The Narrator in "A Rose for Emily"

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INTRODUCTION

In his *Voice and Eye in Faulkner's Fiction* Hugh M. Ruppersburg declares, "Every narrative has a narrator" and classifies narrators into two categories, denying the conventional first- and third-person categories as meaningless in Faulkner's fiction: "character narrator" and "external (uninvolved) narrator." According to his classification, the narrator in "A Rose for Emily" clearly belongs to the first. He, who appears in the form of "we," does not seem so conspicuous or highlighted as other Faulkner's narrators; nevertheless this anonymous narrator definitely serves just as significant a function in determining the theme of the story.

The narrator is one of the members of the community, and his comments consist of community opinions, rumors and gossips. Yet, he is not an external narrator or an objective observer who is completely detached from the events. This anonymous narrator has a noticeable personality from which he judges or interprets all he sees or hears, although he never takes his ideas into action. Naturally, he is not all-knowing about Miss Emily, so gives the limited information to the reader. What kind of advantages does this townsperson possess as a narrator?

The narrator is motivated by the "shock" from Miss Emily's gray hair to talk about her life in search of her true image. The reader is compelled to follow the narrator's comments and consequently grasp her image he wishes to convey. The aim of this paper is to interpret how the narrator serves to convey the true image of Miss Emily. The first chapter discusses the character of the narrator and his narrative techniques. The second chapter considers the narrator's structural functions and advantages, and finally approaches the truth of Miss Emily.

The narrator in "A Rose for Emily" tells us what he sees, what he hears, directly or
indirectly, and what he feels, concerning Miss Emily. He tries to gather as much information as he can and give us several opinions existing in the whole town. He perks his ears to different opinions of both older and younger generations as well as women's voices, as typically shown in the following:

At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer." But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige—without calling it noblesse oblige. They just said, "Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come to her." Here, it should be noticed that there is the older generation who has severer moral sense than any other generation, and incidentally "we"—group is men, not women.3

The narrator's opinion is thus not the complete consensus of the community. Yet, the examination of his comments shows that his judgment is not so morally strict as that of the older generation, and not so rational as that of the younger generation, but it is commonsense judgment which is quite close to the majority's of the town, and similar to the reader's. The following comments also reveal his consciousness regards himself as a common towns-person whose opinion constitutes the mainstream of the community.

Daily, monthly, yearly we watched the Negro grow grayer and more stooped, going in and out with the market basket. Each December we sent her a tax notice, which would be returned by the post office a week later, unclaimed. Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows—she had evidently shut up the top floor of the house—like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which. Thus she passed from generation to generation—dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse. (128)

The narrator observes Miss Emily's stories from the viewpoint of the community. So, the examination of his comments will also lead us to the good understanding of the community itself. His judgment is mostly a rather commonsense, normal one, but his moral sense appears relatively strong, although it is not so severe as his elder's. The next day after Miss Emily buys a poison, for example, the narrator comments: "'She will kill herself'; and we said it would be the best thing" (126). They judge things in terms of honor and pride, thinking it will be better and even happier for the proud Miss Emily to kill herself than to live on with shame. Also, when he learns that Miss Emily is married to Homer Barron, the narrator confesses from the moral viewpoint that "We were glad because the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been" (127). They are more
pleased with the removal of a "disgrace to the town" (126) than her marriage. These comments reveal how moral and ethical he is, that is, how deeply rooted the community is in tradition, convention, honor and pride. His comments, based on public morals and social conventions, present the public judgment. This is why his comments reflect the collective opinion of the community.

This does not mean, however, that he is an external narrator or an objective observer who is completely detached from the events about Miss Emily. While he represents the generalized opinion of the community, he is an individual of some noticeable characteristics.

