

## Miss Emily Grierson's Psychopathy in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily": Overt Disorder, Covert Order

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### Abstract

*Despite Faulkner's claim that it is not a psychological text, "A Rose for Emily" investigates female psyche, introducing an old unwed woman who denies her father's death and keeps his corpse in her bedroom for days, then kills her lover, Homer Barron, and spends forty years lying next to his corpse. It does not require a particularly intensive reading to reveal Miss Emily's psychological disorder. Similar to the townspeople in the story who are obsessed with Emily's life of silence and introversion, the reader is left wondering about the female character's unpredictable behavior. That is the reason why one cannot avoid thinking about Miss Emily's psychological disorder and her division into silent conflicting selves.*

*This paper probes Miss Emily's psychological disorder from a psychoanalytical perspective and attempts to show that, deeply scrutinized, the lady's psychopathic traits and her overwhelming silence do contain symptoms of meaning and order.*

**Keywords:** female Psyche, silence, disorder, order, psychoanalysis.

## 1. Introduction:

Reporting one of William Faulkner's childhood memories, Joseph Blotner reveals a connection between the writer and psychoanalysis: "I ran away to a doctor in the family and I browsed through his books. I learned plenty from them. I was interested in the brain. I learned that it had parts – a section of speech, for touch and so on" (34). Later, Faulkner had access to Freud's theory and was fascinated by its principles as his talk was full of it (147). Blotner remarks that "Faulkner's unfinished novel *Elmer* on which he worked in Paris in 1925, includes passages heavy with Freudian imagery" (147). Besides, Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* (1927) features two characters who discuss the personality of a third and refer to Freud times and again which led John Irwin, in *Doubling and Incest*, to conclude that "if the author of the novel is not familiar with Freud, his characters certainly are" (5). In the same way, psychoanalysis is strongly connected to literature. Freud argues that a "creative writer cannot evade the psychiatrist nor the psychiatrist the creative writer, and the poetic treatment of a psychiatric theme can turn out to be correct without any sacrifice of its beauty" (qtd. in Bocking 15).

As far as Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is concerned, many hints show that the main character's silent life and her eerie behavior are related to psychological factors. That is the reason why Faulkner's short story is of great relevance in psychoanalytical theory. Miss Emily's absent mother and her domineering father have clear prints on the woman's psyche. Moreover, being an unusually silent female in a patriarchal society, Miss Emily is a fertile field of analysis for the psychoanalytical perspective. For instance, psychoanalytic critic Norman Holland's study of "A Rose for Emily" builds upon Freudian principles to analyze the character of Miss Emily and examine the motives of her silence. Lacanian theory is also a practical instrument to understand the lady's psyche. Indeed, many of Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's principles are arguably present in Faulkner's short story. This paper applies few Freudian and Lacanian principles to scrutinize Miss Emily's silent personality and her ostensibly disordered psyche to reach the conclusion that the woman's silence and her psychological disorder still carry symptoms of order and meaning.

### I. Miss Emily's psychological disorder: A Freud-based Reading

#### 1. Three conflicting selves in a silent woman:

Despite being silent in most events of her story, Miss Emily leads a very noisy life as far as the inner workings of her psyche are concerned. The woman's silence is the outcome of struggling forces that control her life. These forces refer to the "id," "ego," and "superego" which are terms Sigmund Freud coins to account for the three separate divisions of the human psyche. This trilogy is so much relevant in Miss Emily's regress and her fall from sanity to insanity. Examining Miss Emily's psyche necessarily involves a critical look into her divided psyche, including the "id," "ego," and "superego."

The "id" is the unconscious part of the human psyche, instinctual force motivated by primeval needs and wants (Evans 75). The "ego," also called the "reality principal," arbitrates between what the "id" wants and what reality can provide (105). The third element of the human psyche is the "superego" which struggles to attain what is socially approved and morally appropriate (226). The "id" and "superego" are opposite extremes of what one wants versus what is right, the "ego" is charged with satisfying the "id" while working within the limits of what is socially correct or the "superego." The ego's primary responsibility is to find a common ground that is agreeable to both extremes.

