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Investigating the (Non-)being: A Spectral Reading of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*

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Abstract

This paper offers a spectral reading of the representation of Addie Bundren in William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying* (1930). Spectral Criticism considers literature to be an uncanny affair and reading to be a resurrected, terrifying yet desired communication with the dead. It also approaches a text as "an orphan" which has a connection to its parents but cannot be traced back to them properly. It finds out the return of suppressed past and focuses on the in-accessibilities of getting the complete meaning of a text. Premised on the aforementioned modes of reading, this paper intends to understand how Addie's spectre is represented in the novel, to inquire into the potential of this character as a spectre, and also looks to illustrate the cryptic nature of Addie's monologue. A qualitative content analysis method is adopted to inquire into the spectral discourses in the narrative. The findings show that this narrative manifests the non-present presence to question the hierarchy between life and death; father and mother; and presence and absence. This paper suggests that the spectre of Addie works as a driving force to subvert the social constructions of binary and creates a situation suitable for deconstructive reading.

Keywords: *As I Lay Dying*, deconstruction, spectral criticism, the uncanny, William Faulkner

1. Introduction

The plot of William Faulkner's southern Gothic novel *As I Lay Dying* revolves around Addie Bundren's passing and the Bundren family's following journey with the body of the deceased. Dead Addie and her uncanny presence in the novel are the tropes that destabilize both the characters and the readers. This paper takes on the practice of research through a spectral perspective. It offers a spectral reading of Addie's representation in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. First, it inquires into the uncanny nature of Addie's representation and seeks to understand why Addie returns as a spectre. Second, it looks to trace its impact on the characters and the readers. Third, it demonstrates how the spectral representation of Addie offers to destabilize several fixed hierarchies like word over womb; life over death; presence over absence; male over female, and so on. The paper proposes that all the fixed hierarchal positions are always under the threat of deconstruction, and the spectre of the text offers to be the

haunting force that makes the environment suitable for deconstruction. The paper proposes that the death of Addie is the beginning of her empowerment and she remains a non-present presence even at the end.

Spectral criticism, according to David Punter, “takes us into the shadowy realm that lies beyond the word” (Punter, 2002, p. 267). William Faulkner in his novel *As I Lay Dying* opens up that realm not only by the spectral presence of Addie but also by questioning the centrality of words in understanding all physical and metaphysical phenomena. This connection suggests that a spectral reading is necessary for a better understanding of the discourses that the novel present. This research contributes to understanding how the trope of spectre is used to open up several discursive layers of this novel.

2. Method

The paper takes on the form of library research. Printed books, journals, and online sites are used to gather data for this research. A qualitative discourse analysis is adopted to investigate how Addie is portrayed in *As I Lay Dying*. The research bases its arguments on Spectral Criticism alongside the notion of the Uncanny. It also utilizes theories like deconstruction, hauntology, and cryponymy.

2.1 Operational Definitions:

As the focus of this paper is on the spectral reading of Addie’s representation in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* and the potential of Addie as a spectre in destabilizing hierarchal notion, the first part of this chapter concentrates on elaborating the concepts (i.e. spectralities, textualities, secret and crypt) that are necessary for understanding the paper. This chapter reviews any cultural, political, and philosophical aspects attached to these concepts.

2.1.1 Spectralities

The notion ‘spectral’ is very difficult to define. It is connected to ‘ghostly’ affairs in critical theory. Ghost has been an essential topos in understanding literature which is given focus by Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle (2004),

Ghosts are paradoxical because they are both intrinsic to humanity, genuinely human, and a denial or disruption of humanity, the essence of the inhuman. And we suggest that this scandal of the ghost, and its contradiction, is imprinted in diverse and frightening ways throughout novels, poetry, and plays. (p. 133)

Around the 1990’s the term “specter” or “spectrality” is given prominence over the more mundane “ghost” or “ghostliness” for having a more scholarly tone and having its etymological link to visibility and vision (Blanco & Peeren, 2013, p. 2). However, it remains really difficult to conceptualize which is why Derrida (2006) identifies it as “a quasi-concept” or a “concept without concept”. According to Derrida, a spectre is something between life and death that is neither living nor dead (as cited in Wolfreys, 2013, p. 70).

The concept of spectre is recurrent in history, literature, and theory. Blanco and Peeren (2013) stretch it from an entity to a metaphor or even a conceptual metaphor (p. 1). For its recurrence, Blanco and Peeren prefer a plural form of ‘spectralities’ over ‘spectrality’ (p. 9).