First, the narrator, as Cleanth Brooks points out, has a good "sense of history." The narrator understands the misery of the Civil War and the cruelty of the post-war changes in values. From the start of the story, the narrator turns the reader's attention to the change of the circumstances around Miss Emily as follows:

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily’s house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and gasoline pumps—an eyesore among eyesores. (119)

These two sentences splendidly epitomize the rapid and mighty changes in the social and economic system of the Southern society. The values of the North “encroach” and “obliterate” those of the South, changing the old Southern tradition and convention into “stubborn and coquettish decay.” Throughout the story, the narrator is unusually sensitive to such changes of times. He has good knowledge of the Southern traditional ideas and customs and antebellum family system. The narrator believes the parental authority hinders Miss Emily’s marriage, and feels pity for her.

So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn’t have turned down all of her changes if they had really materialized. (123)

Thinking that her father thwarts Miss Emily’s life as a woman, the narrator predicts her marriage will not last long because of her father’s lingering virulence, as shown in the following comments:

for almost six months she did not appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman’s life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die. (127)
Furthermore, with his good sense of history, the narrator is very conscious of the divergence of views between the generations and adduces its several typical examples to us. One sharp contrast is found concerning the disposal of the smell hanging around Miss Emily’s place between Judge Stevens’ generation and a member of the rising generation.

“It’s simple enough,” he said. “Send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don’t . . .”

“Dammit, sir,” Judge Stevens said, “will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?” (122)

The younger man will handle the affair in a technical, practical businesslike manner, whereas the older in an emotional, paternalistic and gentleman-like way. And, finally they care so much for Miss Emily’s honor that they secretly like burglars, after midnight, creep into her place and walk sniffing around, sprinkling lime.

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily’s lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings. As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away. (122—123)

Faulkner’s description of this scene is quite comical and humorous, but at the same time the scene looks like an old picture that reminds us of good old days. This reveals how considerate the older generation is and how much they value courtesy and honor.

This is true of Miss Emily’s taxation. In this case, too, the older generation is paternalistic, while the younger is legitimate. Colonel Sartoris, who chivalrously invents an “involved tale” (120) to exempt Miss Emily from taxation, is a typical example of the older generation.

Furthermore, it should be noticed that the narrator is old enough to understand the older people’s feelings. For example, when older people just say, “Poor Emily.” the narrator can interpret their emotion behind the words and paraphrase it in proper words; “even grief could not cause the real lady to forget noblesse oblige—without calling it noblesse oblige” (124—125). He is probably one generation younger than Miss Emily, and can be called a “transition person” of old blood and new head, just like Quentin Compson in Absalom, Absalom! (1936), who is brought up in the old social system, and learns new education.

Such differences of views rise from the radical changes in values after the defeat in the
Civil War: the society changes from homogeneous to heterogeneous. The narrator is conscious of the fact that Miss Emily must live on in an age of such radical changes in values. In this sense, Miss Emily can be regarded as one of the people who cannot conform themselves to the change of times; in Emily's case, the reason is that she has been too much immersed in antebellum family system. The narrator, who has a good capacity of understanding, thinks of her as a victim of times, and feels pity for her.

Another characteristic of the narrator's nature is that he has a remarkably keen insight into human nature. When Miss Emily denies the fact of her father's death and refuses the burial of this body, the narrator thoroughly understands her feeling, as the following shows:

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

(124)

The narrator explains Miss Emily's response to her father's death is rather natural, far from strange, and deserves sympathy. The narrator understands her father has taken up an extraordinarily important position in Miss Emily's life, whether good or bad. The narrator fully appreciates Miss Emily's psychology confronting her father's death.

The narrator is also a shrewd judge of the difference of values between man and woman. He can sharply perceive the difference of the reasons for attending Miss Emily's funeral.

WHEN Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house .... (119)

When Miss Emily begins to be seen on the buggy with Barron, the ladies make a fuss and forces the minister to call on her, saying it is "a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people" (126), but the men do not want to interfere. Another contrast is shown about the exemption of Miss Emily's taxation: "Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it" (120).

In this story, the ladies in town are depicted as inquisitive, realistic and passive, while the men diffident, romantic and idealistic. This discrimination never suggests Faulkner is contemptuous in his portraits of women. He only thinks that a man's interest is in the abstract, such as honor or pride, while a woman's in the concrete, such as her life or family.

