

Le sentier obscur: A Consideration of Heroism
And Isolation in André Malraux's La condition humaine
And William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying

An Honors Thesis

by

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Purpose of Thesis

An interesting treatment of the idea of heroism is found in both André Malraux's La condition humaine and in William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying. These novels do not consider the hero in conventional terms; rather, La condition humaine and As I Lay Dying are treatments of what it means to be heroic. For both Malraux and Faulkner, strength is seen in the persistence of character through suffering. The survival of this suffering leads to a transcendent existential self-understanding which composes both the Faulknerian and Malrauvian hero. Darl (from As I Lay Dying) and Tchen (from La condition humaine) exhibit these characteristics in their understanding of life and death. After an introduction to Faulkner, Malraux, and these novels' heroes, Darl and Tchen, a character study of each of these two characters is presented. After this, a brief discussion of solitude concludes the thesis. A selected bibliography is also included to aid those who wish to read more about this subject.

Connaissance de soi:

William Faulkner and André Malraux; Darl and Tchen

William Faulkner and André Malraux were born within four years of one another at the turn of the twentieth century, making them the sons of new writing, new warfare, and new psychology. Certainly, their work had to have been influenced by such a world--a breeding ground for their eventual blossoming, a nascent palate for their written coups de pinceaux. It was in this manner that both Faulkner and Malraux interpreted the world in their writings. Escaping the bonds of the naturalist grip of the world while not wholly subscribing to the rise in modernism, Faulkner and Malraux created novels which were as philosophically important as they were earthly. They allowed their characters to define themselves in their own terms without totally refuting the effect of their immediate environment. In this way, both Faulkner and Malraux might be seen in terms of their creation of a world of duality--a perfunctory earth full of people with their own agendas.

Parity and disparity, ease and disease, finality and eternity are all realized in the works of both William Faulkner and André Malraux. Indeed, juxtaposed antitheses inform the work of these men who lived and wrote in a world which spawned such antipathetic ideologies as Bolshevism and Nazism. In this way, these men present realities of people for whom the world must seem unreal. Like our own lives, the characters of William Faulkner and André Malraux are filled with joy and pain, understanding and incomprehension, empathy and belligerence.

Certainly, this style cannot be overstated.

One of the most important aspects in both Faulkner's As I Lay Dying and André Malraux's La condition humaine is the idea of heroism. However, these authors propagate this ancient ideal through their examination of it. For them, nobility of character, courage, and achievement are assumed in the idea of the hero; instead, Faulkner and Malraux wish to discover the dynamics of what it takes to become a hero and maintain a heroic position. For them, a pathei mathos--the suffering which leads to understanding--is the essence of the hero. It is through strength of character that Darl (from As I Lay Dying) and Tchen (from La condition humaine) survive and transcend the suffering which is placed upon them by the worlds surrounding them. Faulkner and Malraux imply that their ability to feel and to interpret the trials that they endure gives them an existential self-understanding sets them apart from their companions.

Death and life are the prevailing subjects within both of these novels. It is finally the understanding and acceptance of death that makes a man heroic. And through this knowledge, he is able to live; thus, heroism equals life insofar as it assumes comprehension of death. Both Darl and Tchen know and accept death and are able to live more fully.

Although these novels contain many similar ideas, they are separated by perspective. But, through this perspective difference, a common feeling of paradox pervades these stories. Thus, one finds the idea of stasis in making the trip to Jackson

in As I Lay Dying; conversely, one finds the feeling of action blossoming in the imprisoning city of Shanghai in La condition humaine. Also, each of the major images within the novels has its antithesis: sleep in As I Lay Dying is juxtaposed with the action of the journey, while silence in La condition humaine is always broken by the blaring siren of war. It must then be conjectured that although the novelistic methodologies employed in these two books is different, even antithetical, this is simply the individual intention of both Malraux and Faulkner; therefore, through the idea of paradox, eventually leading to how death relates to life, these two novels are comparable. And, with character analyses of the heroes from each of these novels, these ideas become apparent.