The topos of the spectre is ever present in the literary sphere. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is tagged as the “greatest ghost work” by Bennet and Royle (p. 134). Gothic literature has much to do with the spreading of this topos in literature. David Punter and Glennis Byron (2004) in their book *The Gothic* illustrate how the topos of spectre has been repeated throughout the history of Literature in English with 18th-century novels like *Castle of Otranto*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; Romantic Poetry like Coleridge’s “The Rime of Ancient Mariner”, Keats’ “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”; Victorian novels like *Wuthering Heights*, *The Woman in White* or even postcolonial literature like Amitabh Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. They even give an account of postmodern literature and the film industry where the topos of spectre has become more prominent. In one of the chapters, William Faulkner is called the progenitor of Southern Gothic (Punter & Byron, 2004).

Based on *The Spectralities Reader*, Derrida's coinage of the term 'spectre' in *Spectres de Marx* is the catalyst of a "spectral turn" in critical theory (Blanco & Peeren, 2013, p. 2). For Derrida, spectre is something that is both *revenant* (invoking what was) and *arrivant* (signaling what is to come). Derrida even coins another term 'hauntology' to clarify his interest in the spectral (pp. 13-14).

The spectralities have gained further ground in Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny" which binds spectralities and psychoanalysis together (Blanco & Peeren, 2013, pp. 4-5). Later, Abraham and Torok's theory of "Crypt" also added dimensions to spectralities (Punter, 2002, p. 263). Blanco and Peeren (2013) further stretched the concept of spectralities into politics, media, subjectivity, place, and historiographies in several chapters.

This article looks at the spectre of Addie Bundren by isolating her representation in the novel. It seeks to show how Addie's spectre causes an uncanny experience in reading and how her cryptic monologue destabilizes the socially constructed hierarchy and the concept that everything can be understood through words.

2.1.2 Secret and Crypt

Bennet and Royle (2004) define 'secret', as "[something that] is concealed, deliberately or inadvertently hidden, kept separate and apart" (p. 241). Literature, especially novels necessarily depend on secrets and the gradual revelation of it and secrets attract a lot of readers to novels. However, the word 'secret' has a paradox within itself which poststructuralist critics find out. Once a secret is revealed, it does not remain a secret. Therefore, to remain a secret it must be unrevealed and unconcealed at the same time (p. 246).

Psychoanalysis too has a connection to secrets. In Freud's structure of the psyche, every unacceptable desire and social taboo is repressed by the unconscious. The unconscious, thus in a sense, hides away secrets and sometimes cryptically appears to the subconscious. Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok present a new theory of the 'crypt' as a "psychic space different from the unconscious" that is the "repository of the secrets of the past" (Punter, 2002, p. 263).

What connects 'secret' and 'phantom' is their cryptic way of communicating with the reader. Bennet and Royle (2004) state, "The Ghost at once tells and does not tell. The Ghost keeps the secrets of its prison-house even as it evokes the effects of their disclosure" (p. 247). Addie's monologue gives us the idea of disclosure of several matters, such as how she had an adulterous relationship, and her revenge. Her message of revenge later becomes cryptic as she does not tell how the journey is going to be the 'revenge'. The additional reasons apart from Addie's burial that make the characters go to Jefferson make us consider whether she takes any kind of revenge at all in the novel.

2.1.3 Textuality

In literature and cultural theories, the text refers to anything that can be read. Textuality then refers to the attributes that distinguish the text. Textuality has infinite connections to spectralities. Textuality for Nicholas Royle is "irreducible to the psychic or the real" (as cited in Wolfreys, 2013, p. 71). A text can never be in isolation. It has a connection to its past writers and in a text, they commune uncannily. A text is never an original one, it is haunted by other texts all the time. While reading, a reader believes in the reality of the characters of a certain text and thus gives it a certain phantasmatic quality (Wolfreys, 2013, pp. 69-73).

In reading a text spectrally, one needs to look at what the text suppresses or what is that the text is haunted by. David Punter uses the term "text instead" to read a text in that way. According to him,

In any case, we may claim that we are dealing with an extraordinary metaphorical phenomenon, which I will refer to as "the text instead." This tendency causes the reader to question, first, if what is being read is metaphorical, and, second, whether the whole text is, in some way, a metaphor for something else, something "unwritten" that haunts the words on the page. (Punter, 2007, p. 60)

Another way of looking at a text spectrally is looking at the message it provides as something enigmatic. Jean Laplanche criticizes Lacan for assuming the primacy of Language as a mode of communication. He looks for the

possibility of other primal modes of communication. According to him, for assuming the logocentric nature of a text a reader overlooks any other modes of communication thus all the communication remains incomplete. Punter (2002) later extends Laplanche's theory by saying all communication "mysteriously takes place between crypts" (p. 265-266).

This paper will use this definition of textuality to illustrate how the message in a book cannot always communicate or that it sometimes communicates something other than what the author wants to communicate through his writing. Spectral Criticism seeks to read a text as unparented, but it does not deny the influence of other texts rather it seeks to show how a past voice is there but not as an authoritative one. This paper also looks into the thing that how this novel is an echo of other texts and how it becomes an echo of the texts written later.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks that this paper incorporates are Spectral Criticism, The Uncanny, and Deconstruction. A literature review of these theories is given in the following sections.

