

الهونتولوجيا في الدراسات الأدبية: المجالات والعلاقات والاطر النظرية

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المستخلص :-

يتناول هذا البحث استخدام مفهوم الهونتولوجيا في الدراسات الأدبية، ويسعى إلى تقديم إطار مفاهيمي ومنهجي أكثر وضوحاً لتطبيقه. يعتمد البحث منهجية نوعية نقدية قائمة على المراجعة المفاهيمية والتركيب التحليلي، ويتتبع تطور الهونتولوجيا من صياغتها الفلسفية عند جاك دريدا في "أطياف ماركس" إلى تحولها في النقد الثقافي عند مارك فيشر وتطبيقاتها في النقد الأدبي المعاصر. يركز البحث على ثلاثة جوانب مترابطة: المجالات الأدبية الرئيسية التي تعمل فيها الهونتولوجيا كأداة قراءة نقدية، والعلاقات النصية التي تنتجها القراءة الهونتولوجية، والاطر النظرية التي طبق من خلالها المفهوم. يحدد البحث أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، وأدب الصدمة والذاكرة، والخيال العلمي، والأدب القوطي الجديد كمجالات رئيسية تستجيب للتحليل الهونتولوجي. كما يوضح أربع علاقات أساسية: الزمانية، والوجودية، والنصية، والسلطوية. وأخيراً، يقارن البحث بين الأطر المنهجية الثلاثة: التفكيكي الدريدي، والثقافي-النقدي الفيشري، والنفسي-الترومي، موضحاً مساهمة كل منها في التحليل الأدبي. يخلص البحث إلى أن الهونتولوجيا تقدم مقاربة مفيدة لقراءة النصوص المتشكلة بفعل الذاكرة، والصدمة التاريخية، والغياب، والمستقبلات الضائعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الهونتولوجيا، الدراسات الأدبية، الطيفية، التفكيكية، الذاكرة والصدمة، المستقبل الضائع .

The Ontology in Literary Studies: Fields, Relationships, and Theoretical Frameworks

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Abstract

This research examines the use of hauntology in literary studies and addresses the need for a clearer conceptual and methodological framework for its application. It adopts a qualitative critical methodology based on conceptual review and analytical synthesis, tracing hauntology from Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx to its later development in Mark Fisher's cultural criticism and its applications in contemporary literary criticism. The study focuses on three related aspects: the main literary fields in which hauntology functions as a critical reading tool, the textual relations produced by hauntological reading, and the theoretical frameworks through which the concept has been applied. It identifies postcolonial literature, trauma and memory narratives, science fiction, and the new gothic as major fields responsive to hauntological analysis. It also clarifies four key relations: temporal, existential, textual, and authoritarian. Finally, the study compares the Derridean deconstructive, Fisherian cultural-critical, and psychoanalytic-traumatic frameworks, showing how each contributes to literary analysis. The research concludes that hauntology offers a useful approach for reading texts shaped by memory, historical trauma, absence, and lost futures.

Keywords/ Hauntology, Literary Studies, Spectrality, Deconstruction, Memory and Trauma, Lost Futures. Others keywords / Deconstruction, Memory and Trauma, Hauntology

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework:

1. Research Problem and Questions: -

Since Jacques Derrida's formulation of hauntology in *Specters of Marx*, the concept has moved from its philosophical context into literary and cultural studies (Derrida, 1994, pp. xviii–xx, 9–11; Blanco & Peeren, 2013, pp. 1–28). Later critics, most notably Mark Fisher, expanded its critical use by linking it to cultural memory, nostalgia, and the problem of lost futures (Fisher, 2014, pp. 1–10). As a result, hauntology has been applied to several literary and cultural fields, including postcolonial literature, trauma and memory narratives, science fiction, and the new gothic. These applications show the productivity of the concept, but they also reveal a degree of methodological dispersion in its use. Existing scholarship offers important philosophical, cultural, and critical contributions; however, it does not always provide a unified procedural model for literary analysis. Accordingly, this study approaches hauntology through three connected methodological needs: classifying its main literary fields, analyzing the relations it produces within literary texts, and evaluating the theoretical frameworks through which it has been applied.

1- Taxonomic need: This need concerns the classification of the main literary fields in which hauntology functions as an effective reading tool. Such classification helps clarify its use in texts marked by temporal overlap, the pressure of unresolved pasts, and the return of suppressed memories or unrealized futures.

٢- Analytical need: This need concerns the clarification of the main dialectical relations that hauntological reading produces within literary texts: temporal, existential, textual, and authoritarian. Identifying these relations helps explain how hauntology operates as an analytical approach, rather than treating it as a general metaphor for absence, return, or spectral presence.

