

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

**Fakulta pedagogická**

**Bakalářská práce**

***KDYŽ JSEM UMÍRALA: MODERNISTICKÁ  
TECHNIKA WILLIAMA FAULKNERA***

**Lucie Pittnerová**

**Plzeň 2012**

**University of West Bohemia**

**Faculty of Education**

**Undergraduate Thesis**

***AS I LAY DYING: WILLIAM FAULKNER'S  
MODERNIST TECHNIQUE***

**Lucie Pittnerová**

**Plzeň 2012**

Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadání bak. práce*

(k vyzvednutí u sekretářky KAN)

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

*V Plzni dne 26. dubna 2012*

.....

Lucie Pittnerová

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the supervisor of this thesis Brad Vice, Ph.D. for the beneficial counseling that he provided, as well as for his time, patience, and encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

Pittnerová, Lucie. University of West Bohemia. April, 2012. *As I Lay Dying*: William Faulkner's Modernist Technique.  
Supervisor: William Bradley Vice, Ph.D.

This thesis is concentrated on William Faulkner's universally recognized novel from 1930 named *As I Lay Dying*, for the work is commonly regarded as one of the most exemplary projections of modernism in literature. The primary subject of the central part of the thesis is to delineate the techniques that the author utilized for attainment of the modernist effect.

First of all, the initial section discusses the interconnection between Faulkner's text and the perceptions of contemporary philosophy and psychology, addressing conception of time and consciousness and its reflection in *As I Lay Dying*. The subsequent section of the thesis consults Faulkner's preoccupation with visual arts of his era, predominantly Cubism, and his effort to project it to his writing considering the substitution of painting devices by language, and most especially by the author's Southern American dialect. This chapter presents Faulkner as a regional novelist inseparably linked to the Mississippi area. The final segment of the thesis, contrarily, portrays Faulkner as a global modernist by perusing the mythopoetic approach of *As I Lay Dying*, comparing his method of employing motifs inspired by older generations of writers to other eminent modernist literators. The conclusion, thereafter, essays to provide a coherent synopsis of the propositions from the previous chapters inspecting the modernist techniques applied to *As I Lay Dying*.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY.....	7
VISUAL ARTS AND DIALECT .....	14
MYTHOPOETIC METHOD .....	22
CONCLUSION .....	29
WORKS CITED.....	31

## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twentieth century was a period in which America was experiencing a constant change practically in every area of human life. It started with the Progressive Era at the turn of the two centuries that contributed to strengthening of the democratic principles of the country in terms of reformed political and voting system or purification of the government. The movement of the Progressives was, however, deadened by World War I, or the Great War, the major event of the second decade of the century. Demonstrating its great power in the war, America regained confidence and gradually moved into the new decade, alternatively called also “the roaring twenties”. This era was symbolized by stimulation of the economy, mass-production causing the goods to be affordable on hire purchase to the middle class people, prohibition interwoven with bootleggers, jazz, Charleston, new fashion, looser manners, women movements represented by suffragettes or flappers, and last but not least the new styles in art and literature. It was a merry decade indeed, although it was terminated by the notorious Black Thursday –October 24, 1929 when the Great Depression was launched.

Nevertheless, this remarkable period of American history naturally produced a large number of great writers, among whom the extraordinary Nobel Prize winner from Mississippi may rank the highest. The body of his numerous works was written in a period not much longer than 10 years and even today he is regarded as one of the most influential authors not only of the South of the United States of America, but also of the whole world.

William Cuthbert Faulkner was born September 25, 1897 in Albany, Mississippi, but the town closely connected to his life was Oxford, Mississippi, where his family moved in September 1902. Although young William proved to be exceptionally intelligent, he resigned his education in formal facilities and acquired new experiences and knowledge in real life by working and by maintaining relationships with two personages crucial to his whole life: Philip Avery Stone, his friend and literary guide, and Estelle Oldham, his childhood friend, object of affection and later wife.

After he was not acknowledged as an appropriate suitor for Estelle by his sweetheart’s father, he departed from Oxford to work as a clerk at Winchester Repeating Company on Stone’s recommendation. In the application for the company, the additional letter *u* firstly appeared in spelling of his name, which, as a major biographer Joseph Blotner comments on it, happened “either in error or as the first step in a stratagem soon to be attempted” (58). What Blotner meant was the fact that Faulkner (after being rejected in



U. S. Army Air Force) soon enlisted in Canadian Royal Air Force, pretending he is an Englishman, to which purpose could the name Faulkner serve. Nevertheless, before he managed to finish the training in Canada, the war in Europe had ended. Faulkner then returned to Oxford feigning he was a war hero, and in 1919 he utilized the provision for war veterans to enroll at the University of Mississippi, although he never graduated from high school. He only spent three semesters studying at “Ole Miss”, but some of his early short stories and poems were written during this period.

Thereafter, at the beginning of 1925, during his stay in New Orleans his first book was published: *The Marble Faun* (1924) was a collection of poetry and it was soon followed by his first novel called *Soldier's Pay* (1926). When the book was out of print, Faulkner departed for Europe. He traveled to Switzerland to see the glorified Alps described in Shelley's poems, further to France and later to England, but the most significant part of the trip was spent in Paris, the center of the modern artistic world. Stone planned for him to be introduced to the famous modern writers; yet, according to famous biographer Jay Parini, William Faulkner defied and “partly through shyness and partly through ornery self-regard, refused to mingle with other writers,” even though the café favored and frequented by James Joyce was just around the corner (86). For the whole of the duration of his European visit, he evaded the company of the artistic circles and preferred watching ordinary citizens – the working class people (Parini 87). This period of Faulkner's life was, however, the most substantial one in regard of his literary work. The time spent in Paris benefited in encountering and acquiring techniques of writing employed by major modernists such as already mentioned James Joyce or Virginia Woolf both contributing to artistic circles of this heart of modernism, and that was one of the circumstances resulting in writing *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and primarily *As I Lay Dying* (1929), the central topic of this thesis, and thus Faulkner to become a part and parcel of literature all over the world.

Shortly after his return to the United States Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* (1927), and *Sartoris* (1929), the cut version of what later was published as *Flags in the Dust* (1973), introduced the fictional country called Yoknapatawpha County to the readers. The year 1929 was consequential to William Faulkner also in personal life: he finally married Estelle, who, divorced, returned to Oxford. To be able to provide the family Faulkner focused on earning money by writing by day and working at a power plant by night. The same year and the next one, the two already mentioned novels revolutionary in style and manifesting Faulkner's modernist implementations: *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As*

*I Lay Dying* (1930) were published; and the machinery “picked up steam” – Faulkner produced novels in rapid succession. For illustration only it was *Sanctuary* (1931); *Light in August* (1932); *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936); *The Unvanquished* (1938); *The Wild Palms* (1938); *Go Down, Moses* (1942); detective stories called *Intruder in the Dust* (1948) and *King’s Gambit* (1949); *Requiem for the Nun* (1951); etc. Occasionally Faulkner also co-operated with director Howard Hawks as a screenwriter in Hollywood. The two of them filmed Ernest Hemingway’s *To Have and Have Not* in 1944 and Raymond Chandler’s *The Big Sleep* in 1946 together.

The year 1950 Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and he traveled to the Academy in Stockholm and his “acceptance speech . . . has become the most famous speech by any American writer to receive the Nobel” (Parini 329). In addition to the Nobel Prize Faulkner received Pulitzer Prize and The National Book Award for Fiction in 1955 for his book *A Fable* (1954).

After those events William Faulkner acted as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia and still continued with writing, too; in 1959 he finished the Snopes trilogy, consisting of three novels: *The Hamlet* (1940), *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959). Unfortunately, before long his life was suddenly ended by a heart attack on 6 July 1962 and his body buried in Oxford. Posthumously his final novel *The Reivers* (1962) was published and his memory honored by being awarded another Pulitzer Prize as well as the Golden Medal for Fiction by American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Nevertheless, William Faulkner, as it was already remarked, is inseparably interwoven with literary reflection of modernism, being one of its major representatives and most respected personages. Still, in the creative period, in which William Faulkner’s most appreciated novels were written and published, other largely significant modernist authors were writing their works as well. First of all there were writers associated with the so called “lost generation”, a term firstly pronounced by Getrude Stein, and, according to Roger Lathbury in *American Modernism*, denoting people who “experienced the horrors of World War I and came out of it shaken – having lost their faith in government, God, and most of their peers and elders” (17). These authors, such as Francis Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, E. E. Cummings, or another giant of American literature, Nobel laureate, too, and an ostensible leader of the lost generation, Ernest Hemingway, published many great novels, stories and poems, yet the style and form of their works is substantially dissimilar to Faulkner’s. The authors wrote their novels and short stories in a more traditional, realistic manner, adapting the routine methods of the previous generations of writers.