Darl

In William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, a tension is built within the entire Bundren family stemming from Addie's death. In Elizabeth Hayes' essay, "Tension Between Darl and Jewel," she states that "As I Lay Dying is fraught with tension, as one would expect in a novel whose chief action is a coöperative group effort performed . . . by people who don't understand or like one another very much" (Hayes 49). By having a family which is largely composed of people with nothing in common who must succeed in a common goal, Faulkner allows the reader to see characters in terms of one another's true selves. Also, by the method of the interior monologue, the characters are allowed to comment on the action which is occurring around them; thus, the text sorts itself out in terms of those characters who are heroic and those who are less noble. Awareness of how language shapes reality is also an important feature of As I Lay Dying, creating much of the tension within the novel. The reader must interpret what is happening just as the speakers do--it is also important that the reader understands how to interpret the speaker's credibility. Finally, it is Darl who stands above the rest of his family in terms understanding and nobility; however, without his brother Jewel, Darl would not have the sounding board needed to discover his identity in a world which to him does not make much sense.

The first chapter of the novel is "Darl," and his first word is "Jewel" (3). Darl's interest in his brother is obvious

in that first chapter concerned mainly with a comparison between Jewel and himself. Darl comments on his brother's physical superiority in height, saying, "although I am fifteen feet ahead of him, anyone watching us from the cotton-house can see Jewel's frayed and broken straw hat a full head above my own" (3).

As these two men approach the cotton-house, Darl decides to follow the path that circumscribes the cotton-house, while Jewel keeps his steps straight and passes directly through the house. This action allows Jewel to take the lead in the sort of follow-the-leader game that Darl and himself are playing. This minor action is an opening symbol of the entire novel; for, although Darl continues to follow the already worn path of his family, he will eventually fall to insanity while Jewel's straight-backed effort will succeed in carrying his mother to her Jackson grave.

It is also important to note that in this first chapter, the real subject of the novel, Addie's death, is barely approached by Darl, and then only near the end. Elizabeth Hayes points out that, "although their mother is dying, Darl does not even mention that fact until the close of the monologue, and then only obliquely ('Addie Bundren could not want a better . . . box to lie in')" (Hayes 51, Faulkner 5). In fact, Darl's emphasis on Jewel is seen in eleven of his nineteen monologues from the opening; therefore, a scene only begins for Darl when Jewel is present (Hayes 51).

Darl's insistence on closely following the actions and physical attributes of Jewel is another instance of Darl's near infatuation with his brother. According to Walter K. Everett,

Darl's "vision often focuses narrowly upon concrete details in a way in which the vision of others does not"; yet, his focus only occurs upon his environmental descriptions and those of Jewel (Everett 8). Seeing Jewel's sunburned neck, Darl closely notes that "the back of his neck is trimmed close, with a white line between hair and sunburn like a joint of white bone" (Faulkner 39).

Often, Darl ends his chapters with scenes of Jewel, even when the chapter's obvious conclusion has already occurred. For example, when Cash's leg is broken, the chapter could easily end with Cash's statement, "Ay, I'm obliged" (209). However, Darl does not believe this to be the finalization of the action, which comprises the chapter. The end of the chapter to Darl is when the Bundrens all turn to "watch [Jewel] . . . coming up the road behind" them (209). In fact, the surprise return of Jewel is not surprising at all to Darl, and he ends the chapter in a self-assured tone.

Commonly in As I Lay Dying, the narrators' actions are tangential to the plot of their own monologues. This technique is utilized only during action sequences. And, although much of the action in the chapters seriously affects those about whom are being spoken, it is often the case that the narrators relate those scenes of serious emotional importance to themselves. For example, Dewey Dell relates her affair with Lefe, but it is the druggist and the clerk who relate her attempts to purchase abortive drugs. Darl is therefore shown as both a conscious speaker and a conscious thinker--relating

the actions of others as well as giving insight to his own emotional inquiries. Darl's super-sensitivity is hereby derived, and his relationship with Jewel is carried onto another level.

