

Postmodernism Elements in William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying

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Abstract: This paper delves into the profound postmodernist traits embodied in William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying*, particularly focusing on the concepts of "indeterminacy" and "immanence". Initially, the paper establishes a clear understanding of postmodernism, outlining its definition and characteristics, encompassing Ihab Hassan's theory and conceptualizations of indeterminacy and immanence. Subsequently, the analysis shifts to the exploration of indeterminacy embodied in *As I Lay Dying*, highlighting its manifestation in the narrative through mentally challenged narrators such as Vardama and the "normal" yet mad Darl. Furthermore, the paper examines the indeterminacy in the plot's progression and the ambiguity of its overarching theme. Beyond indeterminacy, the work also showcases immanence, evident in the stream-of-consciousness narrative, the mission formula, and the profound inner strength of the characters. By dissecting these postmodernist facets, the paper unveils the unique allure and profound depth of *As I Lay Dying* as a postmodern literary work, emphasizing Faulkner's mastery of the craft and the profoundness of his spirit. Overall, this paper offers a fresh perspective on the novel, serving as a valuable reference for understanding both the work itself and the broader scope of postmodern literature.

Keywords: Postmodernism, William Faulkner, Indeterminacy, Immanence

1. Introduction

William Faulkner (1897-1962), as a pioneer and representative figure of American literature, has garnered widespread praise for his unique narrative style, profound exploration of themes, and exquisite literary skills. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949. Throughout his lifetime, Faulkner authored 19 novels and over 120 short stories, most of which are centered around his fictional "Yoknapatawpha Saga." This vast literary system takes place in the small southern American town of Jefferson and its surroundings, telling the stories of several generations of families belonging to different social classes, spanning from 1800 to after the Second World War.

As I Lay Dying, one of the significant works in Faulkner's "Yoknapatawpha Saga", was published in 1930. Faulkner once claimed that this novel was his tour de force. Centering around the "Odessey" of the southern American farmer family, the Bundrens, who embark on a journey to transport their deceased wife's body back home for burial in accordance with their promise to her, the novel utilizes multi-narrative inner monologues and stream-of-consciousness to reveal the intricate emotional entanglements and inner conflicts among family members.

Research on Faulkner in the 20th century largely focused on modernist literary characteristics, while by the early 21st century, studies shifted to exploring the relationship with postmodernism. The academic circle has already conducted some research on the postmodernism of Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, but as one of the important works of his Yoknapatawpha saga, the research on the postmodernist elements presented in *As I Lay Dying* has not yet appeared. Ihab Hassan identified the fundamental characteristics of postmodernism as "indeterminacy" and "immanence" in his work *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*. Undoubtedly, *As I Lay Dying* exhibits remarkable those postmodernist elements.

"Indeterminacy" encapsulates diversity, ambiguity, randomness, rebellion, and abnormality, representing the dissolution of all established orders and structures. "Immanence" signifies the individual's inherent adaptability to the environment, reality, and creativity. Hassan argues that postmodernism no longer possesses transcendental qualities and has shifted its focus away from traditional concepts such as spirit, value, and truth. Instead, it manifests as a retraction of the subject and an inward adaptation to the object.

Drawing inspiration from Ihab Hassan's seminal work, *The Postmodern Turn*, this paper endeavors to unearth the intricate postmodernist tenets embodied in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. Specifically, it focuses on the aspects of "indeterminacy" and "immanence" as outlined by Hassan, exploring their manifestation in the novel's narrative structure, plot development, and overarching themes. By delving into the stream-of-consciousness techniques and intricate interior monologues, the paper aims to illuminate the ambiguous, often surreal world envisioned by Faulkner, thereby reflecting the dismantling of traditional narrative frameworks and the individual's inward adaptability in the face of a fragmented reality.

2. The Theoretical Foundation

In order to study the postmodernist elements in Faulkner's novels, it is necessary to understand the definition of postmodernism, which is quite complicated. This chapter aims to provide the theoretical foundation of postmodernist characteristics based on the theory proved by Ihab Hassan, which could provide clues to the trace of postmodernism in Faulkner.

