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May 10, 2010 013 Child Relations In the book "As I lay Dying" by William Faulkner the character that is dying name is Addie Bundren, the mother of five children. She was also the wife of no good Anse Bundren. Anse is lazy, selfish, no good farmer, who can hardly be called a farmer because he does almost none of the work himself. Out of an act of lust Addie and Anse married and ended up giving birth to Cash and Darl soon after. After the birth of her two sons Addie was bent on not having any more children. The birth of Cash confirms her feeling that words are irrelevant and that only physical experience has reality and significance. Through the act of giving birth she becomes part of the endless cycle of creation and destruction, discovering that for the first time her aloneness had been violated and then made whole again by the violation" (Vickey 54). Anse wanted as many children as possible so that he would have as many hands a possible to work for him, but Addie was determined to have no more. This made their marriage very rocky and lead to Addie requesting to be buried with her blood relatives in town.

In this time period this was hard because of the lack of transportation that they had as well as a lack of money. Her determination to not have any more children was brought to an end because she had an affair with Whittfield, which lead to the birth of Jewel. Anse did not know of this affair so he thought that jewel was his child. Addie decided to make it up to Anse by giving him two more children. " She consciously and deliberately gives Anse Dewey Dell to negative Jewel and Vardaman to replace him" (Vickey 55). Among the five children that she had Addie treated them all in a different way.

Addie especially treated Cash, Darl, and Dewey Dell very differently. The relationship between Cash and Addie is magnificent for many reasons. Out of the five children that Addie had she liked Cash's personality the most. Cash is the oldest of the five children. In addition to being the oldest, Cash is also a man of very few spoken words. He can be considered a very simple character compared to the others of the novel. For example, in his first narrative excerpt from *As I Lay Dying* Cash speaks in list form. {draw: custom-shape} This is one of the most simplistic forms of communication known.

As a skilled carpenter, Cash, went and built his mother's coffin, especially to her liking in front of the window in which she was slowly dying. Cash and Addie had a relationship based off very few spoken words. " Her blissful union with Cash exist beyond body language: Cash did not need to say it [love] to me nor I to him" (Clarke 38). Clarke is explaining in this passage how there are no words needed in the relationship between Addie and Cash. As Cash built his mother's coffin, for each piece that he completed he held up for her approval. " She's just watching Cash yonder" (Faulkner 9).

This shows how Addie was continuously looking out the window to check on Cash's progress on her coffin. Cash is extremely determined to complete the coffin. " With Cash all day long right under the window, hammering and sawing at that-----" (Faulkner 19). This is proof of their strong relationship because he spends all his time doing this strenuous task. " Work is Cash's way of communicating with Addie, his means of getting and holding her

attention, and thereby assuring that unspoken understanding that has always existed between them”(Bleikasten 179).

Bleikasten is showing that Cash rarely speaks unless it is through his actions such as building the coffin. Although Addie and Cash did have a very good relationship, Cash still needed something to help him cope with the death of his mother. For him this would be his carpentry skills. “ The carpentering itself is an activity in which Cash can immerse himself sufficiently to insulate himself from the harsh reality of his mother’s imminent death” (Powers 56). This is simply saying that Cash is using carpentry to replace his mother after her death. The work of mourning begins before death has actually occurred” (Bleikasten 178). The mourning begins early because Cash already has a strong feeling that his mother is about to pass on so he begins to work on her coffin. “ The building of the coffin should become for Cash the object of a manic counter investment. If he cannot be the jewel, he can at the very least be the jeweler, the maker of the perfect shrine in which the mother’s precious body is preserved. In nailing Addie into the coffin, Cash encloses himself with her, burying his desire and pain” (Bleikasten 179).

Cash making the most perfect coffin possible is his special way of mourning and the completion of the coffin with his mother’s body in he is enclosing his pain. “ The infant loved by his mother grows to be a man of deeds; and Addie, in the absence of Jewel, calls out to him at the moment of her death—and he continues that relationship in his silent agony on the wagon”(Williams 117). Addie and Dewey Dell did not have the best relationship but at the same time did not have the worse possible relationship. Addie felt

indifferently towards Dewey Dell, meaning that she didn't particularly care what happened with her.