Interestingly, Darl often refuses to use Jewel's proper name when Jewel himself is not being directly addressed in these first sentences of the chapters. For example, in the opening of the fifth chapter, Darl begins, "we watch him come around the corner . . . ," or at the beginning of the tenth chapter where he states, "he has been to town this week . . . " (16, 39, emphasis added). The lack of antecedents when Darl speaks of Jewel is an example of Faulkner's invention of what Hayes calls "special signs" that subvert "textual conventions" (Hayes 53). The reader can only assume that when no antecedent is given to a "him" or "he," Darl is speaking of his brother Jewel, especially since Darl is normally careful to specify about whom he is speaking. This technique intensifies the reader's understanding of the pre-occupation Darl has with his brother, Jewel.

The lack of antecedents is not a phenomenon confined only to the beginnings of Darl's chapters. In fact, Jewel's name is rarely used when he is not being spoken to or about within Darl's monologues which, in effect, deifies him--Hebrews will not say Jehovah, the Cheyenne will never use their real names. The characters who do speak his name do so reverently, perhaps fearing his wrath. In fact, Vardaman and Cash are the only two characters who use Jewel's name at least partially lovingly, as though he were a human being. And, Cora Tull remains the only character to use Jewel's name to refute his strength of

character. Cora's opinion is a bit paradoxical, though, for she is on one hand the most sophisticated and articulate speaker (who is living or sane); however, on the other hand, she is comic and pathetic in her religious convictions. Her sophistication in speech might be a result of her at one time having been a school teacher; yet, the trust that might be gleaned from her well-structured speech patterns is perhaps usurped and certainly over-powered by her comic religious fervor.

This portrayal of Cora's lack of trustworthiness further strengthens Jewel's charisma by supplanting her authority of character judgement. Actually, Cora becomes Addie's foil. Both Addie and Cora were at one time school teachers. Another example is that although both women held some sort of spiritual faith, Addie has less a religion of structure than Cora, and more a religion of practicality (Everett 10). Cora's religion, which is the subject of comic comment by her husband, Vernon, instills respect for Addie's less stringent religiosity. Also, in opposition to Addie's feelings for Jewel, Cora believes Darl to be the truly loving son and "condemns Anse and Jewel for being avaricious and forcing Darl from his mother's deathbed" (Everett 10). Darl is the one, though, who wished to pull Jewel from Addie's deathbed, and in some ways this solidifies the understanding that Jewel was the truly loving son.

Jewel's strength can be seen through Faulkner's underlining Darl's thought patterns concerning Jewel by the use of italics. In fact, as Hayes points out, "most of the italicized passages concerning Jewel occur in Darl's sections" (Hayes 54). Darl

is hyper-conscious of Addie's love for Jewel, and during the deathbed scene, he sometimes flashes to the scene where he and Jewel actually are through italics; thereby, Darl brings (at least in his mind) Jewel and himself to Addie's deathbed. These italics are also perhaps symbolic of the tension unintentionally created by Addie between these two brothers--Darl in constant want for Addie's attention and his all too keen knowledge that Jewel did not have to work for it (thus Jewel's name). By bringing himself and Jewel mentally there, he somehow believes that Addie will love him wholly as well.

The italics are also skillfully used in the scene after Cash's injury when Jewel is putting his horse in the barn. Darl can no longer see what Jewel is doing, but he projects a very sensual scene between Jewel and his beloved horse. Here, Darl's thoughts are in standard typeface until they turn to Jewel where they become italicized (note that all pronouns have antecedents, except Jewel's): "after Armstid gave pa a drink, he felt better, and when we went in to see about Cash he hadn't come in with us" (Faulkner 182).