2.2.1 Spectral Criticism

In an essay named "Spectral Criticism", Punter (2002) says that spectral criticism cannot still be claimed as a school or even an emerging notion of criticism. It seeks to bring together a series of images or tendencies from various sources which continuously exercise a ghostly influence over critical activities for a few decades now. Punter considers Maurice Blanchot to be an 'originary' point as he talks about the death and dubious returns of literary voice (p. 259). Blanchot refers to the act of reading as "a dialogue with the dead" that favours a "phantomatic reality" over the "bizarre illusion of normalcy" (as cited in Punter, 2002, p. 259-260). He even considers writing to be connected to death as well because for him it is the feeling of dread of death that gives rise to the writing (Haase & Large, 2001, p. 51). So, a text, considered from both perspectives of a writer and a reader, becomes haunted by the communion with the dead or the death. According to Punter, reading is a type of conversation that is both uncanny and perverse. For him, "literature is intertwined with the phantom, the ghost," since the "continued existence and corporeal actuality" of a book might be a source of suspicion, worry, or even terror (260). This ongoing survival and frequent connections to classic books (such as *Hamlet*) render them ethereal (274). Although Punter (2002) acknowledges the difficulties of defining spectral criticism at the outset, he still attempts to do so,

Therefore, spectral criticism is not a program or goal to be completed, but rather a substrate of all textual work, an indeterminate ground on which reading happens, and a reinvocation of a terrifying but wanted communion with the dead. (p. 260)

The connection with Blanchot's argument becomes apparent with this statement. A few other approaches that Punter puts forward in spectral reading are the "law of orphan" and "text instead". In the formulation of the concept of the "law of orphan", Punter traces out the paradoxical nature of a text's connection to the past. For him, although a text has an inevitable connection with the past, the voice is not authoritative. So, when a text is read, it appears to be unparented or with an absence of originary point (p. 261). It seeks to understand whether a text can be read as a metaphor for something else that is not written but haunts the whole text (Punter, 2007, p. 60).

The concept of absence and the possibility of return remains one of the major concerns of spectral criticism. Drawing from Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, Punter shows the impossibility of erasing the past. Past according to Punter, "takes the form of a series of apparitions that can neither be addressed nor be banned". It remains in the unconscious and returns as a revenant to the subconscious level of our mind. This inevitably connects the concern of spectral criticism with the psychoanalytical theory of Freud, Lacan, Nicolas Abraham, Maria Torok, and so on (Punter, 2002, p. 262-264).

For the formulation of spectral criticism, David Punter presents four possibilities. It hinges on the "law of the orphan," which states that if the parentage of a text cannot be determined, the quest for the origin of the text will quickly lead us to the dark domain that lies behind the word. Its model would be Gothic, with its return to a transformed past, a past devoid of historical precision. Its primary metaphor would be the eerie, the inability to

differentiate between the familiar and the unknown. It would be characterized by an ambiguous message that seems unintelligible and is thus susceptible to a reading of a “text instead” that relates to a ghostly modification of the material’s previous condition (Punter, 2002, p. 267).

This paper bases its argument based on spectral criticism and thus looks to trace the enigmatic nature of Addie’s representation in the novel *As I Lay Dying* and seeks to illustrate the uncanny nature of reading that the novel establishes.

2.2.2 The Uncanny

Freud (1973) explored the notion of the uncanny. His essay defines and elaborates on the notion of the uncanny in both literature and the real world but considers the literary sphere to be better equipped for the use and analysis of the uncanny. The essay shows the uncanny nature of reading literature. Although Freud accepts the undefinable nature of the term, he generally defines it at the beginning to be something, “that belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread” (p. 204). Semantically it can be connected to the word *unheimlich* (unhomely). To elaborate further, he considers *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (unhomely) together along with their meanings. For him, *unheimlich* has the potential to become uncanny, but not all the unfamiliar is frightening, and therefore something more needs to be added to make it uncanny. Freud also quotes E. Jentsch who defines uncanny to be an “intellectual uncertainty” (p. 206).

After giving an elaborate example of the dictionary references about *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, he prefers Schelling’s remark about the meaning of *unheimlich* which is closer to Freud’s way of thinking about the uncanny. Schelling’s notion of *unheimlich* applies to things that are “intended to remain secret, hidden away but come into the open”. Freud’s search for meaning ultimately reveals the ambivalent nature of the word *heimlich* and shows how it can easily merge with its antonym *unheimlich* (p. 207 -216). In chapter II of the essay, Freud offers us an exploration of the elements that are associated with the arousal of uncanny feelings (pp. 217-236). This is later elaborately discussed by Bennet and Royle (2004) with ten specific points (p. 35-38).