She didn't really care because Dewey Dell was only meant to negate Jewel because it was her illegitimate child that Anse did not know of. Addie purposely gave Anse Dewey Dell and Vardaman to make up for the birth of Jewel. Dewey Dell clearly did not have the strongest relationship with her mother though. "Dewey Dell is not so clearly disturbed by her mother's death, yet her activity with the fan at Addie's bedside may be seen as similar in protective function to Cash's carpentry" (56 Powers). Dewey Dell too had something to substitute for her mother's death. Dewey Dell, terribly preoccupied by the bud of life within herself- the result of going to the woods, the 'secret shade,' with Lefe- can scarcely attend to Addie's death" (Powers 56). Dewey Dell quickly became pregnant after an agreement that she had with Lefe. Lefe manipulated the agreement and found a loop hole and ended up picking cotton into her basket. As she lost her virginity under the secret shade and realizes soon after that she is pregnant "Dewey Dell admits that 'the process of coming unalone is terrible'" (Williams 105).

It quickly became clear that "Dewey Dell has no need to replace the mother figuratively, for she replicates the mother in her own pregnancy" (Clarke 41). This shows that Addie and Dewey Dell really did not have a close relationship because even through her pregnancy she should have been attending to her mother's needs as she left this world. Further more as they took the casket into town, Dewey Dell's intent to go to town was so that she could try to find some abortion medicine, because like her mother she did not necessarily want

her first child at that point in time. So the daughter goes through the same experiences as her mother: in pregnancy Dewey Dell discovers as Addie did her destiny as begetter, and like her mother she is snatched from aloneness only to be thrown back to it" (Bleikasten 180). Although Addie and Dewey Dell have many similarities when it comes to their pregnancies they are also different. " Unlike Addie, she is determined, if possible, to effect their separation. Thus, she will not name her condition even to her self because to do so would be to transfer her pregnancy from her private world of awareness to the public world of fact" (Vickery 61).

Darl and Addie on the other hand had the worst possible relationship ever. This was proven several times throughout the novel *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner. Darl had said " I cannot love my mother because I have no mother" (Faulkner 95). This shows exactly how they have a bad relationship, but it is not just a one way street, Addie in turns hates Darl also. " Addie claims to have been tricked by a word in Darl's conception; she says that my revenge would be that he would never know I was taking revenge. And when Darl was born I asked Anse to promise to take me back to Jefferson when I died" (Williams 115).

This is the beginning of the dislike on Addie's behalf because she did not want another child to begin with, so she intended on getting revenge on Anse. " He too must finally cast the son most like him (Darl, the one that folks say is queer, lazy, pottering about the place no better than Anse, the one who most resembles his father looking out over the land...with eyes [that] look like pieces of burnt out cinder" (Williams 115). In this passage

Williams describes why Addie actually hates Darl. She hates Darl because she hates Anse with a passion, and Darl acts just like Anse in the sense that he is lazy like his father. Because Addie accepts the fact that she and Anse live in different worlds, her second child, Darl, comes as the ultimate and unforgivable outrage" (Vickey 54). Since Darl receives no love from his mother he makes it his duty to terrorize everyone else in the Bundren family minus Anse. " Never having had a mother, Darl is more surely possessed by her than any of his brothers. Darl's eyes, as Dewey Dell describe them, are full of the land dug out of his skull and the holes filled with distance beyond the land" (Bleikasten 188).

Darl is known for his abilities to communicate without words, " at times, a kind of nonlinguistic " feminine" intuition" (Clarke 35). Using this ability he continuously terrorized Dewey Dell because he was the only one whom knew of her pregnancy in the Bundren house hold. In one of Dewey Dell's narratives she said " He said he knew without words like he told me that ma is going to die without words, and I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with words I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us" (27).