Although both Faulkner and Hemingway pursued the precision of the language and form of their works, each of them accomplished it in his own way. As the authors of *Critical Companion to William Faulkner* insinuate, Hemingway's "distinctive and much-imitated style" was different to Faulkner's primarily in using "simple sentences, exact descriptions, terse [and] highly suggestive dialogue" (Fargnoli, Golay, and Hamblin 403).

On the other hand, a group of literary figures, whose style of writing is assuredly kindred to Faulkner's, is referred to as the experimental modernists above all represented by the two foremost personages of modern movement in literature - James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Both of them, and William Faulkner alongside, employ a new, revolutionary style of writing. They integrate new elements and features into what is called the modernist novel, simultaneously with new themes, leaving the antiquated conventions of literature behind. The method primarily delimiting works of these experimental authors is an exceedingly modernist technique termed as *stream of consciousness*. Among the novels that are proverbial for applying this method, such as Joyce's *Ulysses* or Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, also *As I Lay Dying* occupies an important position in world's literature.

Consequently, William Faulkner's short novel *As I Lay Dying*, the principal subject of this thesis, unquestionably belongs to the domain of a modernist project. It was published in 1930 and as Faulkner claimed, he wrote it within the time interval of only six weeks and on top of that he allegedly never changed a single word of the novel. The novel depicts a story of the Bundrens, a poor white Southern American family of farmers on the journey from their countryside farmstead to the town with the primary aim of burying the dead body of their mother, meeting a range of complications, inconveniences and obstacles.

Although the plot may appear as mundane, the story is not everything in the novel: Faulkner presents the narrative with innovative method of a series of monologues in fifty-nine chapters successively narrated by fifteen protagonists of either all the seven Bundren family members, including their dead matriarch Addie, or their neighbors and passers-by. Still, there are many other modernist techniques that Faulkner exercises; on that account, when questioned about the methods used in his novel, he once stated:

Sometimes the technique charges in and takes command of the dream before the writer himself can get his hands on it. That is *tour de force* and the finished work is simply a matter of fitting bricks neatly together, since the writer knows probably every single word right to the end before he puts the first one down. This happened with *As I Lay Dying*. (qtd. in Gorra 188)

Yet there certainly is deliberateness, not only imagination in control, in Faulkner's literary production.

First of all, since it is necessary to remark that modernism is a very complex movement enforcing in various disciplines, the era of modern movement was commenced by new approaches in philosophy and psychology. New theories about human mind and conscious vs. unconscious levels of thinking and behavior were promoted: concepts of consciousness constituted by American psychologist William James, a world-widely acclaimed psychoanalytic method by Sigmund Freud, and precept of relative perception of time in relation to consciousness and theory of duration by French philosopher Henri Bergson. All of these conceptions issued in the stream of consciousness technique and thus laid foundations to modernism in literature, for in a significant number of novels, not excepting Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* or *As I Lay Dying*, Joyce's *Ulysses* or Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, such theme is one of the central.

Secondly, the rebound of modernism is pronounced also in visual arts of the first three decades of twentieth century. The avant-garde meant a blossoming of new astonishing art styles, specifically Pablo Picasso's Cubism or Salvador Dalí's Surrealism, both of them employing techniques based on new standpoints and approaches in philosophy and psychology such as automatism, and, by the spirit of modernism, distorting in highly creative manner the painting routines of their artistic predecessors. These methods used by cubists and surrealists, although primarily created for depicting reality on canvas, projected to literary world as well, or more precisely to the output of William Faulkner, respectively into *As I Lay Dying*, as the novel is on numerous occasions denoted as a cubist novel.

Last but not least of the techniques used by Faulkner in *As I Lay Dying* is interrelated with the central theme of the novel, which is a journey. Faulkner chose the journey as his leitmotif in *As I Lay Dying*, yet it is an element that is not new to literature at all – traveling to home was the chief motif of Homer's *Odyssey*. However, based on Parini's comparison, modernist approach transforms the journey home from its mythological understanding, whether considering Leopold Bloom's way to his unfaithful wife in *Ulysses*, or Addie Bundren's return to her blood relatives at the cemetery in Jefferson (143). Therefore, Faulkner conspicuously asserts fabular and mythological motifs in *As I Lay Dying* and on that account may be regarded as one of the authors exhibiting what is called mythopoetic method.

On these grounds, it is evident that *As I Lay Dying* is a very complex novel that in its content de facto unifies a significant amount of techniques pursued by authors of modernist literature. This thesis examines elaborately the three practices used by William Faulkner in *As I Lay Dying* adumbrated above. First chapter provide a more detailed description of combination of science and philosophy with art in terms of *As I Lay Dying*, the subsequent inquires similitude of the novel and modern visual arts with regards to Faulkner's distinctive language, especially Southern American dialect, and the final section of the work is concerned with mythopoetic approach of the novel, and while the foregoing part pictorializes Faulkner more as a regional author, this chapter addresses Faulkner as a universalist or contextualizes him in a global ensemble of authors.

## PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY

William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, being assuredly one of the most representative writings of American modernism, as insinuated in the introduction, certainly employs methods quintessential for experimental novels in its entirety. David Daiches, in his essay "What Was the Modern Novel", while examining the factors defining experimental novels, enumerates, besides other things, new conception of time and consciousness as demarcating points of the modern writings (815). This assertion may corroborate the fact that modern authors applied findings from contemporary approaches to philosophy and psychology. Although, as David Howel Evans implies, William Faulkner himself never acknowledged being occupied with philosophical issues of any character, the elements of both philosophy and psychology are clearly perceptible in his artworks (9). Thus *As I Lay Dying* may be viewed in the perspective of such progressive modern philosophical theories introduced during the incoming period of modernism.

Above all, the concept of consciousness is of high consequentiality for the whole modern movement. One of the first thinkers to engage in levels of human mind was American pragmatist William James, who proposes that human behavior and thinking is always conditioned by what has been previously experienced, either as a product of personal or collective unconscious, and it is projected into perception of other people, or as he imparts in *Principles of Psychology*, "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him" (James 294). This presupposition of wearing a certain kind of mask is represented by Faulkner's characters in *As I Lay Dying*; the most exemplifying illustration may be provided by Addie. The Bundren's dead matriarch in her short entry to the narrative explains her constant pretense in various life roles, either in being a mother who feels that her aloneness had been violated by giving birth to her progeny, or in being a wife who detests her own husband, or even in being an adulterous woman who covertly prefers the illegitimate son to the remainder of the family. However, Addie's most momentous disguise is in the way she designs her cortege to Jefferson as the "revenge would be that [Anse] would never know I was taking revenge," and therefore the family would never actually expose her genuine emotions towards them (100). Nevertheless, Addie is not the only member of the family hiding behind a disguise or a mask: Dewey Dell feigns a peace of her mind, although she is terrified and disconcerted by her pregnancy, Anse dissimulates solicitude for Addie and the family, yet he is self-centered, egoistic idler, Whitfield, an adulterous lover, pretends innocence of a churchman. Faulkner

enables the reader to see behind those masks because of the specific form of the novel by which every character is portrayed from various angles, since there is not only one narrator, the verdicts on individual characters are presented by the others, and to the contrary also their true inner emotions are provided.

Additionally, William James also contends that individual previously acquired experiences are especially projected into communication between individuals, as they do not have the same experiences and on that account sometimes the purpose of communication fails or the message is misunderstood or misinterpreted (Daiches 815). In other words, quoting William James, “[a] great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices”. Again, the failure of communication is another feature of philosophy indisputably detected in Addie’s character. In almost a sociolinguistic manner she meditates on the nexus between words and objects or emotions which the words actually signify and she finds none. She concludes that only deeds are of true purport, not words, or “sin and love and fear are just sounds that people who never sinned nor loved nor feared have for what they never had and cannot have until they forget the words,” and on that account, Addie’s communication with Anse malfunctions, for Anse expresses himself exclusively verbally and Addie, the inverse, solely accepts action (100).

William James was, however, not the only one to research human consciousness. His theories were further expanded and to a certain extent overshadowed by the study of Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, who developed a renowned theory of three stages on which human mind operates. The surface, conscious level, is called *superego* and what Freud meant by that were feelings, memories and knowledge that every human being is fully aware of. The middle layer, pre-conscious, or *ego*, functions as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious, as it is a storage of our past experiences and knowledge that can be easily transferred to the conscious. The deepest of the three levels is *id*, or the unconscious, where the sexual desires, anxieties, violent incentives or repressed memories are preserved. Freud was particularly absorbed in this area of mind and he asserted that it is accessible through dreams or impulsive behavior, thus the reinterpretation of dreams became a great part of his research.