3- Evaluative need: This need concerns the comparison of the main methodological frameworks through which hauntology has been applied, especially the Derridean deconstructive framework, the Fisherian cultural-critical framework, and the psychoanalytic-traumatic framework. Such comparison helps assess the strengths and limits of each framework in relation to literary analysis.

Therefore, this research addresses these methodological needs through a qualitative critical study based on conceptual review and analytical synthesis. It seeks to do so by answering the following research questions, each of which corresponds to one of the three needs identified above:

What are the main literary fields, textual relations, and theoretical frameworks through which hauntology operates as a critical approach in literary studies?.

2. Methodology and Scope

1.2 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative critical methodology based on conceptual review and analytical synthesis. It traces the historical-theoretical development of hauntology from Derrida's formulation in *Specters of Marx* (Derrida, 1994, pp. xviii–xx, 9–11), through its transformation into a tool for analyzing contemporary culture in the work of Mark Fisher (Fisher, 2014, pp. 1–10), to its reception and application in literary, critical, and cultural studies (Blanco & Peeren, 2013, pp. 1–28). This review is used as a basis for clarifying the concept's core components rather than as a descriptive survey: the "specter" as a mode of presence that unsettles temporal order, "distorted time" (Derrida, 1994, p. 6), and the "lost future" (Fisher, 2014, p. 8). These components are examined through deconstructive philosophy (Derrida, 1994, pp. 9–11) and psychoanalysis (Davis, 2007, pp. 10–16).

The study then analyzes death and absence as two central conceptual pillars of hauntology. Death is treated not as an absolute end, but as a spectral presence that reshapes the relation between the self, time, and memory. Absence is treated not as emptiness, but as a continuing trace manifested through trauma, memory, and collective experience. This analysis explains how spectrality operates within literary texts and supports the derivation of four dialectical relations: temporal, existential, textual, and authoritarian.

Finally, the study moves from conceptual review to critical analysis by examining hauntology alongside adjacent concepts, including the "uncanny" (Royle, 2003, pp. 1–3), "archival memory" (Huyssen, 2003, pp. 1–7), and "postcolonial criticism" (Gordon, 2008, pp. xv–xvi, 8). It also compares the main frameworks through which hauntology has been applied to literary texts (Blanco & Peeren, 2013, pp. 24–26). On this basis, the study identifies the literary fields in which hauntology functions as a critical reading tool, including postcolonial literature (Gordon, 2008, pp. 139–166), the new gothic (Royle, 2003, pp. 2, 15–20), and the literature of memory and utopia. Thus, the methodology proceeds through review, conceptual clarification, analytical derivation, and comparative evaluation.

1.2.2 Scope of the Research

This study is limited by the following parameters:

- 1- Temporal focus: The study begins with Derrida's formulation of hauntology in 1993 and traces its main theoretical and critical developments in literary studies.
- 2- Sources and languages: The study relies primarily on theoretical and critical sources in English, since the concept of hauntology has been developed and applied mainly within English-language literary and cultural criticism.
- 3- Thematic scope: The study focuses on the theoretical and literary-critical uses of hauntology. References to other creative fields are used only when they clarify the concept's relevance to literary analysis.

4- Cultural-critical context: The study follows the main trajectory of hauntology within Western critical discourse, while allowing limited observations on its possible application beyond that context.

1.2.3 Hauntology versus Ontology

This section examines the shift from traditional ontology to Derridean hauntology. Ontology is generally concerned with being, essence, and presence. It tends to understand existence through stable distinctions such as presence and absence, being and non-being, inside and outside. In this sense, ontology seeks conceptual stability and epistemological certainty (Heidegger, 1962).

Derrida's argument also shows why ghosts and specters require a hauntological rather than a strictly ontological mode of analysis. Spectrality refers to a form of presence that is "neither present nor absent, neither positive nor negative, neither inside nor outside" (Good, 2019, p. 418, citing Derrida, 1998, p. 88). In this sense, it unsettles the binary logic on which traditional ontology depends.

Hauntology therefore becomes more than a theoretical concept. It introduces an ethical way of thinking about the relation between the living, the dead, and those who are yet to come. Derrida links this responsibility to the need "to learn to live finally" with ghosts (Derrida, 1994, p. xviii). This means that the present is shaped by unresolved pasts, forgotten injustices, and future responsibilities. Unlike ontology, which seeks stable presence and fixed essence, hauntology attends to traces, absences, and unfinished forms of historical responsibility. It is therefore not limited to supernatural phenomena, but offers a framework for understanding time, memory, and ethical responsibility in literary and cultural discourse.

