



Death, Mourning and Human Selfishness: Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* Through a Freudian Lens

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Abstract

William Faulkner's classic Southern Gothic novel *As I Lay Dying* is more than just an experiment in modernist techniques: it is a novel that expressly examines its characters' minds, a work containing great psychological depth. This paper will examine the psychological reactions of five members of the Bundren family to the death of Addie, their mother or wife. This examination will utilize Freudian psychoanalytic techniques to address the characters' psychological complexities: developmental stages, defense mechanisms and their mourning processes. Proceeding from that psychoanalysis, this article will argue that Faulkner is using the minds of the characters to impart a message, a comment on the human experience. Faulkner is saying that humans' minds are complex, and that humans, when faced with tribulations, are self-centered.

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