In *As I Lay Dying* the Freudian subject matter may be discovered through the second of the female characters, Dewey Dell Bundren. The pregnant young girl appears not to be very disturbed by her mother’s death; instead, she’s deeply engrossed in resolving her difficulties. Therefore, Dewey Dell’s entries are in large measure not the conscious ones, but they incorporate the intentions of the *id* layer of her mind, speaking in Freud’s

terms. By accident, or maybe it was Faulkner's deliberateness, one of Dewey Dell's parts portrays the train of her thoughts while falling asleep. She dreams about "Darl's eyes . . . begin at my feet and rise along my body to my face and then my dress is gone: I sit naked on the seat . . ." and although it may give an impression of sexual symbolism, presumably her declared physical exposure may in Freudian dream interpretation be a parallel to the anxiety of exposure of mind (69). She's dismayed by the possibility that Darl, the only brother who knows about her condition, may divulge it to the family. On that account, her fantasies develop into the point where she imagines that "I rose and took the knife from the streaming fish still hissing and I killed Darl" by which her violent motives and aggressive character may be implied, later actually realized, yet in moderate way, by assaulting Darl after he set the barn ablaze (69).

Still, another prominent of modern philosophy inquired into the question of consciousness, supplemented with its relation to time, and that was French philosopher Henri Bergson, who created a theory of Duration, or theory of time and consciousness. Concisely, in his essay *Time and Free Will* Bergson polemicizes, among other matters, about existence, or more accurately non-existence, of time. He assumes that time is a relative concept, since every individual perceives its pace differently in different situations while as a scientific unit the tempo is always the same. William James, apart from his theory of masks, also contributes to the idea of non-existence of the present point in time or as David Daiche paraphrases him, "the present moment did not exist in human consciousness, which was a continuous blend of retrospect and anticipation, a flow of the 'already' and the 'not yet'" (815).

As a matter of fact, the problems of time and its perception occur plentifully in modern novels. Various distortions of time are not uncommon and neither are sudden, unexpected or unexplained transitions of times and periods of the narration. In Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* the fall of the aristocratic family is narrated in accordance with the relevance of the occurrences, rather than in chronological sequence, and also the protagonists of the novel are often not aware of the sense of time, or are solving the question of time relativity. In *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, many passages and contemplations emphasize the transience of time, the greatness of Big Ben measuring time in contrast to the shortness of human life. James Joyce, furthermore, to a certain extent flirts with Bergson's idea of distorted time speed: in *Ulysses* time accelerates and slows down depending on what the characters are experiencing at the moment.



In a similar way it is with *As I Lay Dying*, where Faulkner also encompasses the topic of time and timelessness, but rather in association with movement and motionlessness which the characters of the novel are constantly sensing. First of all, Faulkner repeatedly inserts the word “motionless” into his characters’ mouths since the opening of the story, for instance when Darl depicts Jewel and his horse as “rigid, motionless, terrific, the horse back-thrust stiffened, quivering legs . . .” or when the same person is watching Cash completing the coffin with “his face sloped into the light, with a rapt, dynamic immobility above his tireless elbow . . . the trees, motionless, are ruffled out to the last twig, swollen, increased as though quick with young,” and there are further illustration in quantity to be noticed throughout the novel (9; 44). Jolene Hubbs, in her essay “William Faulkner’s Rural Modernism” also see the Bundrens on their journey “not in flux but frozen, thus representing neither ascent nor decline, neither progress nor regress, but rather a confluence of forms of stasis – spatial, temporal and social,” yet she sees it more as an element archetypal for rural area and its inhabitants (462). This fact could reveal Faulkner’s intentionality in creating such characters of the novel as McGowan or the pharmacist Mosely, whose monologues indicate the differences between the poor, uneducated country farmers and them, the town dwellers, since they consider the Bundrens to be obsolete, underdeveloped and to a certain extent unintelligent and thus slow; this utmost slowness may sometimes even have an effect of a complete stagnation.

On the other hand, André Bleikasten, a germane literary critic, approaches the theme of motionless in *As I Lay Dying* more from a perspective of Bergson and James’s philosophy. He asserts that in the novel the immobility oftentimes becomes a question of time than merely of space, and that Faulkner intermingles the two quantities, or in Bleikasten’s own words, “space and time exchange their attributes; time becomes space, space time – not the time of events but a time accumulated like that of memory, bewitched like that of dreams, fluid and static; a time marking time” (278). This fact is demonstrable in several passages of the book, but the most obvious section is when Darl watches his family on the other bank of the river and states that it feels like:

we had reached the place where the motion of the wasted world accelerates just before the final precipice. Yet they appeared dwarfed. It is as though the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality. It is as though time, no longer running straight before us in a diminishing line, now runs parallel between us like a looping string, the distance being the doubling accretion of the thread and not the interval between. (85)

Darl is, after all, a character who perceives such transitions best, and on numerous occasions also adverts to them and epitomize in a specific manner by a very specific language.

Nevertheless, the psychological grounds laid by Henri Bergson, claiming that time and consciousness are two issues closely related to each other, are in literature reflected principally by a highly modernist technique established as *stream of consciousness*. This narrative method attempts to attain the exact depiction of mental processes, emotions or private trains of thought of the character in the book, or as Lawrence Edward Bowling presents in “What Is Stream of Consciousness Technique”, its aim is:

to give a direct quotation of mind – not merely of the language area but of the whole consciousness . . . the only criterion is that it introduce us directly into the interior life of the character, without any intervention by the way of comment or explanation on the part of the author. (345)

However, as Bowling also mentions, the absence of author’s remarks and observations in such a flow of inner thoughts is essential, failing that it is a case of either *interior monologue* in which the author indicates and clearly demarcates the borders of the direct quotation, or a basically different method called *internal analysis*, meaning the reinterpretation of the thoughts indirectly through author’s own words (345). The interior monologue and direct or indirect speech is oftentimes associated with Virginia Woolf, for *Mrs. Dalloway* is recounted by omniscient narrator who intermediates the inner thoughts of the protagonists, while the technique of stream of consciousness in its purest version is to be found in works of James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and, of course, William Faulkner.

The story of *As I Lay Dying*, since no omniscient narrator interfering and directing the course of the plot is present, is intermediated solely by what could be considered as a series of interior monologues and direct or indirect speeches of the protagonists. However, the technique of stream of consciousness emerges plenteously in the novel, providing the exact portrayal of the thoughts mostly of the Bundrens.

This phenomenon is interwoven and profoundly accented by the employed language, which is, according to Faulknerian scholar Virginia V. Hlavsa, another characteristic device of the modern novel, as she notes that modern authors usually apply word plays, puns, polysemous or ambiguous expressions, misspellings or incorrect grammar (Hlavsa 26). In addition, the formulations from the whole spectrum of the speech layers are numerous present in modernist works; authors employ this type of creative language for the purpose of preventing the tediousness and attracting the readers, but

primarily in order to render the text multivocal, leaving the interpretation on readers' imagination. This feature is greatly exemplifiable on *Ulysses*, as the range of language means used is exceedingly broad, from Standard English to colloquialisms and slang, from contemporary expressions to Old English ones. In *As I Lay Dying* Faulkner also exercises a considerably broad variety of language devices and speech layers. Some of the characters, especially the uneducated, lazy father of the family Anse, express themselves with a heavy Southern American dialect (which is a trait examined in more detail in the subsequent chapter of this work), while some sections of the monologues creating the spine of the novel are voiced with almost poetic, highly imaginative language, for instance in Darl's emotive fantasies and parables. Faulkner's objective in using such alterations and diverse modifications of the language might be believed as an implement to distinguish between the levels of consciousness in which the concrete discourse takes place, since sometimes within the framework of only one character what is said aloud and what is meant to be a stream of consciousness is not always homogenous. Dorothy J. Hale in "As I Lay Dying's Heterogenous Discourse" supports this idea while emphasizing the inappropriateness of language in Dewey Dell's and Vardaman's interior monologues: neither an illiterate young girl nor a small child would be actually capable of thinking with such advanced language (7). Thus it may appear that the previously acknowledged conventions of realism are actually not very realistic.

