

*Windows and Womanly Secrecies*  
*in Flaubert's Madam Bovary,*  
*Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, and Joyce's "Eveline"*

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**Abstract**

The subversive image of “windows” signifies an opaque boundary between the inside and the outside as well as a distorted yet impressive view of the things. Flaubert, Faulkner, and Joyce have unveiled multifarious implication of window imagery in their works, exploring the fact that windows may not provide the reader with easy connection between the two disconnected worlds. They create due to their real opaqueness and unbreakable quality underlying their surface values. Based on this, focusing on the window imagery in Flaubert's *Madam Bovary*, Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, and Joyce's “Eveline”, the study argues that despite their seemingly insignificant state resulting from their misleading appearances, windows in these three works cannot be overlooked as they take on a significant role by giving important insights into the Otherness, masked realities, and the paradoxical crisis surrounding the protagonists of the each work, Emma, Addie, and Eveline, all of whom voice a single woman in close touch with the windows subjecting them to silence, serving them as masks, and shattering their view of life as inside and outside.

**Keywords:** Windows, Women, Opaqueness, Otherness, Masked Realities, Fragmentation.

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“There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses”

Louis MacNeice, “Snow”

Windows, as images seemingly fail to go beyond fragility and transparency, provide easy accessibility to what they reflect without creating any strong boundary between the individual and the outside world. However, windows can hardly be reduced to simplicity by their appearances because notwithstanding their ostensibly transparent and fragile qualities that give the impression that they connect the inside with the outside, reveal reality, and provide easy connection to what they reflect, they create huge and irresistibly misleading boundaries between the individual and the outside and carry out the function of a mask, by their opaqueness lying behind their transparent appearance. Given this filtering aspect of the windows, this study aims to investigate window imagery in the works of Flaubert, Faulkner and argues that although the window imagery seems to have little importance in its overall interpretation, windows in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, and Joyce's “Eveline” cannot



be reduced to simple images with their preconceived definitions because they offer profound insights into the realities underlying their female protagonists, through revealing their Otherness, reflecting their helpless state as stuck between reality and illusion, and showing their masked identity. In the light of this argument, it is, of course, conceivable to think that none of these three women are always located behind windows to provide evidence for their ostracized state, paradoxical crisis, and masked identity; however, it is important to know that the physical absence of the windows does not suggest lack of their impact on the characters, given that even at times when they are physically absent, they metaphorically mark the lives of all Emma, Addie, and Eveline with their psychological existence, unveiling the intricacies of their worlds.

The windows having a role in the lives of Emma, Addie, and Eveline, firstly, help the reader unveil these women's Otherness, as strong barriers subjecting them to emptiness, indifference, and disintegration. The window appears to be a filter between the character and the life behind the window, presenting Emma, in Lacan's terms, as "Other." As a woman in 19<sup>th</sup> century France where "women were suited to be only 'housewives or harlots', providing for the comforted pleasure of men", despite the flourishing ideas of feminism (Proudhon qtd. in Waelti 3), Emma's this empty state is shown, for instance, through her objectification by her husband, given that though "filled in with abundance of psychological and social details", she is regarded by him as "nothing more than bodily surfaces and intense sensations" (Bersani 17), as if she was devoid of an identity:

He could not keep from constantly touching her comb, her rings, her fichu; sometimes he gave her great sounding kisses with all his mouth on



her cheeks, or else little kisses in a row all along her bare arm from the top of her finger up to her shoulders. (Flaubert 25)