Jewel's horse, his only "real" prized possession, reflects a fulcrum within As I Lay Dying on two levels: true to Faulkner's style, it is Darl who relates the story of Jewel and his horse, and symbolically, it is also the only unifying force in the brothers' lives. It would be impossible for Jewel to relate the somewhat mystical relationship he has with his horse; therefore, Darl, who has a sort of prescience and the gift of focusing narrowly upon concrete details, is the perfect

choice for the telling of this passage. Darl's super-sensitivity for the world can reveal feelings for his brother Jewel in Faulkner's sought "tour de force" fashion. Again, this follows Faulkner's use of a narrator to tell a story that is involved with another character. Generally, subjects which are related in this way are some of the most substantial--especially concerning the dynamic between characters; therefore, this scene between Jewel and his horse allows a subtle interpretation of Darl's infatuation with Jewel on yet another level.

The symbol of the horse is also used to show the care shared between Jewel and Addie, and to intensify the jealousy Darl feels toward his brother in that regard, as well as acting as a catalyst through which they can relate to one another. The horse that he so cares for but is taken and sold by his father, Anse, is paralleled with his mother, Addie, whom Jewel loves very much but is easily replaced at the end of the novel by Anse's wife-to-be. Addie's obvious favor towards Jewel haunts not only Darl, but Anse as well, emphasizing the validity of Darl's jealousy. In fact, it might be Anse's jealousy toward Jewel that makes him sell the horse, which Anse calls "a deliberate flouting of her and me" (Faulkner 101). Darl calls Jewel "lean as a racehorse" and is therefore able to say on more than one occasion that Jewel's mother is a horse (218; 95, etc.). Also, Darl questions his own life's existential viability through this mother/horse comparison: "I cannot love my mother because I have no mother. Jewel's mother is a horse" (95, emphasis added).

any word that exists is and the words that are not present are what Darl might have called "not-is" (Nielsen 33). Darl can only define his existence in terms of Jewel; and in turn, Jewel is defined in terms of Addie, who exists "either because Jewel is conscious of her or because she gave Jewel life" (Hayes 56).

The night of Addie's death, Darl questions his own existence and comes to an almost Cartesian assertion that, "I am is" (Faulkner 81). Sleep, which becomes a major image within the novel is the catalyst for this existential questioning:

. . . before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I don't know what I am. I don't know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep because he is not what he is and he is what he is not . . . [O]nly the wind and the rain shape [the wagon] to Jewel and me, that are not asleep. And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are was, it is not. Yet the wagon is, because when the wagon is was, Addie Bundren will not be. And Jewel is, so Addie Bundren must be. And then I must be . . . I am is. (80-81)

The connection between existence and consciousness here shows Darl's theory that he must be made to exist by his brother Jewel in much the same way that since Jewel keeps Addie alive (even in death), he is dependent on the response that tells him he

is alive. Darl's mind is left shuffling like a person trying to think of the next face to make at the camera in a carnival's photograph booth. Jewel is the only means left to Darl to sooth his maelstrom-mind. Hayes calls this probing a "futile effort to establish order and meaning" in Darl's world (Hayes 57).

Another affirmation of Darl's epistemology of life concerns the relationship between the validity and reality of ideas compared with unviable and unreal notions achieved through either the recognition or refusal of those ideas. When seen, however, it is Darl who understands this ontology and wishes to make his sister, Dewey Dell, recognize it as well. She refuses to tell anyone that she is pregnant and wishes to go to Jackson not for Addie's burial but for an abortion. Her refusal of admittance and her somewhat selfish motives for the journey are inpalatable characteristics to Darl. He then tries to explain to her that she does not believe her situation to be real, saying, "the reason [Dewey Dell] will not say it is, when [she] says it, even to [herself], [she] will know it is true" (40).

The naming becomes an important premise in a novel that is not what it seems: getting Addie Bundren to Jackson means something different to everyone involved. But to Darl, this catalyst gives him reason to sort out what it means to live and to die, what it means to have the burden of thought. Every character in the novel is set against Darl by his own words, by other characters comparisons to others or themselves, and by the reader who is left to sort out the motives of everyone,

including Addie. To decide what it means to be "is" to Faulkner is what it means to be alive. Through Darl, an acute knowledge is gained on the effects of life, including those that are not palpable. In effect, Darl sacrifices himself to the audience and his family alike (assuming they are paying attention or are able to surpass their own selfish agendas) by bearing the cross of mental instability in order to gain higher consciousness. This is the essence of the hero in As I Lay Dying.