The term also depends on the phonetic proximity between "ontology" and "hauntology," which Derrida uses to place spectrality at the center of philosophical inquiry (Sterling, 2021, p. 70). While ontology asks about being in terms of presence and essence, hauntology asks how what is absent can still act within the present. This shift challenges the assumption that existence can be separated from the traces of the past and the unrealized possibilities of the future (Good, 2019, p. 418, citing Derrida, 1998, p. 88). It also responds to a political and cultural present that imagines itself free from earlier ideologies, although it remains haunted by their unresolved effects (Derrida, 1994, p. xix).

Hauntology revolves around three interrelated conceptual pillars:

The concept of "spectrality," which embodies an irreducible ontological ambiguity (Sterling, 2021, p. 71, citing Ruin, 2019, pp. 416-417), where the specter challenges binary logic through the state of the "absent presence" or the "present absence." It is "an active force despite its material incompleteness, and an influential existence despite its virtual character" (Derrida, 1994, p. 10), thereby undermining any claim to a self-sufficient present existence.

Thus, grasping this concept makes it possible to brilliantly grasp the central problematic that constitutes the essence of the Derridean hauntological project, namely the deconstruction of the illusion of the self-sufficient present. The idea



of "spectrality" is not merely a concept within a conceptual network; it is the very condition for thinking about existence after Derrida. The specter, as an "absent presence" and "present absence," embodies the productive ontological contradiction. It is not merely a ghost returning from the past; it is an embodiment of the present itself in its fractured state. The specter reveals that the present was never a coherent whole, but rather a structure based on exclusion and forgetting. The phrase "an active force despite its material incompleteness" points to the heart of the metaphysical logic based on essence and matter, offering an alternative consisting of the agency of non-being, or the effect of "nothingness".

This redefines the relationship between matter and meaning, between reality and imagination. The ethereal (the specter) becomes more effective and more real than silent matter. More importantly, this conception leads to a new epistemological ethics. If the present is fragmented and penetrated by spectral forces, then the task of thought lies not only in interpreting the world but also in recognizing its responsibility toward the ghosts it produces. Spectrality, in this sense, is a self-critique of presence. It reminds presence of its fragility and its impossible debt toward what it has excluded. Accordingly, the question shifts from "how do we explain ghosts?" to "how do we allow ghosts to reshape our very interpretive frameworks?" This shift calls for destabilizing the position of the knowing self. It turns the self into a space that receives and responds to invisible forces, forces that carry an ethical weight even when they are not directly visible. Thus, hauntology transforms from a theory about the past into a practice of the present. In this practice, the present re-examines its legitimacy by invoking what has been excluded. This is what makes spectrality more than just a conceptual pillar. It is the critical stance itself that makes existence an open question of its repressed possibilities and accountable for its silent history.

The second concept arises where hauntology engages with the idea of fragmented time, or "time outside calculations and history" (Derrida, 1994, p. 18), where the past "that was not buried with dignity" mixes with a future "that was promised but did not materialize" (Fisher, 2014, p. 19). It does not deal with time as a sequential series, but as simultaneous layers of intertwined times.

The third concept: hauntology carries within it an "ethical and political obligation" (Derrida, 1994, p. xviii). It is a call "to bear responsibility for memory and heritage towards those who are no longer materially present, and also towards those who have not yet been born" (Derrida, 1994, p. xviii). It imposes upon us to learn how to live with ghosts, in that ethical distance between life and death.

Based on the review of these three concepts, the essential contrast between the hauntological perspective and the traditional ontological perspective becomes clear when comparing their central questions and assumptions. While the ontological question seeks to determine the essence of existence and the substance of the present, the hauntological question investigates the nature of

the trace, the specter, and its contradictory mode of presence. If ontological temporality is linear, based on succession and singularity, then hauntological temporality is fragmented, based on interpenetration and improbability. Ontological logic tends to affirm decisive dualities, while hauntological logic deconstructs these dualities to reveal the interstitial spaces inhabited by ghosts. This theoretical difference entails a difference in ethical stance. If the ontological stance is essentially descriptive, the hauntological stance is subversive and committed, linking knowledge to justice and historical responsibility.

These conceptual frameworks find rich applications in the fields of literary and cultural studies. They enable the analysis of the return of repressed historical traumas, "such as the memory of colonial violence, in the form of cultural symptoms and narrative representations" (Good, 2019, pp. 411-412). They also offer a tool for reading the "spectral text" with all its absent references and dialogues with other texts and marginalized voices that hover in the margins of dominant discourse. Furthermore, hauntology enables "the critique of the modernist narrative of progress by tracing its ghosts – failed projects, neglected principles, and possibilities that were closed off" (Demos, 2013, p. 13).