Freud (1973) suggests that “the uncanny is something familiar that has been repressed and then reappears” (p. 237). Freud however acknowledges that the arousal of uncanny feelings has something to do with the psychological condition of a person too. He also contends that although uncanny in real life has fewer determinants, it is in the sphere of literature where uncanny experiences flourish as “in literature, there are many opportunities to achieve uncanny effects that are absent in real life” (238-241).

Bennet and Royle (2004) in their entry on “The Uncanny” in *Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory* suggest that literature is “the discourse of uncanny” as it evokes experiences, thoughts, and uncanny feelings (p. 35). For them,

Uncanny refers to a feeling of strangeness, mystery, or unease. Specifically, it relates to a sensation of unfamiliarity that arises at the core of the familiar, or a sense of familiarity that appears at the core of the unfamiliar. The eerie is not just a question of the strange or scary, but rather has to do with a disruption of the familiar. (p. 34)

Following Freud, they find out the paradoxes of the word “familiar” which has an etymological connection to Latin *familia* which can be connected to the idea of ‘keeping things in the family’ thus making it at once familiar and potentially secretive and strange (p. 34).

Bennet and Royle consider uncanny to be relevant to the study of literature as in literature the “literary” and the “real” often merge. They connect literary theories like Viktor Shklovsky’s defamiliarization to this notion of the uncanny (p. 35). Bennet and Royle (2004) suggest a few forms that the uncanny takes. They are the repetition of a feeling, situation or event, or character; odd coincidences like divine interventions, and the idea of fate; anthropomorphism or situation where something that is not a human being is given the attributes of a human being; fear of being buried alive that can be considered in a broader sense to confinement and claustrophobic feelings; silence; telepathy, and death. Bennet and Royle (2004) also exemplify how putting only a quotation mark in a familiar word can make it strange or spooky. They consider the uncanny to be an experience. It is not a theme or

technique that the writer possesses rather it has to do with how a reader reads or interprets a text. So, the uncanny has a close connection with the “effects of reading” and “the experience of the reader” (pp. 35-41).

This paper, in its reading of the spectral representation of Addie, will cash in on the concepts of uncanny in understanding the reading experience.

2.2.3 Deconstruction

Cuddon (1999) describes deconstruction as “a certain sort of reading practice and, thus, a technique of critique and a style of analytical inquiry.” To exemplify the phrase further, he cites Barbara Johnson:

Deconstruction is not synonymous with destruction. It is significantly closer to the term ‘analysis’, which etymologically implies ‘to undo’ - a synonym for deconstruction. The deconstruction of a book is not accomplished via random doubt or haphazard subversion, but rather through the painstaking elucidation of conflicting forces of meaning within the text itself. If something is destroyed during a deconstructive reading, it is not the text itself, but rather the claim to the absolute dominance of one form of signification over another. Deconstructive reading is the analysis of a text’s critical divergence from itself (as cited in Cuddon, 1999, pp. 209-211).

One of the basic understandings about deconstructive reading is that no text can have one particular meaning. Jacques Derrida is considered the major philosopher associated with the philosophy of deconstruction. His chief contribution to language was to show how language is slippery and often self-contradictory and therefore no word can have a final meaning rather meaning is produced temporarily. This is why deconstructive reading looks to rebel against the “authoritarian meaning” in a text (Nayar, 2012, p. 39).

Another basic notion of deconstructive reading is that it destabilizes the proposed hierarchies or ideologies that a text presents. It looks to bring out the binary oppositions a text proposes and destabilizes its hierarchy by looking into evidence of how the text contradicts the hierarchy (Selden et al., 1997, p.173). Deconstructive reading thus is aware of the fact that incomplete deconstruction causes the creation of a new hierarchy. So, it is self-conscious while reading a text.

In *As I Lay Dying* thus the spectre is represented as an entity between life and death. As death becomes more emancipatory for her to resist the hierarchies that society put on her. It also shows the cryptic nature of her monologue.

3. Spectral Reading of Addie Bundren

This chapter isolates and examines how different extracts from *As I Lay Dying* represent the spectre of Addie Bundren. It looks to understand the reason behind her spectral return and looks to trace any possibility of continuity of the spectre even after the burial.

3.1 Representation of Addie

Addie dies during the 12th monologue of the novel *As I Lay Dying* (Faulkner, 1930, pp. 42-47). But her presence is felt all the time when one reads the text. The uncanny nature of Addie’s representation is established here. Addie’s death is not described from the perspective of any character that is beside her, but rather is described by Darl Bundren who is on the way back home. However, the character Addie develops as a spectre after her death. So, death is in a sense the beginning of the development of this character. The few instances that we find her before her death are in the monologue of Cora Tull, where she describes her in her dying moments as “lonely with her pride” (p. 18), or in the monologue of other characters like Darl, Anse, Jewel, Vernon Tull, and Dewey Dell. It is as if she has no voice of her own. Readers find her bedridden with little movement. One specific movement is emphasized when she sits down and calls Cash with rage before her death (p. 41). It is after her death that she becomes a (non)being of interest. As this paper focus on the spectral representation of Addie, the following part will focus on her spectral representation.