Tchen

Tchen is one of Malraux's heroes in La condition humaine. Perhaps in order to present a more well-rounded picture of what heroism means, this novel has several men who could well be considered heroic; but, unlike Kyo Gisors or le Baron de Clappique who begin to understand themselves and their actions in terms of other people, Tchen defines his own actions--both for himself and for others--in terms of himself.

The first scene in which the reader is introduced to Tchen is the first scene of the novel. In this first chapter, Tchen is faced with the problem of killing a man for the first time. Interestingly, though, he is named from the beginning of the novel as an assassin. Through this catalyst, Malraux imposes upon Tchen a role which he must interpret and even live up to. Like the mosquito net that surrounds his victim at the beginning of the novel, Tchen's world (and more largely, the world of the novel) is one which is barely translucent, but one whose opacity is reliant upon the viewer's concentration. Tchen, a man whose self-reliance is well defined, has the cognitive power to understand and decipher his place in the cloudy world.

Old Gisors, Kyo's father, plays an important role for Tchen as well. Once Tchen's teacher, Old Gisors is a man who knows that Tchen must discover his own path. Gisors himself has a bit of a gloomy outlook concerning the world, but one which is well thought. On waiting for Tchen to visit him for the first time in the novel, Old Gisors thinks to himself that "We

are nothing. We live for the State in the present, for the order of the dead through the centuries" (Malraux 55). Indeed, this is close to Tchen's own philosophy, one which surrounds him and defines his actions. When speaking with Old Gisors, Tchen tells him that, "I'm terribly alone" (56). Gisors seems a bit troubled about this, but eventually begins "to feel, not without melancholy, the isolation that Tschen was speaking of" (59). Both of them, two Chinamen in a sweep of proto-French existentialism, realize that life had no meaning.

Tchen at first relies on politics to give "meaning to his solitude," but eventually realizes that his life must be discovered by himself to be worthwhile, meaningless and lonely though it may be. Like Tchen's politics, Baron de Clappique (commonly referred to as simply Clappique) defines his life in more worldly terms. He is an antique collector and seller; he is a drunk and denier of life. In La condition humaine, Clappique is not viewed as a hero until the end of the novel when he altruistically gives up his suicide pill for two other men thus having to wait for a more severe and torturous death; instead, Clappique plays foil to Tschen in many ways throughout the novel, especially in terms of how others view him. In this way, Malraux underlines the effect of self-projection. Instead of exuding control and austere posturing, Clappique suffers from exorcising control and wrenching posturing from every aspect of his life. This confounds Kyo, but his father Old Gisors is a wise man who understands Clappique's actions. Thus, he becomes Tschen's foil: Clappique is a man whose "mythomania

is a means of denying life . . . and not of forgetting" (40). Tchen, on the other hand, is quite aware of his solitude and uses this affliction in his favor.

The effect of solitude is not quite as heavily laden in the life of Kyo Gisors. According to James W. Greenlee in Malraux's Heroes and History, it is argued that it is Kyo Gisors' story, not Tchen's which is being told in La condition humaine; however, Kyo simply acts as a central figure to the story holding together the string of relations between people (Greenlee 59). Indeed, Kyo is the leader of the Shanghai uprising of 1927 related in La condition humaine, but this does not imply his heroism. In fact, Kyo seems more often haunted by happenings over which he has absolutely no control. Unlike Tchen, Kyo's life is hampered by the actions of others, exemplified by his large political role and his marriage to May.