Nonetheless, the technique of stream of consciousness is regularly accompanied by the erroneous usage of grammar, aforementioned within the modernist language means proposed by Hlavsa. In writings of modernist authors the complete omission of punctuation can be discovered, predominantly in passages containing stream of consciousness technique to provide the exact image of the thoughts whirling in their characters' heads. When the attempt to cross the river failed and the coffin with Addie is almost carried away by the torrent Vardaman's thoughts of rescuing the coffin with his mother revolve in his head as:

Cash tried but she fell off and Darl jumped going under he went under and Cash hollering to catch her and I hollering running and hollering and Dewey Dell hollering at me Vardaman you vardaman you vardaman and Vernon passed me because he was seeing her come up and she jumped into the water again and Darl hadn't caught her yet[.](87)

His stream of consciousness proceeds practically until the end of the chapter and Faulkner excludes punctuation entirely. When Dewey Dell is dozing having her dream of homicidal

intent, Faulkner does so similarly, as the girl is feeling “[w]hen I used to sleep with Vardaman I had nightmare once I thought I was awake but I couldn’t think what I was I couldn’t feel the bed under me and I couldn’t think what I was . . .” (69). Identically the method of rejecting formal grammatical sentence structures is utilized in the very last chapter of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* or again by William Faulkner in the opening scene of *The Sound and the Fury*. Yet, it is obvious that the stream of consciousness and the lack of grammar is in the novels conventionally conjoined with eccentric or bizarre states of mind: in Molly Bloom’s soliloquy in *Ulysses*, Leopold’s wife is on the edge of sleep, dreaming, and so is Dewey Dell in *As I Lay Dying*; Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury* is a character suffering from mental illness. Considering Vardaman, he is just a little child sustaining a loss of mother and coping with death that he cannot fully comprehend, therefore the style of his cerebrating and consequent expressing is very special, just as he resolves, drawing a parallel between the killed fish chopped into pieces and eat, that “My mother is a fish” (49). Yet also other characters of Faulkner’s fiction document specificity and distinctiveness in their utterances, for instance Cash, presumably the most practical character, consequently comments on the occurrences in a highly pragmatic manner. On the other hand, Darl, the madman, uses poetic and ornery language full of metaphors during his effusions and passages mediated by his almost extra sensory perceptions.

Regarding all these facts and illustrations from Faulkner’s novel, it is self-explanatory - *As I Lay Dying* certainly carries features of the contemporary science on the medical and psychic grounds as well as of the philosophical subjects and questions that allow for the problems of time and its relation to human mind, which are of high momentousness for modernist. Thereto the involvement of such notions into the prose integrates Faulkner side by side to such giants of modernist literature as James Joyce, Marcel Proust or Virginia Woolf.

## VISUAL ARTS AND DIALECT

*As I Lay Dying* could be generally considered as a greatly complex novel with a large number of characteristic features. Because of its unique arrangement as well as in view of the fact that it was written in the period when new experimental styles of visual art were rising, the confrontation of *As I Lay Dying* and the contemporary painting only suggests itself.

The visual arts of the first third of twentieth century commonly termed as avant-garde, preceding the reflection of modernism in literature, universally requested the abandoning of the deep-rooted conventions of painting. To art movements that pioneered the avant-garde pertains the newly established Cubism, predominant in the first two decades of the century, with its two main representatives and also the imaginary fathers, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Origins of Cubism can be discovered in Primitivism inspired also by African culture, facts demonstrable in the antecedent of cubistic painting which is usually regarded to be Picasso's painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* from 1907, and with its rapid expansion Cubism represented a revolution in European art. The eminent French poet and spokesman of the cubists Guillaume Apollinaire defined Cubism in his theoretical work *The Cubist Painters* as "the art of painting new compositions with elements taken not from reality as it is seen, but from reality as it is known" (135). In other words, cubistic paintings depicted objects decomposed and recomposed again, often distorted alongside with geometrical figures in almost abstract mode and thus focusing on offering to the recipient the view on the work of art from more than one angle. Hence the movement also acquired its name derived from the word *cube*, which happens to be one of the solids emerging on the cubistic works of art. Moreover, the three-dimensionality of object is not maintained and neither is the perspective characteristic for earlier artistic production, later Cubism also comes with the utilization of collage. Aside from Picasso and Braque, also artist such as Juan Gris, Francis Leger, Robert Delaunay, Roger de La Fresnaye or Francis Picabia are associated with Cubism.

It is a universally recognized fact that Faulkner's major novels were built on certain structures, and *As I Lay Dying* is no exception. A significant number of Faulknerian scholars produced studies of the novel regarding the point of view of its design, among them Panthea Reid Broughton, who labels *As I Lay Dying* as a "cubistic novel", probably the sole one of its kind. In his novel, William Faulkner masterfully combined words with pictures, having utilized the highly imaginative sets of expressions which leave a profound

impression of almost looking at a canvas, not merely reading words printed on paper, considering for instance the elaborate and suggestive depictions of the scenery or landscapes in Darl's parts.

Nonetheless, what exactly are those features merging this peculiar piece of writing with modern visual arts? First of all, it is the geometry. Faulkner's immersion in geometry is perfectly perspicuous in many aspects. Principally, circular shape alongside to line segment is present throughout the whole novel, be it in form of an actual geometrical figure or in transferred meaning as a cycle or linear spatial arrangement. Those two elements pervade the story constantly: if we look at respective illustrative items containing the circle, it is the very opening scene of the novel where the paths "circles the cottonhouse," it is Darl's portrayal of Vardaman's appearance as having "round head with his eyes round and his mouth beginning to open," or the child's face expression after his mother's decease, resembling a circular owl's face, as well as the circular shape in which the buzzards fly above the coffin (3; 28; 40). Moreover, the actual skeleton of the novel may be approached as a certain kind of a cycle, since the story opens with Bundrens being a complete family and ends equally by Anse marrying the new Mrs. Bundren. Darryl Hattenhauer in "Geometric Design of *As I Lay Dying*", however, remarks also additional representations of the circle not so evident on the first sight: Vardaman's desire for a toy-train going in circles, Cash's craving for a gramophone, or Dewey Dell's urge to have an abortion to restore her menstruation cycle (147). The arrangement of linear structures is most preferably discernible in Anse's meditation on horizontal and vertical organization of real world's objects regarding their purpose, when he asserts that:

the Lord put roads for travelling: why He laid them down flat on the earth. When He aims for something to be always a-moving, He makes it long ways, like a road or a horse or a wagon, but when he aims for something to stay put, He makes it up-and-down ways, like a tree or a man. He never aimed for folks to live on a road . . . He aimed for them to stay put like a tree or a stand of corn. Because if he's aimed for man to be always a-moving and going somewhere else, wouldn't He a put him long-ways on his belly like a snake? It stands to reason He would. (22)

Again, Hattenhauer provides further exploration of the verticality and horizontality by taking account of the water in form of rain (vertical) and thus creating the river (horizontal) causing an obstacle to Bundren's progress, and also of wood of trees and wood converted into coffin; nonetheless, most importantly he implies the discrepancy of Anse and Addie as

the former being a character exclusively vertical, meaning static, and the latter being horizontal, able of, or more precisely yearning for movement and advancement, on the other hand (148).

The second factor conjoining *As I Lay Dying* with visual arts is the altered dimensionality of particular sequences of the novel mostly contained in Darl's remarkably descriptive visions. Claiming that "transformation of volumes into surfaces" and "transparent space . . . substituted [by] opaque space with neither depth nor relief, against which objects appear flat" are features attributive for *As I Lay Dying*, this factor is intensely supported by one of the chief literary scholars André Bleikasten (282). From this point of view, there is every indication that Faulkner adopted the technique of disturbing traditional perspective and preferring plane figures archetypal for cubist painters, for oftentimes the scenes in the novel are flattened being deficient in their three-dimensional form of appearance. Darl, the character associated most frequently with this phenomenon, as it is intimated above, repetitively envisions scenes as pictures. The chapter when Addie passed away and Darl, although not being actually present at the farmstead, depicts the happening occurrences, is full of illustrative examples, just as he describes Cash and Tull finishing the coffin when "[u]pon the dark ground the chips look like random smears of soft pale paint on a black canvas" and "[u]pon the impalpable plane of [the air] their shadows form as upon a wall" (44).

The last but certainly not least element that suggests a resemblance between Faulkner's prose and Cubism is the very fundamental fact that the characteristic form of *As I Lay Dying* proffers to the reader various perspectives on concrete objects, persons and actions, or in other words, as Panthea Reid Broughton in "Faulkner's Cubist Novels" asserts:

As the cubists stacked different viewpoints together on a flat plane, so Faulkner assembles a number of different perspectives in *As I Lay Dying* . . . The effect of seeing circumstances from so many different perspectives is to deny any one's claim to absolute truth and to force the reader to search for something which approximates that truth – a fourteenth way of looking at a blackbird. (81)

From that, it is obvious that Faulkner propounds insights into incidents of his story and interiors of its protagonists from many various angles, creating a sort of cube that the reader can rotate for gaining more and more information; and thus the individual

components gradually form the whole theme just as the individual geometrical figures form cubistic paintings.