3.1.1 Addie as a Spectre

After the death, Addie becomes the center of the world of the novel. Her presence is always felt diversely with characters like Vardaman mourning or making disjointed claims like “My mother is a fish” and during the journey with the smell or the presence of “buzzards”. It is as if Addie “lives despite physical death” as M. Landon says (as cited in Roy, 2015, p. 102). As Roy (2015) asserts, Addie’s presence subverts the authoritative power of life over death. The journey blurs the line between the living body and the dead body. Addie asserts her existence in a tyrannical way by dictating what is to be done after her death and thus urges to *be* even after her death (Faulkner 1930, pp. 101 -102). It is as if death becomes a source of power, her unvoiced self too is replaced by a voiced one with her monologue (pp. 157-168). Even before her monologue, in the contemplation of Cora, a reader finds her prophesizing the events that are about to happen as she says, “[Jewel] is my cross my cross and he will be my salvation. He will save me from water and fire. Even though I laid down my life, he will save me” (Faulkner, 1930, p. 156). This goes with Derrida’s conceptualization of the specter. For him, a specter is always both revenant (invoking what was) and arrivant (announcing what will come). A spectre causes a temporal disturbance by appearing when it is least expected (Blanco &Peeren, 2013, p. 13). Addie then does the same. As the earlier quotation is taken from Cora Tull’s contemplation on Addie, these assertions were made by her even before her death. But her prophecy disturbs the general sense of time.

If death is generally considered to be the end of life and thus the end of growth, then Addie completely destabilizes this. As Irving Howe says,

Addie's dominance endures and expands; in fact, Addie's power is never stronger than at the moment after her death, when the Bundrens understand how tenaciously the past's tyrants linger on. (as cited in Tredell, 1999, p. 68)

Addie Bundren’s monologue is really important in understanding her spectral representation. She remembers how she used to beat her students to make them aware of her presence (Faulkner, 1930, p. 157). It can be stretched to consider that she is now taking revenge against her family members by asserting her “(non)presence”. She questions the relevance of the word and thinks it to be a “shape to fill a lack” (160). Her monologue becomes an illustration of how Anse has violated her body and made her virgin body a blank spot. Addie’s monologue is a revelation of how patriarchal society reduces her to a womb and does not even give her proper respect for it. The monologue reveals her resistance to it too. She resists by not breastfeeding Cash and Darl. She also does this through her adulterous relationship with Reverend Whitfield. Deborah Clarke’s comment seems relevant here,

As I Lay Dying resounds with the contradictory strength of women's corporeal absence and presence, of women's silence and voice... Addie is trapped in a civilization that, although eradicating women's bodies, has strong control over the physical and metaphorical, bodies and words. (as cited in Tredell, 1999, p.147)

The hierarchy of language over silence, presence over absence, semiotic over symbolic, and womb over the word are thus reversed by the specter of Addie.

Another major concern of spectral criticism is how a literary work uncannily deals with the concealment and disclosure of secrets. As already suggested in the earlier section how the word “secret” is necessarily ambivalent as it is both unconcealed and undisclosed. The spectre of Addie tells and does not tell the secret at the same time. Addie’s adulterous relationship is already hinted at by Darl in his monologue as he says,

That night, I discovered her sitting in the dark next to his sleeping bed. She sobbed uncontrollably, maybe because she had to grieve so quietly, or perhaps because she felt the same way about tears as she did about dishonesty, loathing herself for committing the falsehood and him because she had to. Then I realized that I knew I knew. That day, I understood it as well as I knew about Dewey Dell. (Faulkner, 1930, p. 123)

Although the author keeps it vague, a reader who concentrates can understand Addie’s adulterous relationship connecting to the indication of Dewey Dell’s pregnancy for adulterous relationship and Darl’s intuitive nature of looking through people’s secret. So, when Addie tells us of her adulterous relationship, it is already partly known to the reader. Her message on revenge also remains cryptic as it seems all the characters, apart from Darl, have their particular reasons to go to Jefferson. A deeper contemplation on revenge by Kartiganer (2007) reflects that

Addie does not care about the marriage that Anse is looking for rather it is by making Lazy Anse move she takes revenge (pp. 429-44).

In *As I Lay Dying* thus the spectre is represented as an entity between life and death. As death becomes more emancipatory for her to resist the hierarchies that society put on her. It also shows the cryptic nature of her monologue.