2.1. The Definition of Postmodernism

Postmodernist literature emerged as a widespread literary trend in Western society after the Second World War, peaking during the 1970s and 1980s. While it continues and builds upon the literary ideologies and creative techniques of modernism, its distinguishing characteristics have transcended the scope encompassed by traditional "modernism," hence its recognition as an independent literary trend. Postmodernist literature is not a concept with a fixed or unequivocal definition. It encompasses a diverse range of literary schools, primarily including absurdist drama, the nouveau roman, and black humor novels.

Postmodernist literature is characterized by several prominent features. Firstly, it adheres to a principle of indeterminacy, manifesting in the ambiguity of themes, images, plots, and language. Secondly, it exhibits a pluralistic approach to creation, which is intertwined with the multiplicity of postmodern culture and reflects the convergence of postmodernism with modernism, realism, and romanticism. Lastly, it engages in linguistic experimentation and discourse games, highlighting its "language-centered" nature.

In summary, postmodernist literature, with its unique creative principles, pluralistic methods, and profound exploration of language, has opened new directions for the development of Western literature and exerted profound influence on subsequent generations.

2.2. The Characteristics of Postmodernism

2.2.1. Ihab Hassan and The Postmodern Turn

Ihab Hassan is one of the earliest scholars to describe and theorize postmodernism, hailed as the "father of postmodernism." His articles on postmodernism's theoretical thought are collected and published in *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*. In this book, Hassan analyzes and elaborates on the postmodernist phenomena manifested in literary works. He gives "postmodernism a more identifiable identity," creating the concept of "indeterminance" to summarize the fundamental characteristics of postmodernism, illustrating its deconstruction and reconstruction.

Hasan also commented on the postmodernism in Faulkner's works. He argued that "while Faulkner avoids the nihilistic tendency of postmodernism and attempts to transcend it in his novels, his spirit remains closely related to the postmodern society."

2.2.2. The Concept of Indeterminacy and Immanence

The emergence of Hassan's idea of "indeterminance" underwent a process of contemplation. Hassan first examined the rebellious tradition of avant-garde literature, proposing "silent literature" and revealing the rebellious and hopeful voices beneath the appearance of silence—the "angry shouts" and "apocalyptic tones." Building on this, Hassan summarized the fundamental feature of postmodernism as "indeterminance," encompassing "indeterminacy" and "immanence," two core and constitutive tendencies of postmodernism. "Indeterminacy" embodies the disintegration and rebellious force in postmodernist culture, while "immanence" is a creative force inherent in human beings, latent beneath this mad deconstruction. If "indeterminacy" is the objective context, then "immanence" is the proactive creativity in the face of indeterminacy.

Hassan is extremely assertive in his interpretation and research on postmodernism. He not only negates the explorations of theorists such as Abrams and Nelson Goodman on postmodernism, mocking them for not understanding the postmodernism they have studied their entire lives, but also considers Habermas' distinction between premodernism, antimodernism, and postmodernism as "futile." According to Hassan, some theorists negate the positive value and future-oriented tendency of postmodernism based on modernist thinking. However, postmodernism not only stimulates the diversity of discourse but also brings new vitality to it: postmodernism contains the idea of deconstruction, but deconstruction breeds the power of reconstruction, implying a trend of reconstruction. According to Hassan, the essence of postmodernism lies in the indeterminacy of discourse, which is embedded in immanence, namely, the trend of deconstruction and the coexisting trend of reconstruction.

Hassan's theory of postmodernism's indeterminacy and immanence demonstrates a powerful spiritual force, a resilience that can rebuild after shattering [1]. As most studies on the postmodernism in Faulkner's novels focus on the postmodernist ideas and techniques embodied in his novels, undoubtedly, Faulkner's works exhibit the main postmodernist characteristic of "indeterminacy" in terms of plot, characters, and themes, deconstructing the authoritative voice and unified meaning of traditional novels and exhibiting indeterminacy in themes. These works transcend modernism in both ideas and narrative techniques. However, more importantly, the power of reconstruction embedded in postmodernism in his novels, namely immanence, is rarely noticed. This creative force latent beneath the appearance of mad deconstruction is the true value waiting to be explored.