Further, the look at particular pictures and paintings may reveal other shared peculiarities of the two artistic disciplines. For instance, in the aforementioned predecessor of the whole movement of Cubism, the canvas denominated *Les Femmes d'Alger*, excluding the joint parameters above-named, Picasso dauntlessly demonstrates a daring image of five women, prostitutes apparently, undressed, exposing their nudity; and the consumer receives an unveiled, genuine, almost perverse and not exactly congenial sight of the nature of the depicted females. The same thing renders Faulkner: he enables his readers to see into the souls and psyches of his characters, into the very heart of their spirits, just only by the absence of the omniscient narrator. He almost portrays nakedness of the particular persons through the full and complete representation of both their consciousness and unconsciousness. Yet, such an accurate inspection into mind may sometimes cause a horrifying effect, which is a fact that Faulkner is obviously aware of and turns it an advantage for his novel. On ever so bizarre occasions as boring holes into the coffin and the dead body's face, or breaking the already broken leg and its subsequent fixation with cement, or even nearly drowning the coffin in the flooded river, the reader is placed to position where s/he does not know whether to laugh or cry. The same instance represents Picasso by covering the demoiselles' faces with masks that can either carry a terrifying or ridiculous effect.

Nevertheless, the conversion of painting into literature naturally encounters a deficiency in the scale of applicable visual devices, colors, tinctures, an indefinitely broad spectrum of shades and materials that immediately impress and influence the consumers; the literators must contrive to manage with one solely – they substitute all the expedients utilized by painters merely with language, hence it might be stated that words in literature can equal the paint and materials for visual arts. From that viewpoint, as it was minutely substantiated in the preceding paragraphs by illustrating the precision of Faulkner's fuse of particular characteristic components into his novel by using poeticisms and suggestive expressions, in the commixture of avant-garde painting and *As I Lay Dying* William Faulkner manipulates the language with bravura. He employs ineffably wide-ranging scale of parole layers and diversity of language varieties; among them his use of Southern American dialect plays a principal role. In fact, the integration of dialect into novelizing espouses a weighty position in modernist literature, just as Michael North in preface to *The*



*Dialect of Modernism* asserts, “dialect became a prototype for the most radical representational strategies of English-language modernism” (i).

Regarding Faulkner, the dialect is intimately conjoined with regionalism, as the primary, and actually the only one, locale of his writings is situated into the fictional country area called Yoknapatawpha based on existent Lafayette County in Mississippi, the Southern American state inseparable from Faulkner’s life. Through this “own little postage stamp of native soil,” as Faulkner designated this fictitious county of his novels, he draws practically accurate portrait of the American South (qtd. in Parini 102). Being one of the major personages of the so-called Southern Renaissance, he brings attention to the obsolescence of the South and unapproachableness of the agrarian society, alongside to the traditional values such as the conformity of family contrary to the personal individuality, and, primarily the persisting racial issues. On that account, according to John T. Matthews:

Faulkner discovers his voice as a novelist, becomes “Faulkner”, in the work of realizing the modernist sensibility as a function of his region’s and nation’s history. The interplay of dialects in Faulkner’s writing marks how Faulkner’s modernist voice comes to life as he accepts the obligation to tell about the South. Minority voices and subjects are not incidental to Faulkner’s achievement; they are its foundations. (73)

The foregoing quotation appreciably implies, besides other things, the multiplicity of various levels exerted in Faulkner’s novels, which is a provable truth confirmed by the author himself, for in a famous university radio interview he answered the inquiry about the exact number of the dialectical forms in his books as follows: “[t]he dialect, the diction, of the educated, semi-metropolitan white southerner, the dialect of the hill, backwoods southerner, and the dialect of the Negro - four, the dialect of the Negro who has been influenced by the northern cities, who has been to Chicago and Detroit” (qtd. in Gwynn, and Blotner 125). By implication, Faulkner’s assortment of dialects is repetitively comprehended and explored as a device for clear demarcation of interracial differentiation, or as a Faulkner’s rendition of the attitude to African-American community in Southern America, predominantly in *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August* and other writings. However, in *As I Lay Dying* the use of dialect may be interpreted in a slightly dissimilar manner. Since there are no black narrators in the novel, the dialect used here belongs to the second type that Faulkner mentioned and more preferably serves for an indicator of the rigidness and illiteracy of the penurious Southern farmers, the backwoods inhabitants as

termed by Faulkner, and the poverty-stricken area of Yoknapatawpha, or better to say its symbolism for the real Mississippi.

From a linguistic perspective, the scope of the regional dialectic forms abnormal to the standard use of English to be detected in the novel is immensely extensive; the subsequent paragraph, however, provides just a brief overview of the most conspicuous representatives. First of all, the regional vocabulary is perceptible throughout the whole narrative, either in the form of words with slightly modified spelling or in the form of completely dissimilar phrases. The former group comprises, beyond all questions, such expressions as *hit* as an alternative for standard *it*, verbs as *holp*, *ketch* or *git* instead of *help*, *catch* or *get*; Anse provides a great example of such dialectic misspellings when explaining to the doctor why he did not sent for him earlier that “[h]it was *jest* one thing and then another, . . . [t]hat ere corn me and the boys was aimin to *git* up with, and Dewey Dell a-takin good *keer* of her, and folks comin in, a-offerin to help and *sich*, till I *jest* thought. . .” (26; emphasis mine). Also the typical southern lengthened final vowels in *maw* and *paw*, how Addie and Anse are couple of times referred to, are remarks of the changed spelling. The latter group of dialectic expressions incorporates for example the locative adverbs as *yonder* (“ . . . it was lying right *yonder* in the dirt” (39; emphasis mine)), meaning (*over*) *there*; or *nigh* (“It was *nigh* to midnight and it had set in to rain. . .” (40; emphasis mine)), meaning “nearly, approaching” according to “A Glossary of Quaint Southernisms” by Robert Beard. Yet other elements are worth of notice, just as the novel is rife in the use of pronominal *them* instead of *those*, e.g. in Anse’s pronouncement that “God’s will be done. . . Now I can get *them* teeth,” (30; emphasis mine); and the demotic expression *reckon* figures in *As I Lay Dying* almost constantly in alternative to the common *think*.

Concerning the grammatical structures, the dialectic figures mostly exert influence over the use of verbs. Predominantly, the Southern American dialect employed by the Bundrens disturbs the conventional conjugation, the verb *be*, for instance, in past tense habitually adopts a form *was* for all persons instead of *were*; accordingly, also other verbs are frequently pronounced in non-standard forms; relatively sizeable amount of the discernible variations of the verb forms provides the passage when Vardaman arrives to the Tulls and he cries with his:

hung back, dripping, watching [Tull] with them eyes. “You *was* there. You *seen* it laying there. Cash is *fixing to* nail her up, and it was *a-laying* right there on the ground. You *seen* it. You *seen* the mark in the dirt. The rain

never come up till after I was *a-coming* here. So we can get back in time.

(41; emphasis mine)

The substandard use of preterits such as *seen*, or *kilt*, *knowed*, and *et* from the previous chapters of *As I Lay Dying*, moreover, when Cora Tull notices Vardaman standing in the rain she compares him to “a *drownded* puppy,” which is a dialectical form as well (41; emphasis mine). Yet, on the prior citation from the novel also the very common southern prefixation *a-* is demonstrated, and furthermore the phrase *fixing to*, which appears several times in the novel, for example when Anse constantly repeats that “it *fixing to* rain, too,” (22; emphasis mine). It serves for expressing the future, as an auxiliary verb meaning “getting ready to” in compliance with Robert Beard. Besides, the use of double negative is not extraordinary in Bundrens’ and other characters’ utterances, for instance when Anse avers “[c]ant nobody else ketch hit,” or “[n]o . . . no. We dont need nothing” (25; 149). The negative particle *ain’t* occurs plentifully for creating negation, too, and it is often related to double negative likewise, e.g. when Vardaman says “What? I aint done nothing” (37).

By the use of dialectical structures in his prose Faulkner categorize the Bundrens into their social stratum, but most importantly, through that he fulfills the modernist demands of the display of reality in a fresh mode, in new frame of reference, just as the visual arts of this era do. The dialect captures the two-dimensionality of the speakers’ utterances similarly to the cubist painters: the reader is coerced to decipher the message secluded by the substandard form of language equally to the manner by which the consumer of cubistic canvas is compelled to decode the factual objects covert by the lines, geometry and distorted composition. In this sense, the dialectical structures also provide simultaneously the real as well as the veiled meaning. Moreover, in *As I Lay Dying* Faulkner places the Southern dialect in opposition to other speech layers, for illustration it is the high distinguished, almost noble formulations in Darl’s sections of the narrative several times analyzed in this thesis, but expressed also by Dewey Dell as she states “I feel like a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth” (38); and furthermore the pragmatism of Cash’s rational monologues or disorderliness of Vardaman’s infantile contemplations; yet neither Darl, nor Dewey Dell and the others, would presumably articulated this kind of language aloud, it lingers in their inner speculations, while when communicating they remain with the conventional dialect. This very fact may resemble the cubistic techniques and visions; by altering the exercised type of language within the framework of the individual characters, considering the level of the discourse (and naturally considering the conscious or unconscious level of their thinking, as dissected in the previous chapter), Faulkner

provides a coherent and self-contained outlook to his protagonists from sundry points of view, which is a phenomenon proverbial for Cubism.