3.1.2 Addie's Spectre as a Conceptual Metaphor

Blanco and Peeren (2013) suggest that a spectre can be read as a conceptual metaphor too for implementing it in several other theoretical sectors (p. 1). Addie's spectre can be considered as one too. She can be considered as a metaphor for mother, wife, womb, or even woman in general. According to them, to understand the nature of the spectre closer attention needs to be given to "who haunts and who is being targeted?". Spectral criticism explores the marginal gender, sexuality, and race as non-normative positions and tries to show that the specific social position settled for them is why they haunt the "Other". They even exemplify how being haunted by one's mother is not the same thing as being haunted by one's father or a stranger (310).

In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie is a woman who is marginalized by the patriarchal social construction. Spectral presence of Addie is used as a mode to reveal the suffering of the woman in the patriarchal society and her resistance against the suffering. As Blanco and Peeren (2013) suggest the boundary between normative and non-normative subject positions although bound heavily by social orders, creates a sense of anxiety. This anxiety is not often perceptible and thus becomes spectral (310). Addie's haunting presence or vengeance, therefore, is against her husband Anse or even her children who marginalize her for being a woman. In the case of the anxiety between Darl and Jewel, the spectral tension of normative and non-normative positions can be brought forward too. As Darl is a legitimate and normative child, he taunts the non-normative, illegitimate child Jewel. Thus, the concept of conceptual metaphor and spectral subjectivity becomes another way of looking at *As I Lay Dying*.

3.2 Notes on Spectral Continuity

Addie's spectre subverts the notion of the finality of death. Death in *As I Lay Dying*, is not something that ends rather it begins the establishment of the spectre. Death actually cannot be the end for Addie as Darl asserts, "And Jewel is, So Addie Bundren must be" (Faulkner, 1930, p. 74). As already suggested in the last chapter Addie can be read as a conceptual metaphor for mother, in it too the spectral continuity occurs.

Dewey Dell's failure to get an abortion signals a continuation of motherhood and the social taboo of adultery. Deborah Clarke suggests that "the mother's body cannot be vanquished" (as cited in Tredell, 1999, 154). Anse's marriage brings a new Mrs. Bundren to the family it too can be considered as a spectral continuity. The novel destabilizes the notion of death as the finality. The novel brings forward the notion of spectral continuity as the text itself does not end in an end rather it ends in a beginning. The title of the novel is taken from Odyssey (Book 11) where Agamemnon describes Clytemnestra, "As I Lay dying the woman with the dog's eyes would not close my eyes for me as I descended into the Hades" (Towner, 2008, p. 27). If Addie is the *I* in the title of the novel, Faulkner maybe then evoke us to read Addie with connection to Clytemnestra. In this sense, Addie herself is a continuity of Clytemnestra. This textual haunting can be further drawn. *As I Lay Dying* is later connected to several other texts. According to Cohn (2007),

As I Lay Dying established the fundamental template for a genre of books in which numerous views centered on a dying or deceased character present a kaleidoscope vision of his or her life, family, and societal order. The works of Mara Luisa Bombal's *The Shrouded Woman* (1938, English translation: 1948), Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955, English translation: 1959), Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *Leaf Storm* (1955, English translation: 1972) and *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975, English translation: 1976), and Carlos Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962, English translation: 1964) all have roots in Faulkner. While *The Shrouded Lady* follows in the footsteps of *As I Lay Dying* by focusing on the experience of a woman and her family, its scope is more limited (p. 511).

Is it then the canonical nature of *As I Lay Dying* too that resists the plane of time and keeps on coming back like a “ventriloquists' puppet” as an echo that David Punter talks about when he attempts a spectral criticism of Hamlet (Punter, 2002, p. 272)? If it is so then the presence of Addie too becomes an echo for all the female characters that suffer at the hand of patriarchy. The spectre of Addie, in these ways, keeps on coming back and resists the finality of her death all the time.

4. Spectre, the Uncanny, the Text and Reading

An earlier section on spectral criticism already suggests that the Uncanny is the fundamental trope of spectral criticism. This chapter focuses on identifying how Addie's presence after death creates an uncanny situation in the textual world and how it makes the reading of *As I Lay Dying* an uncanny experience.

4.1 *The Uncanny and the Textual World*

William Faulkner's textual world itself is uncannily different. His fictional Yoknapatawpha cycle brings on characters from different novels and short stories in interaction. Thus, he creates a fictional world within which most of his novels and short stories from 1929 to 1959 are written. *As I Lay Dying* is one of the novels of the Yoknapatawpha cycle. Yoknapatawpha itself is a Gothicized southern village. According to Punter and Byron (2004),

Faulkner depicts a Gothicized image of the American South, exploring lunacy, decay, and despair, as well as the ongoing strains of the past on the present, notably with regard to the lost aspirations of a dispossessed Southern aristocracy and the continuation of racial animosity. (p. 116-117)

As I Lay Dying however is completely a familial novel surrounding Addie's death and the journey of the Bundren family. The journey becomes uncanny as it seems as if the Bundrens are enchanted by the spectre to go through with the journey even after multiple obstructions and temptations (p. 103). As Bennet and Royle (2004) suggest, death is one of the ten forms of uncanny feeling. The realm of the novel becomes filled with uncanny feelings with the death of Addie.