In the context of contemporary culture, hauntology is used "to understand phenomena such as aesthetic nostalgia and the dominant cultural feeling of the loss or cancellation of the future under late capitalism" (Fisher, 2014, pp. 16-24). In conclusion, hauntology is not reducible to an approach for studying ghosts; rather, it is a comprehensive critical methodology that reshapes the horizon of thinking about the conditions of existence and knowledge within a world saturated with traces of the past and harbingers of the future. It is, in its essence, a philosophical and ethical response to the fragmented nature of modern time, where the present transforms from a solid mass disconnected from its past or future into a space haunted by specters – specters of historical injustices that have not been accounted for, repressed memories that refuse silence, and promising futures that were aborted before their time.

Hauntology requires a reconsideration of knowledge itself. Knowledge does not arise only from examining what is present and evident; it also depends on analyzing the traces of what is absent, concealed, or historically repressed. In this sense, hauntology shifts the ontological question from "What is being?" to a more ethical and critical question: how do we account for the ghosts that shape the present, and how do we respond to the histories and futures they invoke? This shift changes the researcher's position from a neutral describer of presence to a critic attentive to the absent forces that structure literary and cultural discourse.

By virtue of this shift, hauntology offers an indispensable framework for any serious research in the humanities, from literary analysis and cultural criticism to historical studies and the anthropology of memory. It enables us to deconstruct hegemonic narratives by tracing what they have excluded and

concealed of voices and experiences, and allows us to read texts as spectral fields where absent voices interact with manifest discourse. It also enables the analysis of contemporary culture not merely as a product of the present moment, but as a complexity resulting from the accumulations of the past and the failures of the future. Moreover, hauntology establishes an ethics of memory based on responsibility towards the absent victims and future generations, considering that a condition for any possible justice.

Thus, hauntology does not merely transcend descriptive simplicity towards complex critical understanding; it pushes this understanding to the limits of ethical practice. It is a continuous call to "learn to live finally," as Derrida says, but this learning does not take place in an ivory tower, but rather in that difficult location where one must address ghosts and respond to their impossible demands. In this sense, hauntology is more than a theoretical framework; it is an existential and critical stance that equips the researcher to confront the complexities of our spectral world, where deep analysis meets ethical commitment in a single task: deciphering the present through a courageous and honest dialogue with its specters.

As for the structural shift of the term hauntology as a comprehensive cultural critique, it begins with the rise of Mark Fisher as the most prominent representative of the second generation of hauntologists. A radical transformation occurred in the nature and function of the concept through his efforts when Fisher turned hauntology from a tool for analyzing the past into a diagnosis of the present cultural condition, focusing on the idea of the "lost future" as a central feature of late capitalism. He indicated in his insightful analysis of the contemporary cultural scene that "popular culture has become haunted by a pathological nostalgia for imaginary futures from the past, reflecting an inability to produce authentic future conceptions"(Fisher, 2014, p. 19). Naturally, this structural shift transferred hauntology from the sphere of specialized literary criticism to a comprehensive cultural theory, becoming a tool for analyzing various phenomena such as:

Digital aesthetics and the reproduction of the past in new media.

The attention economy and the consumption of collective memory.

The crisis of historical time in contemporary political discourse.

Then, as a result of Fisher's efforts, the process of institutionalization reached its peak with the emergence of institutions and academic publications specialized in spectral studies, such as the publication of books like *The Spectralities Reader*, edited by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren in 2013, which provided "a comprehensive survey of theoretical and practical developments in this emerging field" (Blanco & Peeren, 2013, p. 1). In another context, journals such as *HAUNT* and *Spectral Studies* were founded, and these platforms provided a distinguished critical space for hauntological research.

This institutionalization was accompanied by the development of specific analytical methodologies, such as:

Spectral text analysis: focusing on gaps, repetitions, and structural absences.

Haunted archive reading: paying attention to documents and cultural remnants as carriers of spectral memory.

Fragmented narrative time analysis: studying temporal disturbances in the contemporary novel.

Today, it can be said that hauntology has surpassed the founding phase to become a mature critical field with clear methodological boundaries and a rich conceptual arsenal. This maturity did not come from nowhere; it was the result of a precise cumulative process carried out by critics who transformed Derrida's abstract metaphor into a productive analytical framework. From Derrida's critique of ontology to Gordon's analysis of spectral social forces, to Fisher's diagnosis of the cultural crisis of the future, the concept underwent essential transformations that expanded its operational horizons without losing its theoretical coherence.