3. Indeterminacy Embodied in *As I Lay Dying*

3.1. The Indeterminacy of the Narrative

As I Lay Dying presents multiple aspects of the story through fifty-nine sections of inner monologues of the Bundren family, their neighbors, and related personnel, totaling 15 characters. This narrative technique makes it difficult for readers to understand the entire story from a single perspective or logical chain, increasing the indeterminacy of the narrative. Meanwhile, Faulkner's portrayal of characters also embodies the indeterminacy of the narrative. The characters in the novel are complex and diverse, possessing both kind and loyal aspects as well as selfish and indifferent ones. This complexity makes it difficult for readers to simply categorize the characters into a certain type or personality trait when understanding them, requiring a comprehensive consideration of their words, actions, and inner world. This complexity in character portrayal also adds to the complexity and indeterminacy of the narrative.

"*As I Lay Dying* is an original fable about human endurance, primarily depicting the mad and painful "Odyssey" of ordinary people bearing various spiritual traumas" [2]. The narrative of the novel relies on this group of traumatized and suffering people. Both biologically insane individuals and those who deviate from social norms or rationalism in a sociological sense are collectively referred to as madmen. The former manifests as mental retardation, abnormal speech and behavior, while the latter are those who deviate from rationality yet firmly believe they are following it, acting unconventionally and thus being marginalized by mainstream society as "others"[3].

This chapter conducts an in-depth analysis of the mad images in the characters to reveal the spiritual characteristics and causes of the mad images in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, and further explores the unreliable narrative features and linguistic characteristics of the madmen to analyze the reasons for the unreliable narrative of the madmen as the narrative subjects. The author mainly selects Vardaman- the mentally disabled and the most 'normal' madman- Darl, for in-depth analysis.

3.1.1. Vardaman- the Mentally Disabled

People with dementia usually have congenital intellectual disabilities, manifesting "all possible negative feelings: confusion, disintegration of thought, mistake, illusion, irrationality, and non-truth"[4]. In *As I Lay Dying*, Vardaman is precisely a role with congenital dementia. Faulkner gives him the right to narrate in nine chapters, trying to reproduce the absurdity and the confusion of social and value orders through his inner monologue.

Vardaman is the child with the lowest sense of presence in the Bundren family, because of his low intelligence, he often does some incredible things. He listens carefully to his mother's voice in the coffin with Darl, and he even thinks that his mother can come out from the holes on the coffin and go into the water. After Darl was caught in a mental hospital, only Vardaman kept saying, "Darl, Darl, Darl is my brother, my brother is Darl." He uses childish language to talk about the absurdity and expresses with wild imagination. It is difficult for him to describe things like ordinary people, but he will focus on describing inner feelings and sensory experiences. He confuses his mother with a big fish and even mistakes his mother's body for a big fish, trying to use a drill to destroy the coffin to "release" her. To a large extent, in his cognition, there is no difference between humans and animals. When his mother's death coincided with the death of a fish, Vardaman, stimulated, blindly yielded to his illusion and naturally regarded his mother as the fish killed by someone. Although this behavior seems absurd, it fully reflects his deep affection for his mother and the fact that he cannot accept the reality of his mother's death.

The most common sentence in Vardaman's monologue is, "My mother is a fish." This sentence appears 8 times in the work, and is even the only content in Chapter 19. This simple but much-watched

metaphor serves as a metaphorical structure and becomes the defining statement of this novel[5]. The absurdity of such a defining statement spoken by a dementia child also highlights the indeterminacy of the narrative.

3.1.2. The Most "Normal" Madman, Darl

Darl appears most frequently in the novel. He is the leading character and the whole book is basically narrated from his perspective. Among Darl's chapters, there is one that is the only one narrated in the third person, indicating the importance of this character.

Faulkner said in his lecture at the University of Virginia in 1957, "Darl was crazy from the start. He became more and more crazy because he didn't have the ability - it was more inertia than sanity - to resist all the disasters that happened in the family"[6]. The complexity of Darl lies not only in his madness but also in the dual identity that Faulkner gave him. Darl is both a madman and a prophet. His narrative is omniscient and he is able to see the whole picture, but at the same time, his narrative is also deeply entrenched in the manic pain of searching for himself, actively resisting yet still being ignored.