The three aspects of Emily's psyche, the "id," "ego," and "superego" can readily be detected and scrutinized in "A Rose for Emily." Miss Emily's self is overwhelmed by the "id" manifested through her instinctive desire to possess a man; a desire she has been deprived of due to the fact that "none of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such" (51). The desire of Miss Emily's "id" is an uncontrollable and overwhelming instinct that eventually pervades her, leading her to a murderous act of her lover so that she can completely possess and control him.

Emily's "superego" resurfaces in the townspeople's encounter. The "superego" is the "superficial impressions drawn from a distance and are not necessarily resonant of Emily's inner self" (Argiro 449). Accordingly, despite her voracious sexuality, the woman is still considered as a "monument" and a "tradition" (A Rose 47) in the townspeople's gaze who, in death, "had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson" (47).

Portrayed as "a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head," (49) Miss Emily is a stereotype of social ethics. This is why the townspeople even send their children into her home to learn the art of china painting. Virtuous and conventional, Miss Emily is what the people of Jefferson want to be. In the eyes of the town, she is a "superego" socially respected and morally proper.

"Ego" is where Emily's two extreme selves, the "id" and the "superego" converge. Emily's "ego" is constructed upon silence. Through her silence Miss Emily manages to veil an invasive vicious "id" and conform to a virtuous "superego." For instance, she manages to conduct art lessons with children downstairs while hiding the corpse of her lover upstairs, which an uneasy act veiled by her silence and her "ego." Respectively, the woman finds in her "ego" a middle ground where she can fulfill her sexual desires enthused by the "id" while meeting the requirements of the "superego" or the perfect portrait drawn to her by the townspeople. However, Miss Emily's "id" is clearly the most powerful part of her psyche. The unwed woman cannot resist her sexual desires toward the patriarch, refusing to bury the corpse of her father then poisoning her lover. Hence, Miss Emily's chaotic psychological disorder is the outcome of the prevalence of the "id" over the "ego" and the "superego." Such a disorder leads to the creation of a cruelly divided self despite the woman's outwardly silent and serene life.

Furthermore, of high relevance are the Freudian terms "repression" and "transference" in Miss Emily's psychotic structure. In Psychoanalytical theory, "repression" denotes "the process by which certain thoughts and memories are expelled from consciousness and confined to the unconscious" (Evans 192). Freud points out that "repression" does not destroy its targeted ideas or memories. Rather, it simply conceals them in the unconscious. Subsequently, the "repressed" is always likely "to return in a distorted form, in symptoms, dreams, slips of the tongue etc..." (192). This process, called "the return of the repressed," is at the origin of "transference" or the transfer of a childhood feeling or desire and the relocation of earlier relationships with other figures, especially those with parents into another person or object in adulthood (237).

From an early age, Miss Emily suffers from sexual repression. Her father prevented her from communicating with the opposite sex and drove away all the young men who proposed to her. So, "with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people

will” (A Rose 52). Emily’s addiction to the only man in her life, her father, confirms her sexual repression. It is this sexual repression that leads to transference when Miss Emily transmits her strong sexual desires from her father to her lover Homer Barron, a “big, dark, ready man, with a big voice, and eyes lighter than his face” (53). Likewise, the repressed violence of the patriarch is transferred to Miss Emily’s father after his death, for she kept his corpse until decomposing then to Homer Barron who is poisoned and left unburied for forty years.

## **2. Miss Emily’s Oedipus Complex: A silent girl, a noisy sexuality**

To Miss Emily, Homer Barron or the surrogate father is not only a concretization of Freudian “transference” but also a symptom of the “Oedipus Complex.” Jack Scherting points out that it is Miss Emily’s Oedipus Complex which incited her “to poison her lover and conceal his corpse from the public for some forty years” (397). According to Sigmund Freud, a child’s source of satisfaction during the phallic stage is his sexual organ. During this stage boys acquire the Oedipus Complex in which they have sexual desires for the mother and consequent fear of the father. This complex is resolved by identification with the father. Though the term is not coined by Freud, a similar process can be based on the Electra Complex<sup>1</sup> in which girls desire the father. Those experiencing problems at this stage develop a phallic character. Men with a phallic character are vain and self-assured whereas women with a phallic character fight hard for superiority over men (Eysenck 288-89). Miss Emily’s feelings and habits of superiority are well established in her story as she is always remembered by the townspeople as a woman who “carried her head high enough – even when we believed that she was fallen” (A Rose 53).