To conclude, the regional constituents integrated into Faulkner's prose have quite manifestly a deliberate purport of creating the impeccability of the author's modernist methods by compensating the absent tools of the contemporary painting with the solely one that the writer has – the language and its variations. Yet Faulkner utilizes the dialect also owing the simple fact that he is a regional author; he generally qualifies as one of the foremost authors writing about the American South and one of the chief figures of Southern Renaissance. On that account, although with certainty William Faulkner is acclaimed as a universal modern writer employing the modern methods and techniques usually conjoined with progress, new established theories and beliefs, and prerequisites of invalidating the antiquated and surpassed ideals, he accomplishes that with a very specific procedure of interspersing such modern techniques into the undeveloped, rigid, rural landscape of Mississippi and thereby, by being a singular regional novelist, he becomes a singular universal novelist.

## MYTHOPOETIC METHOD

Another one of the particularities of modern literature assuredly is the selection of themes and motifs in novels. David Daiche, while defining the attributes of modernist writings, mentions the relevance of themes used by modernists in contrast to those of the Victorians - the radical change occurs “in deciding what sort of event to select from the multifarious details of daily life in order to construct [author’s] plot pattern” – while Victorians usually remained by writing about social, marital or financial status of their characters, the modernists refused to focus on such relative values (814). However, it is a generally known phenomenon that themes in literature recur and reiterate; very frequently the inspiration in modernism is rendered by mythological works, religious texts, legends, poems, novels from antecedent periods etc. In Faulkner’s own words:

A writer . . . robs and steals from everything he ever wrote or read or saw. I was simply writing *tour de force* and as every writer does, I took whatever I needed, without any compunction and with no sense of violating any ethics or hurting anyone’s feelings because any writer feels that anyone after him is perfectly welcome to take any trick he has learned on any plot that he has used . . . because there are so few plots to write about. (qtd. in Gorra)

This technique of drawing motivation from such writings and transferring their components to modern literary production is universally known as *mythopoetic method*. The meaning of the lexeme *mythopoetic* gains transparency by its translation from Greek, since *poiein* stand for “make” and “myth” is just a transcription of Greek *muthos*, thence it is defined as “the making of myth or myths” according to *Oxford dictionary*.

In modernism, certain Faulkner’s contemporaries employed the mythopoetic approach in their works. First of all, the already several times mentioned James Joyce utilized a mythological text of Homer’s *Odyssey*, as the title itself indicates, as a background for his *Ulysses*. Although the story is set into an utterly different period and place, the characters are not heroic as Homer’s, and the plot does not last ten years, but only 24 hours, the 18 chapters of Joyce’s book are named after characters of Greek mythology which Homer’s Odysseus encountered; therefore Joyce in his novel clearly pursues the path established by Homer and creates the mythological story set into modern society. Besides Joyce, also T. S. Eliot is one of the prominent exponents of applying mythopoetic technique in his works. His extensive modernistic poem *The Waste Land* encompasses a variety of mythological sources from which Eliot adduces directly or which

he distinctly implies, starting from Homer, Sophocles, Petronius or Dante up to Shakespeare, further to French decadents or even pre-modernists such as Conrad, and a vast amount of other authors, but also excerpts from Bible and other religious subject are covered; thence *The Waste Land* is an epitome for the mythical approach to modernism.

For *As I Lay Dying*, in the sense of the mythopoetic modernist method, Faulkner elected as a center of the novel the journey and death, or to be precise the process of dying more than death itself. Regarding these two leitmotifs of Faulkner's novel, the evident parallel, albeit in far less obvious manner than in Joyce, also to Homer's *Odyssey* suggests itself, if only for its naming. The title of the novel as it stands refers to Book XI of *Odyssey* where Agamemnon, speaking to Odysseus while recollecting the course of his own death, recounts that "As I lay dying the woman with the dog's eyes would not close my eyelids for me as I descended into Hades" (qtd. in Parini 142-143). Through that, Faulkner's intention for borrowing Homer's words to introduce his own novel is unveiled: the plotline of *As I Lay Dying* revolves around the process of dying of the novel's central character, the matriarch Addie. Moreover, "the woman with the dog's eyes" signifies Agamemnon's wife "whom he despises, even though the tragedy that befalls his family . . . is his own fault," and the hostility within own family and various disasters which accompany the Bundrens are also features of *As I Lay Dying* (Parini 142). Due to these facts the appellation of the book by an excerpt from Agamemnon's speech is utterly apposite.

To amplify the analogy of *As I Lay Dying* and *Odyssey*, the motif of quest presented in both of these works is expedient for investigation, since while studying those two texts, there is a significant amount of mutual elements to discover. To begin with, in Faulkner's story, the mission is commenced by Addie's decease, yet there are more profound inducements for its actual implementation, and that is the mother's wrath and retribution for the miserable life orientated towards her resented husband and the children that she was manipulated into engendering, as she expresses that "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" (100). This Addie's intentions patently bequeath to the fabular Odysseus, whose travels in Homer's work had a kindred causality – the ire. The god of the sea and earthquake Poseidon is outraged and out of revenge precludes Odysseus's return home at the island of Ithaca. Also the journey depicted in *As I Lay Dying* may be judged as a homecoming, for Addie never actually felt home with the Bundrens and therefore prefers to be entombed by her blood relatives in Jefferson, and according to Cora Tull's

presumably mistaken opinion the Bundrens also “just suffered her, because she was not cold in the coffin before they were carting her forty miles to bury her, flouting the will of God to do it. Refusing to let her lie in the same earth with those Bundrens” (14).

By implication, Addie Bundren may remotely resemble embodiment of the role of Poseidon in Faulkner’s novel, because she is the trigger for the afflictions of being on the road. Although Addie is really not the one who inflicts the obstructions that the family is forced to confront, just as Poseidon does, she certainly is in a way responsible for it. Nevertheless, in both cases, the aims are eventually accomplished: Odysseus, after ten years, reunites with his beloved wife, and Addie, after ten days (which is actually also a parallel conceivably intentional by Faulkner) interred with her kinship. Those achievements are attained by unrelenting persistency during the ordeals and tribulations that seem almost interminable, since misfortune is followed by yet another misfortune, in *Odyssey* the mythological king of Ithaca struggles until all the barriers are surmounted and so do the Bundrens in *As I Lay Dying*, for according to Anse Bundren “[i]t’s a trial. But I don’t begrudge her it. No man can say I begrudge her it” (94). Moreover, by finally reaching the town of Jefferson, also several members of the procession achieve their private goals of the journey: Anse buys a set of false teeth and finds a new wife to replace the one recently buried; Cash, though crippled, acquires the desired “graphophone”; Dewey Dell, although not able to negotiate the abortion, at least divests of Darl and his knowledge. Through that, it is not too presumptuous to say that the Bundrens conclude their quest in Faulkner’s own Mississippi odyssey.

However, although this rural Faulknerian odyssey confirms a set of particular elements mutual or illustriously comparable for the fabulous story of Homer’s *Odyssey*, in certain features they are also substantially unequal; primarily in the atmosphere of both text and the emotions and sensations they render. While *Odyssey*, as being an epic poem, is altogether very heroic, *As I Lay Dying* is somehow deficient in such characteristic, or shows heroism in slightly modified version. Although the members of the family manifests certain heroic deeds, despite only in limited number (e.g. by the rescuing the coffin with the decaying body), Michael Gillum in his “Grotesque Intrusion to *As I Lay Dying*” asserts that Faulkner’s narrative has “the effect of devaluing in particular the heroic elements of the story, rendering them [the Bundrens] grotesque by dissolving the purpose behind them” (19). Faulkner masterfully unifies tragedy and comedy reduced to absurdity and even pathos. The character, that demonstrates the most patent ridiculousness is, obviously, the indolent and egotistic farmer Anse with his determination to exploit the situation for all

it is worth – “God’s will be done. Now I can get them teeth,” he says when Addie at last expires, and when she is put to rest, he replaces her with “the duck-shaped woman all dressed up” and “kind of hangdog and proud, too, with his teeth and all” introduces her as new Mrs. Bundren (30; 149). Furthermore, by his selfishness he hurts people, as Peabody rather with a hint of derision remarks while wondering on Cash’s mutilated leg, “God Almighty, why didn’t Anse carry you to the nearest sawmill and stick your leg in the saw? That would have cured it. Then you all could have stuck his head into the saw and cured the whole family” (138). Anse’s actions appear to be a parody of morality; he mocks the death, marriage, labor and other values customarily respected by the society.