As a prophet, he observes those around him closely and knows their actions intimately. He knows that his sister Addie's main purpose for accompanying the funeral is for an abortion; he knows that his brother Jewel is an illegitimate child; he would expose his sister Addie's untold secrets in front of her; and he would persistently ask Jewel, the illegitimate son, who his father is. He saw the absurdity of the funeral procession and wanted to set fire to the coffin to end the farce, but was eventually reported by Addie and forcibly sent to a mental hospital. In the misadventure of the funeral journey, Darl saw through the absurdity and irony of the journey. Although his original intention was to save his family from suffering under his mother's revenge plot, he adopted extreme methods of solving problems like a madman, leading to his being rejected by his family. If he were just an incoherent idiot like Vardaman, people would only observe him indifferently and ignore him, but Darl's extraordinary abstract thinking and prophetic talent destined him to become the object of everyone's aversion and attack.

He is like a mirror, reflecting the ugliness of anyone in front of him. As the most sober and normal person in the book, Darl's ultimate fate is to be sent to a mental hospital. This ironic arrangement is full of absurdity and ridicule, making Darl's narrative also full of indeterminacy.

3.2. The Indeterminacy of the Plot

In *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner utilizes a series of innovative and intricate narrative techniques to shatter the traditional linear narrative structure of novels, injecting a significant degree of indeterminacy into the plot development, thereby maintaining readers' high interest and contemplation throughout the reading process.

Firstly, the novel adopts a nonlinear narrative technique, fragmenting the timeline into multiple segments and continuously jumping and backtracking in the narration. This narrative approach complicates the plot development and makes it unpredictable, requiring readers to constantly adjust their perception of time to understand the connections between these segments and the overall story progression. The jumping and backtracking of time not only disrupts the linear order of time but also shatters readers' psychological expectations, enhancing the indeterminacy and polysemy of the work. For instance, Faulkner reveals the overarching conflict of the story at the beginning: Addie Bundren is terminally ill and wishes to be buried in her mother's family cemetery forty miles away. The Bundren family agrees to her request and prepares for her funeral. Throughout the storytelling, Faulkner disrupts the linear structure and temporal and spatial development of the narrative. Addie's internal monologue appears after her death, a significant temporal dislocation that brings the narrative

to a climax, revealing the protagonist's true thoughts and unraveling the mysteries surrounding this eccentric family.

Moreover, the novel employs a multi-perspective narrative style, where each narrator possesses a unique perspective and varying degrees of distance from the central event, resulting in differences in the reliability and authenticity of their narratives. This multi-perspective narrative approach enables readers to delve deeper into each character's inner world, yet it also complicates and introduces indeterminacy into the plot development. Readers must synthesize the narratives of multiple narrators to piece together the complete storyline. The interplay and collision of multiple perspectives endow the story's development with numerous variables and uncertainties. In terms of narrative frequency, "repetitive narrative" refers to the multiple recounting of a single event; while in terms of internal focalization, "multiple focalization" involves different focal characters narrating the same event from different perspectives [7]. For instance, readers initially believe that Darl's efforts to procure an abortion drug will be successful, but the disappointing result leaves them uncertain. The emotional turmoil caused by Jewel's horse being sold further obscures predictions of his next actions. Moreover, Anse's selfishness and indifference as the patriarch of the family confuse readers about his true intentions. These local conflicts and uncertainties intertwine to form the core of the entire story, maintaining readers' heightened tension and curiosity throughout the reading process, and imbuing the plot development with profound indeterminacy.

3.3. The Indeterminacy of the Theme

As I Lay Dying does not have a specific theme, but instead showcases the complexities of human nature, the ambiguities of morality, and perspectives on life and death, all of which greatly enrich the connotations of the work. However, these themes inherently possess a degree of vagueness and indeterminacy. Moreover, while the novel delves into these themes, it refrains from offering definitive answers or conclusions, leaving room for readers to discover their own understanding.

Firstly, Faulkner reveals the multifaceted complexities of human nature through the inner monologues of the Bundren family. Each family member harbors their own desires, aspirations, and fears, and their actions and choices are often influenced by multiple factors rather than a single motive. For instance, while Anse Bundren appears to act out of a sense of duty to his wife and family, in reality, he longs to escape from his wife Addie's control and pursue a new life for himself. Additionally, even though Addie has passed away, her influence on the family remains pervasive, and her death becomes the catalyst for their actions, highlighting the profound complexities of human nature. Furthermore, the family members often exhibit both selfish and altruistic tendencies when faced with adversity. They strive to protect their own interests while also feeling a sense of responsibility towards their family. This complexity adds a layer of indeterminacy to their actions and choices, making it more challenging for readers to comprehend and interpret the novel's themes.