Unlike Clappique, Kyo plays a central role in the action of La condition humaine; therefore, his impact on how Tchen is viewed throughout the novel is a serious consideration. In Greenlee's book, he states that the hero "is unable to make the conquests that, in themselves, make a single life important" (Greenlee 59). With this in mind, Tchen's decision to be an assassin--a ruthless killer--is one which is an important distinction between himself and Kyo. Much like Darl uses Jewel as a sounding board for his own actions and reactions, Tchen must see Kyo as "other." Indeed, in our terms, Tchen has much to be envious of concerning Kyo: not only does Kyo know his father, but also, both Tchen and he respect Old Gisors as sage;

not only is Kyo powerful, but also well-viewed by others. Perhaps, though, it is in this way that Malraux indicts the person who defines himself in terms of others. It is Tchen who teaches Old Gisors the impact of silence; it is Tchen who works alone for essentially the same cause as Kyo.

It is precisely working alone which makes Tchen's role in the novel the role of the hero.

James W. Greenlee states that "[La condition humaine] could hardly have accommodated a hero whose efforts . . . seemed to augur success" (Greenlee 62). However, small successes which define one's life seem to be both allowed and enjoyed. These times in the novel inform the life of Tchen insofar as they interpret for him the role that he should play as a man. This is crucial, for if he allows himself to interpret these scenes as mere triumphs, he may fall prey to the grips of self-satisfaction; or, if he disregards these scenes, he may find himself without the ability to discover any truth at all. Therefore, Tchen must discover his solitude in a new way--one which is both accepting of success, but one which makes him realize that those successes are his alone in a silent world.

It is reality which is most elusive. The world of the Chinese revolution is a prison. Perhaps this is why different characters, including Chiang Kai-Shek, are trying to liberate themselves from this world that is ultimately silent. In fact, silence itself becomes a major image within the novel, and one that is juxtaposed with freedom itself. Kyo states that, "Freedom is not an exchange--it is freedom" (Malraux 208).

This is immediately followed by a silence between himself and his wife, a person who should be to him the closest of all other people in the world (208). James L. Kastely in his essay entitled "Revolution and Isolation in La condition humaine" states that, "absence might be expected in a world that denies people dignity, for part of the way that alienation would manifest itself would be in the breakdown of relationships" (Kastely 458). Obviously, this relates to Tchen's inability to make any real connections to his horrific world, including those people who surround him.

Out of Tchen's knowledge of self stems a deathwish. Himself an executioner, he decides that a person "can't do better than to make up [his] mind to die" (Malraux 193). This gives Tchen's life, like no one else's in the novel, a feeling of authenticity. His is set free by the idea of death. And, although he himself does not aspire to commit suicide, he will sacrifice himself (albeit mistakenly) under the car of Chiang Kai-Shek to finish what he and his erstwhile comrades had started. And he is ready. Kastely postulates that Tchen's attempt at assassinating Chiang Kai-Shek--and thus himself--is one which shows that, "the political consequences are subordinate to the experiential need for a feeling of complete self-possession" (Kastely 459). This self-possession is his acceptance of his solitude coupled with the knowledge that he must also live somewhat, simply because others count on him. Unlike Kastely's argument that this action seeks "to transcend a human condition that is defined and limited by temporality and solitude," Gisors and Tchen alike believe

that solitude is "a desolation that joined the divine, while at the same time the wave of serenity that gently covered the depths of death widened to infinity" (Malraux 69).

It is thus that Tchen is able to see clearly. Malraux has given Tchen the ability to see. He is self-assured enough to watch the world around him quite closely, perhaps especially in the face of death. As he looks through the window of a building engulfed in flames, he notes that, "opposite, closed shops, narrow windows commanding the exit from the station; above, the rotten curled-up roofs of Chinese houses, and the infinite calm of the gray sky now no longer streaked with smoke of the intimate low sky on the empty street" (96). Tchen is able to see like no other character in the novel, and for this reason, he dies with happiness in his solitude.