What Dewey Dell is explaining is that Darl speaks to her without words and knows of all things that are happening and only the most important things Darl says with no words, such as the death of their mother. Darl also takes it upon himself to confuse his youngest brother Vardaman even more than he already is. For example, Vardaman says " My mother is a fish" (84). This shows how confused Vardaman really is. The conversation that Darl and

Vardaman had concerning Vardaman's mother being a fish and the horse being Jewel's mother really left Vardaman confused.

As if this little part was not confusing enough for the five year old, Darl then confesses that he does not have a mother. " I haven't got ere one, Darl said, Because if I had one it was. And if it is was, it can't be is. Can it" (101)? This conversation leaves Vardaman in a world of confusion. He now starts to doubt if Darl and Jewel are really his brothers. " Darl, who seems to float through a world of words, passing into peoples minds and crossing vast spaces at will" (Clarke 46). Darl was able to make everyone miserable because he had no substitute for his mother's death unlike everyone else in the family.

Vardaman had the fish to replace their mother, while Dewey Dell had her pregnancy to occupy her mom, Jewel had his horse, and Cash had his carpentry to replace the emptiness left by their mother's death. Darl had no substitute " because he never had a mother to replace" (Clarke 46). Darl said this several times throughout the novel in many variations. For example, " I can not love my mother because I have no mother" (95). There is a reason why Darl feels this way and Addie in turn hates Darl also. Darl's feeling that he is not a part of his mother is more than just an expression of sibling rivalry. Addie's rejection of him is absolute; it is the most terrible thing she does. " The rejection by his own mother makes Darl feels that he has no mother especially as a support system. In turn Addie rejects him because he is just like his father Anse of whom she despises as said previously. As a resulting factor " for Darl, the constant exception, the

journey is a continual nuisance, and he wants only to see his mother- distinctly dead- buried and out of the way”(Powers 61).

Darl is constantly suffering emotionally throughout his life due to the absence of his mother, and continues to be affected by his lack of motherly guidance once Addie actually passes away. “ His brothers, as we have seen, all end up some how displacing their grief and replacing Addie: Jewel with a horse, Vardaman with a fish, Cash with a coffin. But Darl’s mother is literally irreplaceable” (Bleikasten 188). Darl’s mother is irreplaceable because all his life he never had one because he was despised by Addie. In conclusion Addie Bundren had very different relationships with her children.

After her death all her children had different ways of coping with her loss also. The relationship with Addie varied greatly from her children Cash, Dewey Dell, and Darl. Cash, her oldest child, she had a great relationship with. They loved and understood one another through the minimum use of words possible. Often times they communicated through body gestures and other types of movement. To substitute the emptiness in Cash’s heart due to the death of his mother, he focused on carpentry. Cash hand built Addie’s coffin to her approval as she looked beyond the window as she lay there dying.

Addie and Dewey Dell had a relationship in which they felt indifferently about one another. They basically coexisted within the same house hold. Addie brought Dewey Dell into the world with a purpose: to “ negative” Jewel because he was Addie’s illegitimate son. Dewey Dell also had a replacement for her mother after her death. At the time of Addie’s death, Dewey Dell is

pregnant with her first child. This pregnancy takes the focus that Addie would have had on Addie and redirects towards an illegitimate child of her own because she is not married. And then there was Darl.

Addie and Darl had the worst relationship possible between a mother and a son. They hated each other. Addie despised Darl because he was just like her husband Anse of whom she also despised. Darl also was her second child who she really did not want to have at all. This was the point in which she vowed to seek revenge upon Anse and made Darl an outcast. As for Darl, he hated Addie because she never mothered him his whole life, which left him broken emotionally causing him to terrorize the rest of his siblings especially his younger ones. Darl did not have a substitute for the death of his mother.

In Darl's eyes he had no mother so the mourning of her would be pointless for him. Work Cited Bleikasten, Andre. *The Ink of Melancholy*. Requiem for a Mother. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. 1990 Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Powers, Lyall H. *Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Comedy*. : The University Of Michigan Press. Ann Arbor. Vickey, Olga W. *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959. Print Williams, David. *Faulkner's Women: the Myth and the Muse*. University of Toronto Press. 1977.