In his psychoanalytical study of Miss Emily Grierson, Jack Scherting suggests that the lady loses the ability to form normal human relationships due to a denied sexual growth. This repression of an invasive sexuality turns her sexual focus to her father, which would explain her three-day denunciation of his death in an attempt to keep him present in her life. At thirty years old, the only outlet for Emily’s sexual desires is her patriarch whose death aggravates her sexual repression. Therefore, according to Scherting, Miss Emily poisons her new lover and keeps his corpse in her bed to replace the dead body of her father the townspeople robbed her of (399).

With “all the young men her father had driven away” (A Rose 52) and with her decision to cease “giving China-painting lessons eight or ten years earlier” (48) Miss Emily is denied sublimation<sup>2</sup> of her sexual desires as she grows up isolated from society and especially from the opposite sex. Likewise, Miss Emily’s authoritarian father and the fact that she spends most of her time within the confines of an inaccessible house testify to the lady’s repressively silenced sexuality and her inability to transform and transfer such a repression into a socially

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<sup>1</sup> The Electra complex is a term proposed by Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung, to describe the girl’s psychosexual competition with her mother for possession of her father. In the course of her psychosexual development, the complex marks the girl’s phallic stage and the formation of her sexual identity.

<sup>2</sup> In Freud’s and Lacan’s conception, sublimation is a process in which the libido is controlled and metamorphosed into apparently non-sexual activities such as artistic creation and intellectual work. As such, sublimation plays the role of a socially agreed upon form of escape valve for excessive sexual energy which would otherwise have to be discharged in socially unacceptable forms such as perverse behavior or neurotic symptoms. Thus, to Freud and Lacan, sublimation means the end of all perversion and neurosis caused by excessive sexual energy (Evans 224).

acceptable form either through marriage or through the lady's socializing with others. Miss Emily's Oedipus Complex is most noticeable after her father's death which caused her to be psychologically transformed into a child. Such a psychological metamorphosis is symbolized by the act of cutting her hair, "making her look like a girl" (52). Miss Emily's inability to cope with the reality of her father's death and the fact that the townspeople took his corpse away caused her to transfer her sexual repression to a surrogate male, namely Homer Barron.

In the same vein, Jack Scherting suggests that Miss Emily killed her new lover and kept his corpse in her bed to replace not just her father, but more specifically the corpse of her father the townspeople deprived her of. When the townspeople talked to Miss Emily, suspecting her father's death, "she told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body" (A Rose 52). It is not patriarchal presence that Miss Emily clung to when she kept her father's corpse. Rather, it is her sexual desires that she silently channeled on his dead body. Accordingly, the lover's corpse becomes the silent substitution of an incestuous relationship with a father's dead body.

### **3. Miss Emily's psychological disorder: An "Anal Retentive Fixation"**

In his psychoanalytical study, Norman Holland points out that Miss Emily's unusual behavior based on secrecy and perversion reveals a Freudian "anal retentive fixation." Freud postulates that the negative reaction from parents can lead the child to develop an "anal retentive personality"<sup>3</sup>. For instance, if the parents impose and force their authority on the child, he/she may react by consciously holding back in rebellion. A child, Freud adds, will develop into an adult who hates mess, is obsessively tidy, punctual and very careful about money (Eysenck 288). Miss Emily's character construction appropriately fits Freud's "anal retentive personality." Indeed, during the anal stage, a child consciously and rebelliously reacts to his parents' authority which is the same case with Miss Emily whose silence and deliberate introversion is a resistive reaction against a patriarchal society which tries to impose on her masculine-biased principles such as accepting male authority and dominance.

Likewise, Freud's argument about the sense of tidiness characterizing an "anal retentive" identity is straightforwardly sensed in Miss Emily's house which, despite its decay, exhibits a high sense of orderliness being "furnished in heavy, leather covered furniture [with] a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace [and] a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father" (A Rose 49). Punctuality is also another trait of an "anal retentive" disposition. This trait is overtly highlighted in Miss Emily when she had a special meeting with the Board of Aldermen. On time, "they were admitted by the old Negro" (48) and on time they were shown out by the same old Negro. Stubbornness, another character trait of an "anal retentive" personality, is revealed in Miss Emily's temperament in many instances. Her refusal to let the druggist know about her reasons behind buying poison:

'But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for.' Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn't come back. (54)

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<sup>3</sup> According to Freud, the anal stage lasts between the age of 18 and 36 months and involves the anal area as the main source of pleasure. This is the stage at which toilet training occurs. Children experiencing problems at this stage may become adults with an anal retentive character (Eysenck 288).