Contrary to that, the genre of tragedy in the conventional sense of the word is, as Robert Merrill suggest that Faulkner deliberately balances the components of comedy and tragedy in *As I Lay Dying*, portrayed by the two chief personages of the novel – Addie, and Darl, the intermediary of for its content the greatest part of the story. Considering Addie and her monologue, she believed her whole life was a series of buskins and “the reason for living is getting ready to stay dead,” as she seeks passion, genuine emotions and sympathy to no avail (101). On that account, Merrill beholds the most consequential tragedy in the relationship, or rather in the non-existence of the relationship, between these two personages, since the “central irony is Addie’s rejection of Darl from the moment of his conception, for it is Darl who loves her passionately. . . . Indeed, Darl suffers more than twenty-five years of denial and frustration” (408). Thus in his monologues his intense jealousy of Jewel, the preferred son, can almost insinuate a distant resemblance to Oedipal complex, which is actually a theme that, according to Debra A. Modellmog in her book *The Oedipus Myth in Twentieth-Century Fiction*, is one of the frequently repeated ones in contemporaneous literature. Moreover, his affliction is topped by having been labeled a madman and dispatched to the asylum, although, notwithstanding the fact that his alienation from reality is incontestable, in a reversed point of view it gives an impression that only he:

realizes that the entire project of constructing the coffin to Jefferson by wagon is absurd, and he tries to stop it. His supposedly warped vision of reality is, in the inverse logic of the novel, “sane.” And he must pay for his sanity by being sent to a mental asylum, (Parini 148)

because the conflagration of the Gillespie’s barn was aimed to stem the terrifying and undignified procession with the putrefying and malodourous casket and reestablish a worth of his adored mother’s decease.



Apart from the themes inspired by Homer and features of grotesque, into his fiction Faulkner also interpolates religious motifs and passages manifestly refer to the Bible. Predominantly, Cora Tull and Whitfield are the Christians of *As I Lay Dying*. While Cora vigorously deplores for the most part Addie's actions against the God's law, Whitfield synopsisizes the hypocrisy and pretense of the church, for being a religious leader and simultaneously an adulterous lover of Addie and father of Jewel. Although he shows the symptoms of comprehending "the enormity of [his] sin" and in immense distress rushes to confess to Anse and ask for absolution, after he's told that Addie is already departed and the divulgence of the secret no longer impends, his sanctimoniousness is performed by claiming that "it was already as though it were done. My soul felt freer, quieter, than it had in years; already I seemed to dwell in abiding peace again as I rode on," in defiance of the fact that the avowal occurred only in his imagination (104).

Nevertheless, into both Cora's and Whitfield's sections of the narrative Faulkner transparently inserts more or less direct references to Biblical texts, which Michael Gorra, the editor of Norton Critical Edition of *As I Lay Dying*, illustratively enumerates and compares to the authoritative text in explanatory footnotes, for instance, concerning Whitfield, when he intends to commence his contrition by saying "Anse, I have sinned. Do with me as you will," Gorra proposes the analogy to Luke 15.18-19, where it reads "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven . . ." (104). Also Addie's cardinal contemplation about declining words and raising acts has, according to Gorra, its genesis in the Bible, as he marks John 3.18, where a line says "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (101). There is a voluminous quantity of Gorra's editorial notes implying Faulkner's proceeding from the Bible while writing the novel, and indisputably there are other ones still to be discovered.

Yet, in *As I Lay Dying* Faulkner benefits not only from citations and slightly altered allusions to Bible, but also from Biblical motifs, first of all the idea of inundation and conflagration. "I simply imagined a group of people and subjected them to the simple universal catastrophes which are flood and fire with a simple natural motive [the burial] to give directions to their progress" Faulkner said in *The Paris Review Interview* when asked about the themes and incentives for writing *As I Lay Dying* (qtd. in Gorra 188). On these grounds, the flood, entailed by an unrelenting downpour of rain, may resemble the 40-day-long rainfall and deluge from Book of Genesis, yet the torrent of Yoknapatawpha River preferably corresponds to the river of Jordan, which is intimated by Cleanth Brooks in

“Odyssey and the Bundrens” (253). The Jordan River in Christian history is a locale that witnessed several miracles, one of them being the fable depicted in Genesis, that two kings, Elijah and Elisha crossed Jordan dry-shod. In *As I Lay Dying* the fortunate family of Bundrens, although not even distantly on dry ground, crosses the flooded river that demolished all the approachable bridges also miraculously, and in spite of the mules that drowned, they all survive, even rescuing the coffin with Addie that is nearly drifted away by the current.

Moreover, a symbolization of the figure of Jesus Christ is another prominent mark of biblical influence that Faulkner concealed into his prose. Since Addie detects her pregnancy with Jewel, she esteems the son as her deliverance, for it is the only child not encumbered by the genes of the loathed husband. In addition, Jewel has to a certain extent a holy father, as Whitfield is an ecclesiastic, albeit rather distorted and corrupt in view of the fact that he is supposed to be an ethical guide for the community. Thus Addie rejects the notion of Christian God in her life by professing that “[Cora] prayed for me because she believed I was blind to sin, wanting me to kneel and pray too, because to whom sin is just a matter of words, to them salvation is just word too,” and somehow substitutes him by a more existent Christ-like figure of her son, claiming that he will be the one to redeem her by his action (102). As Brooks contends that:

Addie’s salvation was not of mere words. It involved the substantiality of the body. The Jordan which it had to cross in order to enter into salvation was the flooded river from which Cash and Jewel save her coffined body. The fire of hell which she had to escape was the quite literal fire of the burning barn from which Jewel lugs the coffin. The salvation was a tangible one, not that of some wordy prayer that was to bring her before a heavenly Father but the actual placing of her now foul body beside the bones of her literal earthly father, (253)

Addie’s allegation is, later corroborated by Jewel’s heroic actions during the inundation as well as during the fire and through that, he with no doubt represents her personal god and provides redemption. Furthermore, also Cash may remotely allude to a personification of Jesus Christ, yet in not Addie’s perspective. He assists Jewel with saving of the casket by which he comes injured and until the journey is concluded he is a martyr tranquilly accepting the torment, “I’m right obliged, it feels fine now,” he insists (123); but primarily, Cash is a carpenter, which is a hypothetical vocation of Christ, although it is frequently disputed.

Nonetheless, on top of the designs from literature adumbrated above, *As I Lay Dying* manifests yet other themes repetitious on a regular basis in prose. One of Faulkner's leitmotifs in the novel is certainly madness represented by a character of Darl, though insanity and derangement stand in the center of literary works substantially more aged than modern. For instance, certain parts of Darl's soliloquies, such as "I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not," practically remind the reader of Hamlet's meditations (46). Also the motif of illegitimate child appeared many times; actually it is one of the most prevalent topics of Romantic and Victorian authors, to exemplify, the similitude may recall American Romanticist Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlett Letter*, where the unacknowledged father of the extramarital child is also a clergyman. What is more, Hawthorne's friend Herman Melville who, in his renowned novel *Moby Dick*, portrays a character of terminally ill Queequeg for whom the ship's carpenter manufactures a coffin while he is still alive, which idea may have provided an inspiration to Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, where the carpenter Cash is producing a coffin for his mother "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" (10).

Essentially, the enumeration of Faulkner's motifs akin to other major writings from history of literature may be further analyzed, but this outline presents Faulkner as an author masterfully comprising requirements of modern author for meeting the requirements of modern novels. It could be said that *As I Lay Dying* is a very complex novel from the perspective of the selected topics and ideas. Thus Faulkner takes his modernist mythopoetic method to perfection, and although he writes prose, such as Joyce, while Eliot's work consists of poetry, the authors are comparable by the broad variety of sources from which they derives; thence Faulkner incorporates himself to the forward places among the most appreciated not only modern, but timelessly esteemed writers.

## CONCLUSION

William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying* from 1930 indubitably ranks amongst the most conspicuous literary projects of modernism. Faulkner intimated his modernist orientation and captivation for experimenting with his writings already with *The Sound and the Fury*, the novel published prior to *As I Lay Dying*, yet in the latter he takes his modernist methods to perfection. It is an extensively complex and all-embracing piece of writing, regarding the quantity of various techniques utilized by the author; Faulkner realizes his originaive writing potentiality by concentrating his attention to structure and form of the novel and therethrough he "created a 'pure' aesthetic artifact" according to Broughton (83). This thesis prospected the comprehensiveness and wholeness of Faulkner's procedures applied to this extraordinary work.