At the same time, the actions of the characters in the novel are often difficult to evaluate using traditional moral standards. For example, while Anse Bundren's actions may seem selfish, his commitment to his wife and sense of responsibility towards his family also reflect a certain moral value. Similarly, while Addie's death may be a relief, her existence had a complex impact on the family, including both positive and negative aspects.

Faulkner's exploration of views on life and death also embodies the indeterminacy of the themes. Addie's death serves as both a liberation and a trigger for the family's conflicts. It complicates and intensifies the relationships among family members, while also provoking their reflections on life, death, fate, and the meaning of life. Life and death are not simply a binary opposition; rather, they intermingle and influence each other. Death is not the end of life, but an essential part of the life process. Facing death allows people to gain a deeper understanding of the fragility and preciousness of life, and to cherish their current life and relationships even more.

4. Immanence Embodied in *As I Lay Dying*

Postmodernism has a tendency of deconstruction, and in Hassan's theory of postmodernism, immanence, as another essential feature, demonstrates the power of reconstruction. The purpose of postmodernism is not to expel literary art, but to restore it to its rightful place. Deconstruction helps to break down modernism's belief in the classics, shattering the facade and inherent restraint of modern discourse. "Immanence" is the source of power to rebuild oneself, re-observe the world and society, reflecting the inherent initiative and creativity of human beings in the face of indeterminacy, and manifesting a constructive trend with creative significance.

Although the novel *As I Lay Dying* is an important member of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, its theme deviates significantly from other members: it hardly touches upon slavery, race relations, family history, war, and other topics that Faulkner was passionate about. There seems to be no invasion or influence of industrial civilization in the text, nor does it feel the oppression of historical burdens [8]. The Bundren family in the novel is more like a group of primitive mountain people wandering in the wilderness, and their funeral journey can be called "Odyssey". This funeral journey is not only the real-life experience of the Bundren family as individuals, but also their exploration and pioneering of their own and each other's inner world. Faulkner centered the work around inner monologues and employed a horizontal stream of consciousness, not only to examine and reveal the ugliness, darkness, and evil in human nature in the spiritual wilderness but also to reveal the immortal glow emanating from the complexity of these human natures, reflecting a firm belief in the ultimate ability of humans to rebuild themselves.

4.1. The Stream of Consciousness

The most significant difference between stream-of-consciousness novels and other types of novels lies in their syntactic and stylistic characteristics. Stream-of-consciousness novels are characterized by irrationality and unconsciousness, de-emphasizing plot development and using rich and free associations to interpret the stories the authors want to express, presenting readers with a sense of vagueness and confusion.

In Jewel's sole monologue, he repeatedly uses the same phrases, even omitting punctuation, reflecting his inner turmoil and struggle. With an awkward identity and a misunderstood fate, yet a proud personality, he often feels perplexed and unable to express himself in normal language. Dewey Dell also employs long and complex sentences with a mess of ideas, attempting to conceal straightforward facts. In Chapter 30, Faulkner even grants her several hundred words of uninterrupted narrative without any punctuation. Vardaman's narrative best embodies the language's "tendency to make the human mind adapt to all reality as it is in itself" [9].

He lives in a world defined by his own creations, and his chaotic language even possesses the ability to "summarize itself in symbols, intervene in nature more and more, react on itself by abstraction, and thus become more and more intensely and directly its own environment"[9]. He has given definitional language such as "My mother is a fish," and has also said, "He killed her. He killed her." As a child with dementia, Vardaman's words are not reliable, but often it is children who speak the truth bluntly.

Faulkner's stream-of-consciousness technique perfectly embodies the power of "immanence." Through the first-person narratives of different characters, he directly conveys the feelings, desires, and contradictions within each character's inner world. This direct portrayal of the inner world unconsciously shapes the appearance of the world, allowing readers to gain a deeper understanding of the characters' inner drives and feel their inner creativity.