This narrator is an acute, experienced observer with a good sense of history and an deep insight into human nature. It is only such a narrator who can give a human eye to her and understand her accurately as she really is. Viewed from a human eye, there can be found
to be something in her life that moves his mind. So, he is sympathetic with Miss Emily and in some cases even on her side: "we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins" (127). By this time the narrator expects Miss Emily will get married happily, although he never really acts.

The narrator equally has a fine ability in narrative technique. Many critics highly praise this narrator for his skill of developing the story up to the climax of shock. Max Putzel, for example, in Genius of Place admires the narrator's "flair for drama," saying, "the tone conveys this story-teller's delight in the delayed shock wave he emits."9 The narrator, according to Cleanth Brooks, is an "accomplished story-teller" who knows "how to build toward an effect."10 Furthermore, Irving Howe comments the story "may seem too dependent on its climax of shock," but rates highly the "canny skill" in manipulating the story.11 Estella Shoenberg remarks its "plot lines are also similar to those of Poe."12

This narrator is a good story-manipulator. By doling out his knowledge, he leaves us in suspension, and gives flight to our fancy. The aim of this technique is not to puzzle or delude the reader, but to make him experience for himself what the narrator has gone through at the same information-level. Faulkner believes this is the most accurate and suitable way to tell the truth about Miss Emily. This belief can be also evidenced by the narrator's metaphor. He conveys to the reader his images and impressions received on his perception. This technique can be, first of all, seen in his usage of adjectives; for example, "stubborn and coquetish decay" (119), "the two mute shoes" (130), "patient and biding dust" (130), "dank smell" (120), a "pepper-and salt iron-gray" (127). These collocations of adjectives and nouns, which are originally created by the literary intention to convey the impression the narrator perceives, are extremely sensory. Faulkner emphasizes the importance of the choice of the words in a short story as follows:

You can be more careless, you can put more trash in it [the novel] and be excused for it. In a short story that's next to the poem, almost every word has got to be almost exactly right. In the novel you can be careless, but in a short story you can't.13

The same effort is also seen in many metaphorical expressions, especially about Miss Emily. "Her eyes," for example, "lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough . . ." (121). And, about her complexion, the narrator depicts: "She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue" (121). These expressions excellently portray how lifeless and stagnant her life is because of the long seclusion from the community. This narrator, as Max Putzel admires, is "expert at melding sensory images——the sights and sounds and smells."14 In the reader's
mind, these sensory expressions leave visual images. Fundamentally, our narrator often tries to visualize his images. The image of the community about the relationship between Miss Emily and her father, for example, is expressed in a “tableau”: “Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a sprawled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door” (123). For another example, the narrator depicts visually the old people’s sense of time.

the very old men . . . confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years. (129)

Old people are likely to think of the past as a pastoral world of good old days. The narrator tries to visualize time in such concrete terms as “road,” “meadow,” “winter,” “bottle-neck.” The narrator here tries successfully to put abstracts things, such as ideas, images or time, into words. His expression makes it possible for the reader to have the same impression and atmosphere that the narrator has perceived.

II

Arthur F. Kinney points out in *Faulkner’s Narrative Poetics*: “ ‘A Rose for Emily,’ for instance, easily a subject for an omniscient perspective, must for Faulkner be filtered through the narrative consciousness of a townsperson.” Indeed, this townsperson may have some controversial elements as a narrator in comparison with, for example, an objective or an omniscient narrator. He is ill-informed about Miss Emily and occasionally he even feels sympathy for her, and on other occasions he makes moral comments on her action. Why does Faulkner choose this problematic person as a narrator? What kind of functions does the narrator serve and what kind of advantages does he bring about?

In the first place, the narrator is motivated to talk about the events about Miss Emily by an extraordinary “shock” he suffers when discovering her “long strand of iron-gray hair” (130) beside Barron’s corpse. The narrator experiences a “shock”, not because he discovers that Miss Emily has been sleeping with a dead body for a long time, but because he finds that the recognition he has thus far had of Miss Emily is completely wrong. This shock leads him to the true understanding of her. The narrator’s main function is to convey to the reader the truth of Miss Emily he gains.