First of all, Faulkner with certainty accented the connection of *As I Lay Dying* to the new approaches to philosophical matters and psychological analyses established by the prominent thinkers of the era as Henri Bergson, William James, or Sigmund Freud, which noticed an expansion during the period when Faulkner was on the crest of his creative wave, and which were promptly adopted into practices of the contemporaneous literature, and moreover, to a certain extent arose as a prerequisite for a modern literature. *As I Lay Dying* certainly displays an impact of those devices; Faulkner asserts the technique of stream of consciousness, so symptomatic for modern authors, throughout many of the passages of his bizarre narrative and thereby exposes the interior psyches of such convoluted character as Darl, Vardaman or Dewey Dell, the latter also confirms Faulkner's awareness about the Freudian dream interpretation. Furthermore, Faulkner's projection of the new conception of time and its perception in human mind was inspected and substantiated in the form of slow-motioned and decelerated progress of the Bundren's procession.

Subsequently, the second chapter of this work, being concerned with rather an exceptional and rare technique of penning, attests Faulkner's endeavor of subsuming the visual arts of avant-garde, especially Cubism, into his prose. Occurrence of particular features of *As I Lay Dying* corroborates such supposition: evidently, Faulkner intentionally inserts geometrical structures of cubist paintings and emulates their characteristic composition of two-dimensionality and reduced volumes, chiefly mediated through Darl's visions. However, as a device for achieving these accomplishments, Faulkner operates with his peculiar language moving in the entire range of possibilities that English language

offers, from highly poetic, figurative language full of metaphors to Southern American dialect. By inference, this fact affirms Faulkner's firm relationship to the region of Mississippi where he dwelt the whole life and his determination to encompass this Southern agrarian area into his work, which is, in fact, not very customary for modernist literature, as the typical motifs usually revolves around cities, technology, and advancement in general. This idiosyncratic feature places Faulkner to a rather distinctive and peculiar position.

Contrary to that, the final segment of this thesis portrays Faulkner in a larger framework of universal modernists and delimits *As I Lay Dying* in a context of literatures of the generations previous to Faulkner's, for externalizing what is designated as mythopoetic approach. The influence of the erstwhile writings and the obvious drawing of inspiration from them stand here as a systematic method practiced by other eminent modernists as James Joyce or T. S. Eliot. In addition to discussing shared features of Faulkner's novel and other various texts, for the most part *As I Lay Dying*'s evident recognition for Homer's *Odyssey* (equally as James Joyce draws an apparent parallel to this piece of writing in his *Ulysses*) is implied and detected, as the leitmotifs of both works appertain to journey, dying, hostility, malevolence or vengeance. Yet, Faulkner also extensively incorporates parallels to *Bible* into his prose, as well as to Romantic writings.

Consequently, it is lucidly evident that the scope of techniques that William Faulkner utilized in *As I Lay Dying* is considerably extensive; he exploits all the opportunities and possible methods that modernism provides. He brilliantly conjoins the designs, as they coherently infuse and pervade the novel in its entirety and by implication the reader acquires a complete image of a modernist experience. Owing that, *As I Lay Dying* purveys an exhibition of modernist techniques, methods and themes ranging from regionalism to obtaining a status of world-wide magnificently appraised and acclaimed novel. "I am going to write a book by which, at a pinch, I can stand or fall if I never touch ink again," Faulkner stated prior to beginning writing *As I Lay Dying* (qtd. in Gorra 186). Evidently, he stands, as a novelist highly esteemed hitherto.

## WORKS CITED

- Apollinaire, Guillaume. *The Cubist Painters*. Trans. Peter Read. Berkley: University of California Press, 2004. *Books.google.com*. Google. Web. 24 Jan 2012.
- Beard, Robert. "A Glossary of Quaint Southernisms." *alphaDictionary*. Lexiteria LLC, 2010. Web. 4 Apr 2012.
- Bowling, Lawrence Edward. "What is the Stream of Consciousness Technique." *PMLA* 65.4 (1950): 333-345. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 Oct 2011.
- Bleikasten, André. "The Setting." *As I Lay Dying*. Ed. Michael Gorra. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010. 262-283. Print.
- Blotner, Joseph. *Faulkner: A Biography*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005. Print.
- Brooks, Cleanth. "Odyssey and the Bundrens." *As I Lay Dying*. Ed. Michael Gorra. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010. 248-262. Print.
- Broughton, Panthea Reid. "Faulkner's Cubist Novels." "A *Cosmos of My Own*." Ed. Doreen Fowler, and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981. 59-94. Print.
- Daiches, David. "What Was the Modern Novel?." *Critical Inquiry* 1.4 (1975): 813-819. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Jan 2012.
- Evans, David H. *William Faulkner, William James, and the American Pragmatic Tradition*. Louisiana State University Press, 2008. Print.
- Fargnoli, Nicholas A., Michael Golay, and Robert W. Hamblin. *Critical Companion to William Faulkner: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. Print.
- Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. Ed. Michael Gorra. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010. 3-149. Print.
- Gillum, Michael. "'Great God, What They Got in That Wagon?': Grotesque Intrusion in *As I Lay Dying*." *The Grotesque*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009. 13-22. Print.
- Gorra, Michael, ed. *As I Lay Dying: A Norton Critical Edition*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010. Print.
- Gwynn, Frederick L., and Joseph L. Blotner, eds. *Faulkner in the University*. University Press of Virginia, 1995. *Books.google.com*. Google. Web. 11 Apr 2012.

- Hale, Dorothy J. "As I Lay Dying's Heterogenous Discourse." *NOVEL: A Forum for Fiction* 23.1 (1989): 5-23. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 Jan 2012.
- Hattenhauer, Darryl. "Geometric Design of As I Lay Dying". *Colby Quarterly* 30.2 (1994): 146-153. *Colby Digital Commons*. Web. 29 Oct 2011.
- Hubbs, Jolene. "William Faulkner's Rural Modernism." *Mississippi Quarterly* 61.3 (2008): 461-475. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 5 Nov 2011.
- James, William. *Principles of Psychology, Vol. 1*. *Books.google.com*. Google, 2007. Web. 24 Jan 2012.
- Lathbury, Roger. *American Modernism (1910 – 1945)*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006. Print.
- Matthews, John T. "Whose America? Faulkner, Modernism, and National Identity." *Faulkner at 100: Retrospect and Prospect*. Ed. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000. 70-92. Print.
- Merrill, Robert. "Faulknerian Tragedy: The Example of *As I Lay Dying*." *Mississippi Quarterly* 47.3 (1994): 403-417. *ProQuest Central*. Web. 27 Oct 2011.
- Moddelmog, Debra A. *Readers and Mythic Signs: The Oedipus Myth in Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Carbondale: The Southern Illinois University Press, 1993. Print.
- "Mythopoetic." *Oxford dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2012. Web. 27 Mar 2012.
- North, Michael. *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth Century Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1998. Print.
- Parini, Jay. *One Matchless Time*. London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2007. Print.

## SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá románem *Když jsem umírala* amerického autora Williama Faulknera z roku 1930, který je celosvětově považován za jedno z nejdůležitějších děl reprezentujících projevy modernismu nejen v americké literatuře, ale i v rámci celosvětového měřítka. Hlavním cílem práce bylo postihnout, podrobně popsat a pomocí příkladů ze samotného díla názorně ilustrovat techniky, jež spisovatel v tomto díle využil k docílení efektů modernistického experimentálního románu.

První část práce osvětluje propojení románu *Když jsem umírala* se soudobými poznatky v oblasti psychologie, zabývající se především lidským vědomím, a poměrně revolučními přístupy k pojetí času ve vztahu k vědomí z oblasti filozofie. Faulkner úmyslně vkládá do svého díla idey významných osobností na poli psychologie a filozofie, v podobě metody tzv. proudu vědomí, porozumění konceptu času nebo interpretace snů ve freudovském smyslu. Následující kapitola bakalářské práce se zabývá Faulknerovým zaujetím pro výtvarné umění první třetiny dvacátého století, především pak kubismem a malbami Pabla Picassa. V knize *Když jsem umírala* jsou jasně patrné snahy autora o zapojení geometrických a kompozičních prvků malířství do literatury. Mimoto tato část práce objasňuje důležitost jazykových prostředků zvolených k dosažení efektu kubistického románu, vyzdvižen je pak zejména jihoamerický dialekt spjatý s autorovým vztahem k rodnému Mississippi. Poslední, avšak neméně důležitá sekce této práce postihuje ve svém obsahu tzv. mytopoetickou techniku Williama Faulknera, a ozřejmuje tak motivy, témata a prvky naznačující vztah mezi *Když jsem umírala* a literárními díly jako je Homérova *Odyssea*, *Bible*, a další literární paralely. Závěr práce pak hodnotí a shrnuje modernistické techniky užití v románu a doložené v předešlých třech kapitolách, a naznačuje oprávněnost klasifikace Williama Faulknera jako jednoho z nejdůležitějších modernistů a zároveň celosvětově nejuznávanějších literátů.