As such, though knowing every detail of her body, he remains ignorant of her soul, regarding even their sexual relation “like a dessert looked forward to after the monotony of the dinner” (Flaubert 32). The window separating Emma from the outside detaches her, also, from Charles by denying him a humanly connection with her. Moreover, the window imagery’s reflection of Emma’s such ignored state as the Other can be shown by her adulterous affairs because while Leon gets bored of her, Rodolphe associates her with a prostitute: “Emma was just like any other mistress” (Flaubert 154; 227), considering “he is simply repeating the previous experiences” (Brooks and Watson, “A Novel About Nothing” 24). The window behind which Emma sits mirrors her Otherness, thirdly, by revealing how little difference she makes in her surroundings, as entrapped within the chains of ignorance like the mythological character Icarus. This becomes clear given that just as her window separates her from the nature which turns blind to her sufferings by going on its daily routines, she is segregated from others who do not have the foggiest idea about the darkness surrounding her. She is led to such kind of a neglected state, for instance, by her husband who does not notice her outcries deep in her heart by subjecting her to the sense of dislocation, as clarified by her helplessly thinking of “the prize-days at the convent” when she was noticed by the “gentleman leant over to pay her compliments” (Flaubert 32-33). This existential vacuum marking Emma can also be observed when she thinks that it is better to remain in silence for having no one to appreciate her: “She gave up music. What was the good of playing? Who would hear her?” (Flaubert 46-47). Thus, as shown through her entrapment within her bell jar, she is left unable to voice herself because of the thickness of the glass. The



strength of the window in subjecting her to such a neglected state is revealed, finally, during her death because while Charles asks her indifferently, “What was it?” and “Who drove you to do it?”, as if he had no role in her suicide, Felicite asks for her shoes, “But I can’t see my little shoe” (Flaubert 248; 249), as concerned not with her mother’s death but with her shoes in the same way with the nature that remains heavenly despite her death: “There was nothing extraordinary about the country; the sky was blue, the trees swayed; a flock of sheep passed” (Faulkner 263). The window imagery giving insight into Emma’s intricacies as the Other takes on an indispensable role by revealing, also, Addie’s Otherness. This relation between Addie’s submissiveness and the window imagery becomes clear by that acting like a barrier, the window behind which she lies in her deathbed detaches her from the outside, thus leading to her neglected and isolated state. Addie’s neglected state as the Other is, surely, uncovered by the fact that her death concerns no person around her. For instance, while she suffers from the coldness of death, her daughter contemplates to herself how the doctor could help her about her pregnancy: “You could do so much for me if you just would” (Faulkner 51) and condemns her to a complete darkness, by confirming the opaqueness of her window. The other characters in the novel, also, fail to see her suffering due to the thickness of her window, given that ignoring her death, Vardaman thinks of the “bananas” they will buy in Jefferson; Cash dreams about a talking machine; Jewel looks forward to earning three dollars; and Anse “shaves everyday”, coming out with a new “Mrs. Bundren” (Faulkner 250; 259; 22; 10; 261). Furthermore, even Darl who seems to be her closest remains disintegrated from her as he calls her not ‘mother’ but “Addie Bundren” as if she was a stranger: “Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box to lie in” (Faulkner 5). Apart from this, Addie’s Otherness is seen finally by her isolation: as



shown in her monologue filled with “a quest for being-as-self” for “salvation from life” (Pierce 296), she feels the need to beat her students to assert her own voice “in the face of what she sees as a meaningless experience”, as Singal states: “she cares less about the lessons her pupils learn than about the visceral communion she establishes when whipping them” (150). Situated between the inside and the outside, the windows show their strength by unveiling, finally, Eveline’s Otherness stemming from a “paralysis” driven not by a “physical handicap or damage of nerve supply” but by the “patriarchal norms, violence, and ideological indoctrination” (Witch qtd. in Wenz 2). This is shown by that just as the window behind which she sits “watching evening invade the avenue” (Joyce 442) confines her to inside the room, social norms entrap within her domestic surroundings, thus leading her to experience the bitterness of being the Other. The windows present her Otherness, firstly, through reflecting the sexual violence to which she is exposed by her father who oppressively treats her as a domestic servant: “She had to work hard to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly” (Joyce 444). Thus, with this “ambiguous existence suspended between identities and roles”, Eveline is led to “passive watchfulness, enervation, and a nameless sense of threat” (Spinks 58) by society, just as her window reduces her to silence. As a result, “inscribed into a male register of need and desire, of authority and irascibility characteristic of Irish potential models” (Henke 23), she is “denied a voice” within her surroundings as if “shut up” in an “asylum” (Schwarze 91), with her window constituting the “otherizing” walls of this deadly place.