The current strength of hauntology lies in its ability to combine philosophical depth with methodological precision, making it an indispensable tool for deciphering our complex world, where times overlap, memories clash, and the ghosts of a past that has not been buried with dignity rise to the surface. In this sense, the transition from spectrality to hauntology was not merely a terminological change; it was a radical epistemological transformation that reshaped our ways of thinking about the complex relationship between past, present, and future.

Chapter Two: Hauntology between Presence and Specter: A Deconstructive Reading

People rarely pay attention to a fact that seems obvious in everyday experience but is profoundly deep in terms of philosophical structure: we do not live alone; rather, we carry the dead with us, or rather we carry their traces, and we host their presence in our consciousness, behavior, and perceptions of time and meaning. In this context, Jacques Derrida's thesis emerges as one of the most intellectually provocative attempts to rethink the concepts of death, absence, memory, and identity, through his deconstructive project that not only dismantles the metaphysical structures of meaning but opens them to a new ethical and political horizon.

This section of the study aims to demonstrate the structural and philosophical connection between the concept of deconstruction and the concept of hauntology, by analyzing the relationship between deconstruction and spectrality through two main axes: death and absence. These axes are not incidental topics; rather, they represent fields within which hauntology operates as a conceptual extension of deconstruction.

2.1 Death as an Entry Point to Hauntology

From a hauntological perspective, death is not treated only as an external event that happens to the other. It also reshapes the self's relation to memory, time, and meaning. The death of the other does not simply mark absence or

disappearance; it disrupts the network of relations, memories, and meanings through which everyday life is formed. This conception destabilizes the traditional binary of life and death and opens the way to a more complex understanding of presence and absence. In this view, "the dead become an integral part of the world of the living, not merely as memories but as active forces influencing the formation of identities and behaviors" (Good, 2019, p. 413). Colin Davis reinforces this conception by describing Derrida's specter as oscillating between life and death, presence and absence. The specter is "neither fully alive nor fully dead," but an ambiguous form that unsettles the dualities of Western metaphysics (Good, 2019, p. 413).

From this perspective, hauntology does not treat death as a simple return of the dead to the world of the living. Rather, it understands death as a continuing spectral presence that shapes the self's awareness of time, memory, and meaning. Death is therefore not only a future event, but also a condition that affects how the self understands its present existence. In this sense, death becomes "a hidden presence that accompanies the self at every moment, shaping its consciousness of time and meaning" (Good, 2019, p. 413).

In this context, the burial of the dead acquires a symbolic dimension that goes beyond religious or social ritual. If the dead are not symbolically buried, that is, if they are not given a place in memory and consciousness, they return as unresolved traces that haunt the present and restrict the possibilities of the self. In this sense, burial may refer to the symbolic processing of a painful past or the reinterpretation of unresolved traumas. If the past is not reinterpreted, it may return in a more disruptive form, as a recurring specter that affects the present and limits the self's capacity for renewal (Good, 2019, p. 413).

The impact of death may also involve an ethical responsibility toward those who have departed and those who have not yet come. Ghosts and specters are not merely incorporeal figures returning from the past; they function as social forces that demand justice for those who are marginal, absent, or not yet present. This approach transforms death from an individual event into a collective issue connected to memory, inheritance, and future generations. It also makes the engagement with specters an ethical and political task, since "addressing these specters is part of our responsibility towards past and future generations, those who appear as ghosts demanding justice, and those future generations who will be affected by our responses to these ghosts" (Good, 2019, p. 419, citing Derrida, 1994, p. xix).

The power of the hauntological conception of death manifests in its ability to disrupt the linear logic of time, neutralize the deterministic dualities that constrain the emergence of interpretations of this spectral region, and confuse traditional calculations of age and existence. When Dewi Ayu returns from her grave after twenty-one years – as in Eka Kurniawan's novel – it becomes "impossible to calculate her age precisely, and the boundaries between past and present, between life and death, collapse" (McGarry, 2008, p. 2, citing

Kurniawan, 2015). These temporal disturbances open new possibilities for thinking about identity and memory, and make death a permanent presence that reshapes our relationship with time and meaning. Her sudden rising from the grave and her return as a ghost "no one knows how to calculate its age exactly" (McGarry, 2008, p. 2) is what raises fundamental questions about the nature of time and existence.