Smell becomes another element that creates an uncanny situation in the textual world. The sensation of odor brings the resident to feel an uncanny presence of Addie even when she is not there. As in Moseley's monologue, he says he could still smell the dead body on the next day of their departure (Faulkner, 1930, p. 195). The smell is a sensation connected to the feeling of uncanny. In his book, *The Uncanny*, Nicholas Royle writes,

Fragrance has an eerie duplicity; it may transport us in an instant from the familiarity of the present to the strange, terrible and/or joyful and/or impossible land of the past; and yet a smell resists being remembered, even for a time, in reality (as cited in Colella, 2009, p. 85).

So, the smell is another element that creates an uncanny sensation within the textual world.

Another uncanny sensation is felt by Vardaman as he once gets trapped in a crib (Faulkner, 1930, p. 59). This kind of feeling of claustrophobia is one of the forms that the uncanny can take. Vardaman's feeling of claustrophobia makes him feel that his mother too would feel claustrophobic in her coffin and therefore he bores two holes above her face on his mother's coffin when everyone is sleeping (p. 66). Faulkner thus evokes an uncanny situation.

So, it can be seen that the feeling of Uncanny persists in the textual world and the spectre of Addie is most of the time at the center of it.

4.2 *The Uncanny and Reading*

All creative writers have the liberty of creating their fictional world as he wishes. He can conform to reality or celebrate his creation of fantasy. But in both cases, a reader has to accept his choice. This makes reading an uncanny affair. This feeling of uncanny is person specific and connected to other outside factors as said in the theoretical definition. The feeling of uncanny can be evoked by using some specific tropes as suggested by Bennet and Royle (2004, pp. 35-38). In this section, the paper will look to analyze how *As I Lay Dying* evokes the feeling of uncanny and how much of it is caused by the spectre of Addie Bundren.

4.2.1 Repetition

Repetition is used by William Faulkner (1930) several times in *As I Lay Dying*. Be it Vardaman's disjointed assertion of "My mother is a fish" or Darl's insane repetition of "yes" towards the end, repetition makes *As I Lay Dying* an uncanny reading. Even for adopting the stream consciousness technique, two subsequent chapters often repeat the same thing. For example, the chapter before Addie's death is described in Peabody's monologue, one can read Addie's harsh voice calling cash (p. 41), The same thing repeats in the next chapter in Darl's monologue (p. 42). Both these repetitions are connected to the character Addie and create an uncanny reading.

4.2.2 Odd Coincidence

Odd coincidence is another trope that makes the familiar environment unfamiliar. It refers to the situation that seems "too good to be true", the feeling that something is making things happen, divine intervention, or fatalism. (Bennet & Royle, 2004, p.36). In *As I Lay Dying*, it always seems that Addie is the voice from the coffin that is dictating the whole event. The feeling of uncanny is also evoked in reading when Cora's contemplation on Addie reveals how she said that she would be saved as a dead body by Jewel from trials of fire and water (Faulkner, 1930, p. 156). It becomes uncanny when exactly what she says happens in actuality in the later part of the novel.

4.2.3 Death and Anthropomorphism

Death as Bennet and Royle (2004) say is something that is always at once familiar and unfamiliar. Anthropomorphism refers to a situation where something that is not human acts like a human (p. 36-37). Death of Addie makes the reading uncanny and her voice given to a dead body or a dead entity makes the reading uncanny. Reading Addie's posthumous representation becomes uncanny in two-fold nature. If a reader considers the disturbance it brings to the natural situation it creates an uncanny reading. On the other hand, if a reader considers her representation as a normal thing then he is making the *unheimlich* (unhomely) affair a *Heimlich* (homely) one. Thus, either way, the reading becomes an uncanny affair.

4.2.4 Telepathy

Telepathy disturbs the normal sense of communication and thus creates an uncanny sensation. In *As I Lay Dying*, William Faulkner (1930) uses Darl to describe the death of Addie Bundren although he is not present at that place (p. 42-47). Telepathy occurs among Darl and the other three siblings Dewey Dell, Jewel, and Cash. Telepathy creates an uncanny sensation as it makes one feel one has no control over hiding their thought too. An example of telepathic communication can be:

And so it was, since I had no choice. I then saw Darl, and he was aware of the situation. He said he knew without the words, like he did when he informed me that my mother was going to die without words, and I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with the words, I would not have believed he was there and saw us. But he acknowledged he did know, so I said, "Are you going to inform your father? Are you going to murder him?" without the words, to which he replied, "Why?" And this is why I can converse with him despite my hatred: he is aware. He stands at the entrance, staring at her (p. 23).