A second function can be drawn from the fact that the narrator reflects the collective
opinion of the community. In Faulkner's works, individual narrators or perspectives often attract our attention, but a community perspective assumes as important a role in *Light in August* (1932) or *The Hamlet* (1961), for example. Hugh Ruppersburg, who regards as "character-symbols" characters whose comments constitute community perspectives, declares that "A Rose for Emily" is also narrated by a "character-symbol." He further observes on *Light in August* that "the community for the first time becomes a primary element, serving for all practical purposes as a major character." This comment is equally true in "A Rose for Emily." The narrator performs an interesting function of giving the community an important position in the story. By the narrator's viewpoint, the relation of the community to Miss Emily looms up as an important factor for her life. The reader should take it into dominant consideration in creating the true image of Miss Emily.

Here, it is necessary to consider the community itself. His comments are based on community morals, and made up of community opinions, rumors and gossips regarding Miss Emily, a Southern lady who has lived for seventy four years. So, through his comments, the reader knows one aspect of folk history in a small town. The analysis of the narrator's information on Miss Emily reveals that the community has undergone considerable changes, from an agrarian society to an industrial, from traditionalism to pragmatism, from a homogeneous society to a heterogeneous one. Such a change violently and mercilessly denies previous values root and all. In a community of such a drastic value-change, Miss Emily is obliged to live.

The change of a society, however, is not a special subject only in the South, although the change the South has suffered is so dramatic as to deserve a story. As long as the town grows, the change in its sense of value and subsequent social conflicts are inevitable, and people must live through such a change. Instead of going with the current of the times, Miss Emily has consistently lived up to a single sense of value that her father inculcated in her mind. Her way of life raises serious and universal questions; what shall one do when his circumstances change in values or how can he deal with the situation whose mainstream values are different from his? These are the questions every person should encounter in his life——tension between an individual value and his community's. An ingratiatory attitude is an easier way for one to take, but then his identity may be lost. Conversely, if one clings to his belief, he is estranged by the community and becomes "grotesque," as the people in *Winesburg, Ohio* show. Thus, a small town in the South which raises these fundamental questions becomes a universal town in the reader's mind. Thus, the reality of the community must be a powerful factor in considering the truth of Miss Emily.
What is the truth of Miss Emily, then? Until she dies, Miss Emily has been regarded as a stubborn, impervious spinster who will not give up her high pride. To the townspeople, she has been “a tradition, a duty, and a care” (119) or a “fallen monument” (119), and always remembered in an old “tableau.” Because she continues to cling to her old-fashioned beliefs, she is now seen as an “eyesore among eyesores” (119), being estranged from the community. She has long been thought of as a fossil-like being in the town.

At the climax, however, Miss Emily’s gray hair tells us that she is really a woman with a “young girl’s normal aspirations to find love and then a husband and family.”21 The reason she cannot realize her aspirations lies not so much in herself—though she is a typically innocent angel-like woman the Southern tradition has produced—as in her father’s staunch pride in fine lineage and the demand of the environment upon her for noblesse oblige, which suppresses Miss Emily’s natural instinct as a woman and warps all her life. This can be clearly proved by the fact that the man she chooses as a lover is a Northern day laborer with no pride or tradition who is a completely different type from her father. Therefore, her relationship with Barron is a counteraction of her long-suppressed natural instinct, an opposition against traditionalism inculcated in her mind by her father and the environment, and her identification as a woman.22 And yet, for Miss Emily, Barron seems to have become everything, and as her rosy bridal room and the collected outfits prove, she as a natural woman dreams of marrying him. So, when Barron is about to leave her, she kills him. Then, until she dies she holds him beside her and continues to “love” him. Such a “love” is extraordinarily unusual and abnormal indeed, but it proves how strong a passion she has for love and how unnaturally her instinct as a woman has been suppressed by her father and conventional environment.