The windows are revealed as serving as a mask for the protagonists in the narratives under consideration as well. The masking influence of the window is felt, firstly, on



Emma, given that despite her thirst for self-revelation, she tries to give the image of a faithful wife like many of Flaubert's women "hypnotized into imagining themselves to be other than they really are" (de Gaultier qtd. in Speziale 3). Thus, though "breathlessly seduced by the transforming erotics of moneyed novelty- novelty of foods, manners, language, models of sexual transgression and dances" (Brooks 23), she chooses to use the window behind which she sits as a mask to veil her passion for liberation. For instance, the more she loves Leon, the more she represses her feelings so that this is not revealed (Flaubert 83). Similarly, even while thinking about Rodolphe's "strong and elegant body", she disguises herself as a chaste "spouse" (Flaubert 144). In this way, captured within the chains of the "tension between the public world and the private world" (Sabiston 339), she benefits from the disillusioning power of the window to survive in the outer world. The windows take on a masking role, also, in Addie's life, by veiling her inner realities under their misleadingly transparent appearance and helping her to silently protest the restrictions imposed on her, as proven through her "mysterious strength" disguised in the role of a "shallow, mindless, and even perverted" woman "having little to say" (Clarke 8). The role of windows in masking Addie is shown, for instance, by Addie's attitude towards Jewel because despite her hatred for him for his reflection of her objectified state, she behaves as an affectionate mother so as to conceal her adulterous affair, as Darl states "She would be sitting in the dark by Jewel where he was asleep", adding "And I know that she was hating herself for that deceit and hating Jewel because she had to love him so that she had to act the deceit" (Faulkner 30). Moreover, notwithstanding her loathing for the role of motherhood, she gives her husband many children to hide her abortion and her adultery with Whitefield as she states: "I gave Anse Dewey Dell to negative Jewel. Then I gave Vardaman to



replace the child I had robbed of him” (Faulkner 175). Thus, hiding her unconventional behaviors, the window situated in front of her turns into such an opaque mask that it even hides her “revenge against the living for the long ago violations of, or intrusions into her inner circle of selfhood”, as clarified by that no member of her family realizes her silent protest driven by her “deconceiving”, “degenerating”, “destroying”, and “betraying” nature disguised in a “conceiving”, “loving”, “tending”, and “nurturing” mother role (Rueckert 52). As in Flaubert and Faulkner, the window imagery carries out a clouding function, thirdly, in Joyce, by denying true access to Eveline’s inner world that clashes with the expectations of her society. The masking effect of the window situated in front of Eveline is clarified by the fact that in the same way it shows Emma and Addie as if they were domestic angels, it provides a misleading reflection of Eveline, through veiling what lies behind her by its fallaciously transparent appearance. For instance, despite her unconventional behaviors, Eveline is believed to conform to the expectations of her destiny shaped by “endless housekeeping” and subservience to “patriarchal violence” (Wicke 238) because despite the rebellious woman deep in her heart, she appears as a submissive young girl by making use of the misleading quality of the window behind which she sits. Similarly, although she meets with Frank by ignoring her father’s disapproval of this relationship, she wears the mask of a conformist daughter in her father’s presence, as a result of failing to “extricate herself from the web of words woven around the sacrosanct authority of the patriarchal Irish father”, as a woman “bound from childhood to a negative self-image” (Henke 23), which surely explains the reason why she tries to veil her realities behind the window.