4.2. The Mission Formula and The Inner Power of Characters

Yoknapatawpha is a mythological world created by Faulkner based on his hometown, which first appeared in his third novel "Sartoris". Meletinsky believes that the revival of myth in the 20th century literature is mainly due to two reasons. First, the crisis of the capitalist civilization has forced people to resort to the common psychological and metaphysical origins of mankind, striving to find a way out that transcends social-historical and space-time limitations. Second, myth, due to its inherent symbolic nature, is suitable for expressing the eternal patterns of individual and social behavior as well as some basic laws in humanity and nature [10]. Faulkner once said, "Since 'Sartoris', I have found that my own postage stamp-sized piece of land is worth writing about, and I will never exhaust it in my lifetime. By turning reality into a virtual world, I can unleash my talent. ... So, I created a world that belongs to me."

In *As I Lay Dying*, the main characters of the novel, the Bundren family, are all anti-heroic figures: Anse cannot sweat; Addie dies in misery; the eldest son Cash can only work in a wooden way; the second son Darl is incompatible with the environment and eventually enters a mental hospital; the third son Jewel is the son of his mother and a lover, with a bad temper and easy to anger; the daughter Dewey Dell is unmarried and pregnant, and is eventually cheated out of her money for an abortion; the youngest son Vardaman is mentally impaired. However, it is these anti-heroic figures that demonstrate a sense of mission without hesitation. They accept their mission, endure various tests, and ultimately complete their mission. Driven by fate or innate nature, the protagonist embarks on a journey with a mission, enduring various rigorous tests (such as floods, fires, and death) and ultimately fulfilling his mission. In the novel, Jewel courageously rescued the coffin from the floodwaters and blazing fires twice, demonstrating his bravery and self-sacrificing spirit. Meanwhile, Cash's loyalty to his mother, his resilience and endurance in bearing pain, as well as Dewey Dell's attentive care for Cash and Vardaman, were all noteworthy. Even the usually indolent and trivial Anse seemed particularly determined, determined to fulfill his promise to his wife and carry on the journey despite all natural and human obstacles.

Faulkner utilizes these anti-heroic characters and the setting of mission patterns to express his yearning for ideals through untraditional methods, revealing that humans will never stop thinking about their future and interests under objective circumstances, reflecting the immanence characteristics of postmodernism.

5. Conclusion

William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, as a significant work within his "Yoknapatawpha Saga," not only demonstrates Faulkner's unique narrative style and profound insights into human nature and social changes but also encapsulates multiple elements of postmodernism. Through the exploration of indeterminacy and immanence, we can glimpse how Faulkner integrates these core characteristics of postmodernism into his narrative art, crafting a literary world that is both realistic and surreal, concrete and ambiguous.

In *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner masterfully employs indeterminacy as a driving force for narrative and plot development. Through multiple perspectives of different characters, readers are able to observe the multifaceted aspects of the same event from fragmented narratives, thereby provoking profound reflections on authenticity and objectivity. Meanwhile, the themes in the novel also exhibit a sense of indeterminacy, transcending traditional moral judgments and value systems, forcing readers to confront their own subjectivity and biases in the interpretation process. This indeterminacy not only enriches the novel's connotation but also gives it broader practical significance and profound philosophical contemplation.

Immanence in *As I Lay Dying* manifests as Faulkner's profound exploration of the inner world of characters and the subjective creativity of these anti-heroic figures towards fate and the environment. Through techniques such as stream of consciousness and inner monologue, Faulkner successfully integrates the characters' inner world with the external world, allowing readers to sense every emotional fluctuation and thought leap within the characters. This immanence not only renders the characters more realistic and complex but also enhances the novel's appeal, highlighting the inherent resilience of humanity.

In conclusion, as a novel with postmodernist elements, *As I Lay Dying* offers a valuable window for people to understand and study postmodernist literature through its unique narrative style, profound thematic exploration, and exquisite artistic techniques. Through the exploration of indeterminacy and immanence, Faulkner not only successfully constructs a complex and multidimensional literary world but also provides us with a novel way of thinking and aesthetic experience. Therefore, *As I Lay Dying* is not only the pinnacle of Faulkner's literary creation but also an important work in the history of postmodernist literature.

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