This word 'without the word' is the perversion of communion that creates the uncanny nature of reading.

4.2.5 Stylistic Elements

William Faulkner uses several stylistic elements in his novel which makes the reading uncanny too. Addie's monologue itself is a disturbance of the familiar as a dead cannot speak. The writer uses some more stylistic techniques which make the reading even more uncanny. For example, in Addie's monologue, Faulkner (1930) uses a blank space (p. 161). As Bennet and Royle (2007) suggest, familiar language becomes uncanny with a slight disruption. Faulkner uses italics, and even his use of italics is not always for the same reason. This too destabilizes the notion of reading and makes it uncanny.

5. The Uncanny Potential of the Spectre

Why such relentless pursuit [*achamement*]? Why this hunt for ghosts? (Derrida, 2006, p. 174)

The analysis of the spectre of Addie Bundren and the uncanny or haunting situation created by this spectral representation has been done in earlier chapters. This chapter attempts to establish the fact that a specter, by creating a haunting environment, becomes the entity that has the potential to subvert hierarchy or even make deconstruction possible.

5.1 Addie and Deconstruction

In his essay “Spectrographies”, Derrida gives an idea about the potential of a spectre.

A specter is both visible and unseen, phenomenal and non-phenomenal; it is a trace that marks the present with its disappearance in the future. De facto, the spectral logic is deconstructive logic. Deconstruction finds its most friendly environment in the components of haunting, in the center of the living present, in the fastest pulse of the philosophical. (as cited in Lippit, 2008, p. 1)

In the earlier portion of the paper, the idea of spectre is elaborated on and shown that it is not only a “ghost” in a general sense. It is anything that destabilizes our socially constructed concepts of normalcy. Even Addie’s spectre can be considered a conceptual metaphor for mother, wife, or womb. As the above-given quotation suggests, spectre has the potential of creating a suitable environment for deconstruction. The spectre itself is the deconstructed phenomena that blur the line between any hierarchy like visible and invisible, presence and absence. The spectre of Addie is the same thing. As a conceptual metaphor, if Addie is a woman then when she raises her voice against the patriarchal domination, she haunts the patriarch. This haunting situation is what becomes potentially suitable for deconstruction. As a spectre, Addie herself blurs the line between presence and absence, life and death. She in a sense becomes the force that causes deconstruction.

Deconstruction theory was inaugurated by Jacques Derrida in the late 1960s. The two major things about deconstruction are, first, it contests the western logocentric notion and reveals the slippery nature of language and second, it begins by finding out the binary and the hierarchy in its approaches to reverse it and then stops itself from creating a new hierarchy and finds a place between the two polar positions. Addie’s character does the same. The major concept that Addie’s monologue provides is that “words are no good” (Faulkner, 1930, p.159). Further analysis of Addie’s character in the earlier part has already shown how the spectre of Addie subverts the hierarchy like word over womb, mother over father, man over woman, life over death, and absence over presence. It would be too radical to suggest (with this little discussion) with this little discussion that within Addie spectrally remained the seed of deconstruction theory as an arrivant but an uncanny connection can be established between the two.

6. Conclusion

The enterprise of the present paper was to show that a spectral reading of Addie is necessary for an in-depth understanding of *As I Lay Dying*. It analyzed the representation of Addie Bundren’s spectre both as a ghostly presence and a conceptual metaphor that goes against the dominant mode of comprehension. It also analyzed how reading becomes an uncanny affair in presence of Addie’s spectre and how Addie’s spectre creates a suitable situation for deconstructive reading. A spectre always waits for chances to assert its presence and thus creates uncanny or haunting feelings in the mind of the dominant. Spectral criticism opens up a new perspective not only on the “ghosts” of the text but also on the “ghosts” of the world, the non-normative or marginalized people at the bottom of the hierarchy, who waits for a voice of their own. Addie’s representation presents the plurality of perspectives that creates a connection of it with the lens of deconstruction. Addie’s spectre destabilizes the social hierarchy and reveals the slippery nature of words. Addie gains potential power after her death that she never had during her lifetime. Addie’s revenge although cryptic keeps the plurality of interpretation open. The uncanny and haunting aspects of the spectre destabilize normative power positions and create the option of deconstruction. This paper initiates several issues that have the potential to be explored. For example, as spectral criticism has connected itself to trauma studies, the trauma of the characters like Dewey Dell and Darl Bundren can be read from this perspective. An investigation into the spectral nature of the roads of the novel seems another interesting scope for further studies.

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