Nevertheless, this is not a reason for her long seclusion from the community, because her seclusion is the way of life she chooses after she kills her lover. She chooses to estrange herself from the community in order to keep Barron’s dead body out of people’s sight. She may have feared that the body leaves her again as when her father died and left her.23 She has lived for her love for forty years, being remote from the community and its social change. These forty years—which is totally a blank for the townspeople because they cannot get any information about her—may be the period of the fulfillment of her love and an expiation of her crime.24 Thus she struggles to accept her fate. This is the truth of Miss Emily, and the acceptance of one’s fate is the central theme of the story. She is, in fact, by nature a woman with natural instinct and is a suffering human being in conflict with her fate.

This truth of Miss Emily is beautifully conveyed to the reader by the voice of the narra-
tor. It is mainly because the reader is made to stand throughout the story on the equal footing with the narrator. The reader observes Miss Emily from the eye of a community member and his opinion of her goes along with the community's. So, at the climax, the reader feels the same "shock" that the narrator did. The shock makes the image of Miss Emily so real. The effect of the shock and the depth of the subsequent understanding of her on the part of the reader are brought about by the narrative told by the person who has experienced the "shock," never by an objective or an omniscient narrator. Although the reader cannot obtain any explanation or comment from Miss Emily for her actions, her image created by the "character narrator" appeals to his breast acutely and vividly, far more so than by any other kind of narrator. This technique is Faulkner's favorite, used in *The Sound and the Fury* (1925), for example, to make the image of Caddy so real to the reader's mind, in which she is indirectly told by her three brothers, but she has no chance to explain about her action. This effect is the greatest advantage gained by the "character narrator."

About Faulkner's narrators, Arthur Kinney declares:

Faulkner never provides us with an objective and omniscient narrator. All of the scenes in his novels, and all of the narrations of those scenes, are filtered through partial and prejudicial consciousness from which we, as readers still more remote from the action, must reconstruct or re-cognize so as to understand.

By the use of prejudiced and biased narrators, Faulkner gives the reader the more accurate and suitable way of approaching the truth the author wishes to convey. In this sense, the narrator's bias may suggest the author's intention. In "A Rose for Emily," too, Faulkner's narrator successfully accomplishes his duty.

It is true that Miss Emily is mostly a victim of her tradition-ridden environment, but it never follows that through this story Faulkner intends to criticize the Southern traditionalism or its closeness as the factor that drives her into suffocation. James B. Carothers remarks that "A Rose for Emily" is an "indictment of these conventions and customs which drive Miss Emily to murder Homer Barron," but there is no such indictment in Faulkner's intention. He just wishes to present there is such a tragic, suffering woman as she really is. Faulkner always says he is simply trying to write about people and to create "flesh-and-blood, living, suffering, anguishing human beings," not to deliver a message. She lives through her long life, sacrificing her life to her only lover and obstinately persisting in her own belief, however "grotesque" she looks to the people around. Faulkner may find there are a reality of a human being and even nobleness about her way of life that move him very deeply.
CONCLUSION

The narrator in "A Rose for Emily" is an anonymous townsperson, yet he has a noticeable personality which reflects the collective opinion of the community. This fact sets the community in an important position in the story, reveals the nature of the community and makes the relation of the community to Miss Emily the dominant factor in considering her true life. Besides, although he is not all-knowing or objective, his is significant information to create the true image of Miss Emily. To examine further this narrator as an individual, his opinions prove that he has a good sense of history and a keen insight into human nature.

In terms of narrative technique, he tries to express his own impressions or images into words, so the story is full of sensory expressions. By this technique, the reader can conceive vividly in his mind the same images and the same atmosphere that the narrator has perceived. With his characteristic traits, this narrator widens the range of the narrator's function in the story and can approach the truth.