Conclusion: Le sentier obsur

Writer Octavio Paz states in his book The Labyrinth of Solitude that, "All men, at some moment in their lives, fell themselves to be alone" (Paz 195). Certainly, for both William Faulkner and André Malraux this was a true statement; however, for these writers, it is the grappling with and subduction of this feeling that leads to a real understanding of a human's condition. Although this might allude to a certain sort of solipscism, Faulkner and Malraux were both aware of the reality of other creatures' viabilities. Indeed, Paz's idea that "solitude is the profoundest fact of teh human condition" would relate a hyper-awareness of the prolific number of other living humans; for him as well as Faulkner and Malraux, this sensibility would be meaningless without the knowledge that next door people are washing their dishes. In Faulkner's As I Lay Dying and Malraux's La condition humaine, to harness this aspect of human nature--isolation--is to be a hero. The solitary aspect of humankind is related in these novels in both language usage and character presentation.

The discovery that death is not only emminent, but also freeing allows both of these characters to break their coccoons, exhibiting a burgeoning chrysalis into heroism. Although each of these characters achieve this in disparate ways, their result is the same. Tchen symbolically breaks the opaque mosquito net in order to define himself and see more clearly; Darl looks into a bucket to see infinity and thus his "being." Both of

these characters embrace death in order to live more fully. Gail L. Mortimer calls Faulkner's view of the body "a shell or container for the person's essence" (Mortimer 88). For Malraux, the body is defined by its representation to others. Through this catalyst, both writers emphasize that in a living being, there is room for potential--how can Darl "be" if Addie is "not-is"; how can a phonograph tell Kyo's story if his voice does not sound the same? The answer is simple: there is no answer.

The worlds of William Faulkner and André Malraux also differ. According to Lynn Gartrell Levins, As I Lay Dying is a journey similar to that of the mythical hero's procession through Hades. She states that, this image "evokes the medieval soul's pilgrimage toward redemption and calls forth such works as The Divine Comedy, Piers Plowman, and Pilgrim's Progress"; yet, one must not overlook too hastily Darl's notes of sulphuric smells and his apocalyptic prophesy to Jewel upon the death of their mother, where "The sun, an hour above the horizon, is poised like a bloody egg upon a crest of thunderheads; the light has turned copper: in the eye portentous, in the nose sulphurous, smelling of lightning" (Levins 98, 99; Faulkner 40).

Unlike Faulkner's biblical and mythical imagery coupled with implications concerning the enormity of his world, Malraux employs images of confines like prisons and closed rooms to describe the claustrophobic nature of the tenebrific revolutionary China. However, despite the conflicting imagery, the result is similar: the protagonist must discover the alienated nature

of his existence in order to be defined as a hero. Also, though, to both Faulkner and Malraux, the hero must discover this isolation in relation to the existence of others. In La condition humaine, immediately before his death, Tchen wonders if he killed Chiang Kai-Shek only to be followed by "the most terrific effort of his life," which ended in his own death (Malraux 246). Similarly, Darl is the truth-sayer of As I Lay Dying, only to be lost to madness. The novel ends on a cyclical note with Anse's marriage to another woman, perhaps leaving the also sensitive Vardaman to meet a similar fate. Violet M. Horvath notes in her book, André Malraux: The Human Adventure, that the structure of La condition humaine is "also cyclic in that the novel is divided into seven parts, which together with tone--a progression from darkness and anguish at the beginning to light and a glimmer of hope at the end--suggest an analogy with the seven-day biblical cycle of creation" (Horvath 195). Faulkner and Malraux both share a similar view of the fate of man, but it is their similar theme of paradox and isolation which firmly cements their consistent view of heroism.

Selected Bibliography and Works Cited

Certainly this work, like all works, is not wholly complete insofar as one must realize that more work need be done in the area of both Faulknerian and Malrauvian comparative studies. The contemporary aspect of their writing coupled with a keen simialrity in theme speaks to a post-naturalist and quasi-modernist vein. On this note, I submit a too short selected bibliography to address questions of theme, style, and biography for those interested in expounding upon this work and the work of early twentieth century Franco-American comparative literature. All citations of La condition humaine are from Haakon M. Chevalier's translation.

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