Lastly, the crucial effect of window imagery in Flaubert, Faulkner, and Joyce can be observed in the female protagonists’ paradoxical states as stuck between the realities of





their restrictive lives and the alluring atmosphere of the illusionary world outside. This is clarified by that though situated by their windows within the dreadful atmosphere of their houses, all the three women attempt to turn their back on the deathlike realities of their domestic surroundings and look through their windows to the world outside, thus experiencing a dual existence. The window exhibits Emma's schizophrenia as stuck between fantasy and reality by reflecting how liberated she feels by peering through her window, in spite of her real entrapment inside by the bars of her domestic prison. As a result, in Stallman's words, she goes beyond the definition of a "unified creation" as "split" by the "tragic disparity between inner dream and external reality" (195). For instance, she chooses marriage, hoping to "find in it the poetry and color of a Scott novel" (Sabiston 342) and when Charles cannot "cure a boredom that she is already experiencing well before she marries" (Brooks and Watson, "M. Bovary: A Novel" 22), she escapes into another illusionary world with her one half still existing inside and her second half lost outside with Leon. Thus, although she is unhappily situated inside by her window, Leon's reflection outside makes her feel as if living on an "Edenic island" surrounded with "willows" and "a song drifting across the water" (Brooks and Watson, "M. Bovary: A Novel" 17). Similarly, though admiringly watching him by the window, she suddenly turns her back on to her window to "get up and order the table to be laid" (Flaubert 74), remembering her domestic duties inside. Most importantly, when Leon comes to her house to say goodbye, she looks outside with "her back turned, her face pressed against a window pane" (Flaubert 91), displaying how stuck she is between two worlds of reality and illusion, as a result of seeing the illusionary world outside as a way to escape Leon's farewell though having not enough power to completely strip herself off this truth. Following this crisis, Emma experiences fragmentation, thirdly, by



Rodolphe with whom she commits adultery with the hope of getting away from her dreadful realities like romantic heroines, as Brownstein notes: “Emma’s transports in Rodolphe’s arms are attempts to replicate those feelings of being lifted outside ‘real’ life that came to her when she secretly read the romances forbidden in the convent” (cited in Brooks and Watson, “M. Bovary: Becoming” 32). In this way, representing “escape, eroticism, masculinity, and wealth”, Rodolphe gives her hope for existence (Godwin 141) and leads her to a crisis, given that no matter how blindly she loves him, she physically exists inside with her realities. The windows’ reflection of Emma’s paradoxical state is shown, fourthly, by her spiritually living in the enchanting balls outside, given that looking out her window to these worlds serving to “erase her past class identity, overwriting it with a new vision of herself in the act of fulfilling a social and sexual aspiration” (Brooks and Watson, “M. Bovary: A Novel” 23), she forgets her physical existence inside her house. However, as “the explanations of literature don’t work in life and the intensities of life are lost in the endless and tiring meanings of literature”, she cannot assert her existence in this fantastic world, either (Bersani 23) and prefers the illusionary world of death in order to escape her real life, again asking her window to be opened just before she dies. The window imagery also unveils Addie’s paradoxical state by reflecting how thirsty she is to get involved in the lives reflected outside by her window, though lying inside with her realities. The relation between Addie’s crisis and her window is shown, firstly, in the scene when she looks out of the window upon being called “Ma” by Dewey many times (Faulkner 48). This signifies her fragmentation between the worlds of fantasy and reality, showing that although she is physically attached to her house, she feels as if belonging to the outside world expected to cut her ties with her objectified state. Addie’s crisis is shown, also, by

her marriage because she marries Anse for “violation of virginity” which is the “oldest remedy in the world for the oldest frustration” (Slaughter 19) and expects marriage to take her away from her father and the realities captured inside by her window as she says: “I would hate my father for ever having planted me. [...] And so I took Anse” (Faulkner 170). Similarly, while lying in the same bed with Anse as situated inside with the conventions of her house, she commits adultery with Whitefield reflected outside by her window as she says: “I would think of the sin as garments which we would remove in order to shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air. Then I would lay with Anse” (Faulkner 175). In this way, regarding Whitfield “inside her circle of selfhood”, she assumes to gain an identity (Rueckert 53), despite still remaining as a wife in Anse’s arms. Addie’s crisis between reality and illusion is finally seen in her death because realizing that “there is no place in life- indeed no self- in life where one can simply Be” (Rueckert 295), she sees death behind her window as a way of escaping the truths inside, which is confirmed by her welcoming it in her “wedding dress” (Faulkner 88). Like Emma and Addie, Eveline is, also, revealed to be stuck between reality and illusion by her looking out her window, despite her inability to resist to “the odor of dusty cretonne” surrounding her real environment inside (Joyce 442). Thus, though situated by her window with the realities of her home acting like a “metronome” showing “the moral compulsions that hypnotize consciousness and preclude the possibility of meaningful change” (Henke 22), she desires what is behind her window. This fragmentation shown in Eveline is felt, firstly, by her relationship with Frank whom she loves just because he appears to be away from “the horrors of her life” (Wicke 234): “Then she would be married-she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been” (Joyce 444). This is