Until she dies Miss Emily has been thought of as a fossillike being, but by the contribution of the resourceful narrator, she becomes a natural woman. The shock he suffers before Miss Emily’s gray hair is one with which the narrator finds the community’s recognition of her is completely wrong, and it motivates him to approach her true image. She is not only a victim of the tradition-ridden environment, but a tragic woman who struggles to accept her fate. The acceptance of her fate is the central theme of the story. By the best choice of a narrator, Faulkner achieves in "A Rose for Emily," too, his literary purpose of creating "believable people in credible moving situations in the most moving way he can."28

NOTES


3The narrator’s some other comments also suggest that he regards women as a third party, and refers to them as "they," or “all the ladies.” See Note 5.
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5Miss Emily's taxes were remitted (in 1894) some years after her father died; he died when she was a little more than thirty years old. The narrator must have already come of age when her father died and the “smell” affair happened. However, the narrator's critical attitude shows that he belongs to the generation younger than Miss Emily's. So, Miss Emily was born probably in the 1850s, and the narrator seems to be born in the 1860s or the 1870s. Cleanath Brooks also observes, “I think of him as a man in his fifties or sixties at the time of Miss Emily’s death” (*William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*) 159. On the other hand, Jack Scherting explains, “The narrator is evidently a male of about the same age as Emily” (“Emily Grierson's Oedipus Complex: Motif, Motive, and Meaning in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily,'” *Studies in Short Fiction* 17: 4 Fall 1980: 397). And Joseph Garrison thinks the narrator identifies himself with the rising generation, “implicitly adopting its attitudes and value norms.” (“'Brought Flowers' in 'A Rose for Emily,'” *Studies in Short Fiction* 16, 1979: 342).

“Then hearing would reconcile and he would listen to two separate Quentins now—the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South . . . the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost . . .” (*Absalom, Absalom!,* Random: 9).

7This is a controversial point. Patricia E. Sweeney generalizes in *William Faulkner's Women Characters* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio Information Services, 1985): “several male critics believe he [Faulkner] is a misogynist, while several female critics believe he is sympathetic in his portraits of women” (x).

8Most of the critics on “A Rose for Emily” agree that the narrator gives a sympathetic eye to Miss Emily. But, Suzuko Shindo asserts the narrator ridicules the life of Miss Emily and tells her story in stinging words, with no sympathy for her. See “On the Narrator of 'A Rose for Emily,'” *Studies in American Literature* 21, 1984: 35–49.


10Brooks 159.


13Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds., *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957–1958* (1959; Charlottesville: UP of Virginia) 207.

14Putzel 221.

comments, “the figurative language in Part I . . . is consistently visual, tangible, and, at times, almost indiscriminate” (342).

16Kinney 250.

17Philip Stevick has the same opinion. Stevick remarks in The American Short Story 1900-1945: A Critical History (Boston: Twayne, 1984): “half a century of communal observation and speculation are repositioned with a narrator confronting the present fact that most of it is terribly, terrifyingly wrong” (130).

18Ruppersburg explains: “Character-symbols usually share three common features: a desire to learn what happened, to understand it, and to explain it to someone else” (46).

19Ruppersburg 31.

20Brooks observes Miss Emily is “grotesque” in Sherwood Anderson’s special sense. (156)

21Gwynn and Blotner 185.

22In this sense, Miss Emily is quite similar to Joanna Burden in Light in August. Joanna’s woman life is also unnaturally thwarted by her father’s white supremacy. Her love affair with Joe Christmas is clearly a counteraction of her long-suppressed natural instinct.

23Kinney makes an interesting analysis of her deep psychology: “Emily Grierson refuses to admit Colonel Sartoris’s death in “A Rose for Emily,” not because she wishes to avoid paying taxes but because in her mind his death is correlative to that of her father and of Homer Barron: and the death of the old order and of herself as well” (94).

24Faulkner says, “She [Miss Emily] had broken all the laws of her tradition, her background, and she had finally broken the law of God too, which says you do not take human life. And she knew she was doing wrong, and that’s why her own life was wrecked. Instead of murdering one lover, and then to go on and take another and when she used him up to murder him, she was expiating her crime” (Faulkner in the University 58).

25Kinney 28.


27Gwynn and Blotner 47.


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