Death acquires a collective dimension in post-conflict and war societies, especially in Eastern societies, where individual losses transform into a collective memory that haunts the present and shapes identity through its influence on the individual and collective unconscious. The dead here are not merely individuals who have passed away; they are witnesses to the violence of political systems and the tragedies of wars and conflicts, and carriers of secrets that authorities do not wish to reveal. For example, in the context of his work in Indonesia, Byron Good describes how stories and ghosts haunt the collective memory, saying: "In June, we heard explicit ghost stories. We were told: we often hear people moaning at night, calling out. Then we call, and they go away. Do they come in your dreams? I myself often see a woman wearing a robe. She is indistinct, approaches, but leaves" (Good, 2019, pp. 415-416). Regarding the famous Asian tsunami, with the death of nearly two hundred thousand people, the disappearance of thousands of homes and entire communities, the stories of the rising sea, the living memories of terror and survival while others perished, and stories of loss, all are disturbing and deeply affecting within the space of Asian thought and literature. This haunted memory demands from us a more complex understanding of the relationship between death and politics, between collective loss and the possibilities of resistance and liberation from the dominance of death summoned by ghosts. As one Asian critic says, "Many Acehnese are haunted by ghosts, and almost everyone is haunted by memories. I am haunted by stories" (Good, 2019, p. 416).

The human relationship with death cannot be understood in isolation from the cultural practices and social rituals that shape it. Death, in Victorian culture for example, transformed into a complex ritual of mourning and remembrance, where photographs of the dead and commemorative artifacts were means of preserving their symbolic presence. Ghost photographs, in which a ghostly likeness appears as a whispered image within a traditional photograph, were keepsakes in the nineteenth century, precious objects in which the living and the dead were reunited through the magic and manipulations of photography. Like freezing an image on a photographic plate, capturing ghosts for spiritualists was a collapse of time, where "the past is preserved in the present for the future" (McGarry, 2008, p. 20). However, these practices, as Molly McGarry points out, carried within them deep contradictions between the desire to preserve the memory of the dead and turning them into consumer commodities. Here, spiritualism emerges "as an alternative offering collective consolation that transcends the logic of consumption and empty rituals, for spiritualism gave



believers a community of mourners that could take them beyond personal grief and the domesticated emotional rituals of bourgeois mourning, instead offering new possibilities for life" (McGarry, 2008, p. 26).

2.2 Absence as a Continuation of Presence / An In-depth Analytical Treatment of the Psychoanalytic-Traumatic Dimension in Hauntology :-

This part of the research presents an in-depth analytical treatment of the psychoanalytic-traumatic dimension in hauntology, drawing on concepts from psychoanalysis. It is perhaps obvious to say that understanding hauntology cannot be achieved in any way without rethinking the concept of absence itself. Absence, in this philosophical horizon, does not indicate mere emptiness or non-presence that can be compensated or filled; rather, it always refers to a specific mode of hidden human existence. In other words, absence is not understood as a simple opposite of presence, but as a presence of another kind, a presence of what does not appear except through its trace. In this context, Jacques Derrida clarifies that "the specter does not belong to the logic of complete presence nor to the logic of absolute absence, but is situated in a liminal zone where traditional metaphysical dualities crack. Accordingly, absence becomes an active force participating in the formation of the present and the reformulation of its meanings, so that it is no longer merely the opposite of presence, but a condition for its possibility, and a foundation through which identity, memory, and meaning are constituted" (Good, 2019, p. 419, citing Derrida, 1998, p. 88).

In this framework, the specificity of the hauntological approach becomes clear, as it does not view absence as a final loss or complete rupture, but as a continuous trace that remains active within the fabric of the present. Moreover, this trace manifests through multiple media such as memory, language, trauma, rituals, and symbolic residues that accumulate in individual and collective consciousness. Hence, it can be said that the dead, as demonstrated in the previous axis, do not absolutely disappear but remain present as specters that influence the perceptions and behavior of the living, and reshape their consciousness of time and destiny. For this reason, Derrida calls on us to trace and analyze this absent agency, not as a traditional object of knowledge, but as a challenge to its very structure. The specter, according to Derrida, "no longer belongs to knowledge, at least to what we think we know as knowledge" (Derrida, 1994, p. 6).

In light of this conceptual shift, hauntology raises questions about the limits of knowledge and interpretation. Lorek-Jezińska and Więckowska describe this problem as an "epistemological crisis" (2017, pp. 9–10), because the specter resists stable classification, measurement, and prediction. The specter presents a form of presence that cannot be denied, yet cannot be fully grasped by conventional analytical tools. This does not mean a failure of knowledge, but rather a recognition that some objects of analysis require methods capable of dealing with uncertainty, absence, and partial visibility. In this sense, hauntology invites a form of knowledge that acknowledges its own limits and

responds to what exceeds traditional cognitive frameworks (Lorek-Jezińska & Więckowska, 2017, pp. 9–10).