clarified by that though seeing him as “a prince who promises personal redemption and a future of wedded bliss” (Henke 22) with her “naive faith in appearances” (Spinks, 26), she is led into no more than an illusion, considering that Buenos Aires, the place where she hopes to gain solitude, was “a center for the importation of Irish women and girls whose poverty made them vulnerable to sexual exploitation” (Wenz 238). Following this, Emma’s crisis is, also, seen when she remembers her mother’s words, “Derevaun Seraun” (Joyce 445) meaning either “the end of pleasure is pain” or “the end of the song is raving madness” (Arp and Johnson 445) as they remind her of her attachment to the realities, despite failing to hinder her from still belonging to the other world reflected outside by the window. Most importantly, she experiences her final crisis by taking refuge in insanity as Schwarze claims that her “loss of cognition” and “descent into madness” in the final scene shows her “final escape” (111) although this cannot strip her off her participation in the patriarchal order.

To conclude, though appearing to have no significance with their seemingly transparent and fragile qualities, windows in *Madam Bovary*, *As I Lay Dying*, and “Eveline” offer multi-layered insights into the realities of their female protagonists, by revealing their Otherness, unveiling their masked identity, and showing their paradoxical crisis between the two worlds of reality and illusion, through their opaqueness. The windows go beyond simplicity in Flaubert, Faulkner, and Joyce, firstly, by revealing the protagonists’ Otherness, which is clarified by that notwithstanding their seemingly fragile quality appearing to give quick access to what lies behind them, they act like an iron barrier between them and the others and subject them to silence, as confirmed by Emma’s victimization to the state of nothingness, by Addie’s reduction to a corpse long before she dies, and by Eveline’s subjection to sexual discrimination. The windows in



Flaubert, Faulkner, and Joyce take on a crucial role secondly by giving insight into their female protagonists' masked identity, shown by the observation that situated behind their windows, all Emma, Addie, and Eveline hide their forbidden relations and lust for self-revelation. As such, though thirsty for liberation and for challenging the restrictions, the protagonists of the selected texts create a misguiding image behind their windows. The important role of the windows in Flaubert, Faulkner, and Joyce is displayed, finally, by their reflection of their protagonists' state as trapped between the realities of their world inside and the illusionary world reflected outside. Thus, stuck between the two worlds disjointed by their windows, Emma psychologically lives in the fantastic worlds of balls, books, adulterous affairs, and finally death although she is physically tied to conventions; Addie is divided between her unconventional life with Whitefield reflected outside and her confinement into motherhood inside; and finally Eveline exists in the illusionary world of Frank, though forcibly tied to her realities behind her window. To sum up, with their opaqueness and thickness veiled under the appearance of fragility and transparency, windows act as strong barriers and masks in Flaubert, Faulkner, and Joyce, and they display their protagonists' lives in a state of Otherness marked by a paradoxical crisis concealed with a masked identity. However, while this study focuses only on women's tie with windows, the fact that any man suffers from nothingness by coming into existence with his socially predetermined identity rather than with that of his own shows that each individual being lives behind windows by unconsciously existing in an illusionary world. As such, even when not looking out of window, it is shown that man already experiences an illusion inside by assuming his role he conforms to as if real, which is surely the most dangerous illusion ever experienced.



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