This conception is clearly manifested in the analysis of individual and collective memory, where the absent transforms into a specter that haunts the present and reveals the wounds and scars of the past. For example, the works of the writer W. G. Sebald present a telling model of this spectral presence, where "the ghosts of the past appear through photographs and texts that destabilize the relationship between reality and its representation. Thus, the image is no longer evidence of the presence of the thing, but a trace indicating its absence, a sign of what was and is no longer, and of what resists complete retrieval" (Kolenda, 2017, p. 18).

At another level, absence can be understood through Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's concepts of the psychic crypt and the phantom. The psychic crypt refers to a structure formed when mourning fails and the lost object is preserved within the self rather than fully acknowledged or worked through. In this sense, what returns is not the dead person as such, but an unresolved secret or unprocessed loss that continues to affect the living and may be transmitted across generations. This helps explain how absence remains active within memory, language, and family or collective histories (Abraham, 1994, pp. 171–175).

This conception then makes it possible to interpret the return of past traumas to the present, and explains how undisclosed secrets can affect the behavior of individuals and groups in unconscious ways. Consequently, it becomes clear that the absent, the unspoken, and the repressed remain active even without being present in explicit consciousness or official discourse. Thus, "the essence of hauntology becomes the view of absence as a dynamic continuity, not as a final conclusion of human experience" (Lorek-Jezińska & Więckowska, 2017, pp. 14-15).

In this regard, hauntology becomes an analytical tool capable of deconstructing hegemonic discourses and revealing the marginalized voices concealed behind them. According to Avery Gordon's conception, "ghosts are not merely a literary metaphor, but an actual component of social life. In this way, the study of society cannot be completed without tracing the effects of exclusion and marginalization that turn into specters haunting the present. Hence, dealing with ghosts means, in its essence, confronting what is painful, difficult, and disturbing, i.e., confronting history in its hidden layers that were not allowed to appear in official discourse" (Gordon, 2008, p. 23, cited in Lorek-Jezińska & Więckowska, 2017, p. 14).

This conception also has an ethical dimension in Derrida's discussion of justice. Justice cannot be limited to the living present; it must also include responsibility toward the dead and future generations. For Derrida, this responsibility extends to those who are no longer present and to those who are not yet present, including victims of war, political violence, imperialism, and other forms of



domination (Derrida, 1994, p. xix). In this sense, absence becomes an ethical demand addressed to the present. This spectral dimension is not limited to the past, but also extends to unrealized futures. Rahimi similarly argues that ghosts do not belong entirely to the past or the present; they also mark futures that were interrupted before they could be realized. At this level, the specter can be connected to Fisher's idea of the lost future, where unrealized possibilities continue to shape and disturb the present (Rahimi, 2021, p. 6).

On this basis, hauntological thinking opens onto a different conception of time itself. Instead of linear time flowing from the past to the future, we encounter a "dislocated" time in which temporal layers mix and intertwine. Thus, the present is not identical with itself, but split between what was and what will be. For this reason, Derrida says that the specter "always remains coming and returning, that is, it constantly moves between presence and absence, between past and future, making time a complex experience that cannot be reduced to simple linearity" (Derrida, 1994, p. 99).

At another level of analysis, the profound relationship between absence and writing becomes clear. Texts are not merely carriers of meaning, but spaces in which the specters of absent meanings and the voices of readers and authors move. In this sense, Julian Wolfreys argues that the text carries a spectral nature, as it possesses an undeniable material trace, yet at the same time lacks direct material presence. Thus, hauntological reading transforms into a double act: a text haunting other texts, a reading haunted by previous readings, and a meaning formed through the absence of other meanings (Wolfreys, cited in Fisher, 2012, p.16).

In light of the foregoing, it can be said that absence, in the hauntological perspective, does not represent the opposite of presence but its deep extension. It does not indicate emptiness, but a hidden fullness of what is no longer directly present. Thus, hauntology becomes a science of ghosts; that is, a science of what is absent yet present, what is lost yet active, what is unspoken yet still capable of speaking within the layers of history and memory. Hence, its analytical power lies in its ability to reveal what is concealed behind the discourse of presence, to do justice to those who have been erased by official narratives, and to restore future possibilities whose doors were closed before they were born.

Finally, through the preceding analysis of the concepts of death and absence, the deep structure upon which hauntology rests becomes clear. Death, as a hidden presence that reshapes time and identity, establishes two of the fundamental dialectical relationships that will be formulated later: the temporal relationship (where the past penetrates the present and linear time becomes fragmented) and the existential relationship (where being becomes carried by absence, and characters transform into spectral beings living in a liminal zone between life and death). As for absence, as a dynamic continuity of trace, trauma, and collective memory, it establishes the other two dimensions: the textual relationship (the text as a space haunted by other texts and marginalized voices hovering in its margins) and the authoritarian relationship (the return of the

repressed and historically silenced to reveal the mechanisms of producing official forgetting and marginalizing alternative memories). In this sense, the four relationships that follow are not a separate theoretical derivation, but a natural extension of the philosophical analysis of death and absence, and an embodiment of them at the level of literary reading.

Conclusion

This research set out from the observation that hauntology has been widely adopted in literary studies, while its application still requires clearer conceptual and methodological organization. It therefore addressed three connected methodological needs: the classification of the literary fields in which hauntology functions as a critical reading tool, the clarification of the textual relations produced by hauntological reading, and the evaluation of the main theoretical frameworks through which the concept has been applied. The study approached these needs through conceptual review and analytical synthesis, tracing the development of the concept from its philosophical formulation to its critical applications, then analyzing its two central pillars: death and absence.

In the trajectory of conceptual development, the research confirmed that hauntology was not born fully mature in Derrida's foundational text; rather, it underwent essential transformations shaped by innovative critics. After the philosophical synthesis by Jacques Derrida, who used spectrality as a tool to deconstruct metaphysical dualities, Avery Gordon came to transform the concept from a rhetorical metaphor into an epistemological structure capable of analyzing the persistence of historical injustices in the social present. Then Mark Fisher completed the trajectory by shifting attention from the past to the lost future, thereby establishing a critical tool for diagnosing the culture of late capitalism where the past is recycled instead of inventing the future. This development was not merely an expansion of the term's applications, but a redefinition of its purpose: from revealing the complexities of time to the critical commitment to interrogating the present through its ghosts.

On the other hand, the philosophical analysis of death and absence revealed that hauntology offers an alternative conception of death that challenges the traditional binary of life and death, as the dead remain present as specters influencing the behavior and consciousness of the living. This spectral presence manifests in cultural practices and psychic structures, such as the concept of the psychic crypt as developed by Abraham and Torok. Absence, in this perspective, does not indicate emptiness but a form of presence that requires a different kind of knowledge, one that acknowledges its own limits.

Proceeding from this analysis, the synthetic results of the research could be extracted. At the taxonomical level, and based on the shift brought about by Gordon and Fisher, it became clear that hauntology concentrates its effectiveness in specific literary fields where times intersect and voices intertwine: trauma and memory literature (where historical traumas return as narrative symptoms), postcolonial literature (where the ghosts of the colonial



past inhabit post-independence identities), and science fiction and the new gothic (where lost futures are employed to destabilize real time).

At the analytical level, it was possible to derive four dialectical relationships that hauntology establishes within the text: the temporal relationship based on the fragmentation of linear time and the penetration of the past into the present; the existential relationship where being becomes carried by absence and characters transform into spectral beings; the textual relationship where the text becomes a space haunted by other texts and marginalized voices; and the authoritarian relationship where hauntology reveals the mechanisms of producing official forgetting and the return of the repressed. These relationships are not a separate theoretical derivation but a natural extension of the philosophical analysis of death and absence and an embodiment of them at the level of literary reading.

At the evaluative level, the comparison between the three major theoretical frameworks revealed that the Derridean deconstructive framework is characterized by philosophical depth but limited in procedural application; the Fisherian cultural-critical framework offers precise diagnostic tools for the phenomena of the present; and the psychoanalytic-traumatic framework (Abraham and Torok) enables a deep understanding of how trauma operates across generations. This calls for a synthesis of all these frameworks to achieve an optimal application.

In the same context, the research establishes that hauntology is not a branch of ontology, but a critical challenge to its central assumptions. While ontology asks, "What is being?", hauntology asks, "How do we live with our ghosts?" This shift moves the question from the description of presence to an ethical responsibility toward those who are absent and those who are yet to come.

Finally, the research concludes that hauntology remains a useful critical approach for the Arab context, especially in reading texts shaped by historical trauma, collective memory, marginalized voices, and lost futures. Its tools may be applied to literary works dealing with experiences such as the Nakba, political violence, social rupture, and the crisis of unfinished modernizing projects. In this sense, Fisher's concept of the "lost future" can help illuminate the failure or suspension of certain Arab Renaissance aspirations. The study therefore affirms that hauntology offers a productive framework for analyzing the relation between past, present, memory, and responsibility. It also shifts the critic's task from examining only what is explicit and visible to analyzing the traces of what is absent, marginalized, or historically repressed.

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