Similarly, the lady's refusal to pay taxes testifies to her stubbornness as well as her meanness which another trait of Freud's "anal retentive" character. Needless to state that all the traits discussed above are manifested through instances of silence exhibiting Miss Emily's seditious acts of resistance and rebellion against the patriarchal town of Jefferson. The table below further details the common points between Freud's "anal retentive" disposition and the character of Miss Emily as depicted in the story:

<i>Freud's anal retentive personality</i>	<i>Miss Emily's character traits</i>
Obsessive tidiness	Miss Emily's house, "a coquettish decay" (47)
Punctuality	Miss Emily's China painting lesson regularly given every Sunday (57)
Stubbornness	- Miss Emily's rejection of the town's laws, refusing to pay taxes, refusing to tell the druggist about the reasons of buying poison. - Miss Emily's character construction via the description of her house: "Miss Emily's house was left lifting its <i>stubborn</i> and coquettish decay" (47).
Meanness	"I have no taxes in Jefferson" (49-50), repeated four times in her single short conversation with the town's authorities.
Silence and introversion	- Miss Emily's voice is described as "dry and cold" (49) and almost unheard. - Miss Emily's silence is transferred to her black servant who "talked to no one, probably not even to her for his voice had grown harsh and rusty as if from disuse" (57).

## II. Miss Emily's disturbed psyche: the Lacanian Perspective

### 1. Miss Emily's psychosis: A silent desire for the "Symbolic Phallus"

Similar to the townspeople in the story, the reader is left wondering about Miss Emily's unpredictable and eccentric behavior. That is the reason why one cannot avoid thinking about Miss Emily's disturbed psyche and her division into silent conflicting selves. Emily's psychological disturbance becomes remarkable in Jefferson after her father passed away:

The day after his death, all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom. Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. (A Rose 54)

In the beginning, the townspeople sympathize with Miss Emily since it is understandable for a person who has just lost her most cherished person. Indeed, Miss Emily's father was not only the person she loved most, but the single love in her life. Emily's father drove away all the young men pursuing her and "she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will" (52). However, with time, Miss Emily's weird behavior becomes uncontrollably serious.

Seen from a Lacanian perspective, Emily's weird behavior is the outcome of her inability to effectively adapt to the absence of the Symbolic stage's "Name/No of the father"

(*le nom/non du père*)<sup>4</sup> metaphor in relation with her patriarch. In “A Rose of Emily,” the “Name-of-the-father” metaphor is concretely established in the tableau analogy:

We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door.  
(A Rose 51)

These lines highlight the “Name-of-the-father” metaphor fossilized in Emily’s memory and psyche. The image of the horsewhip is employed to demonstrate the existence of the “Law of the Father” metaphor with its prohibitive and permitting rules in Emily’s psyche. The father’s “straddled silhouette in the foreground,” his back to his daughter and the horsewhip in his hand provides an image of the phallus which satisfies Miss Emily’s sense of power and pride.

Likewise, Miss Emily’s inherited “yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable” (52) as well as the “swift sound of a horse’s hoof, ‘clop-clop-clop’”(53) symbolize the dominance and the importance of the patriarchal figure in Miss Emily’s psyche, for when she sits on the buggy with Homer Barron, “she carrie[s] her head high enough” (53) so as to display a sense honor and high status she acquires by clinging to the “Name/No of the father” metaphor.

Unable to absorb the idea of her father’s death, Miss Emily undergoes a psychological condition of delusion and paranoia. In Lacanian hypothesis, “the paranoiac lacks the Name/No of the Father, and the delusion is the paranoiac’s attempt to fill the hole left in his symbolic universe” (Evans 34). Miss Emily realizes that she is unable to survive the symbolic stage in her father’s, or the Symbolic phallus, absence. In Lacanian terms, her passage from the Imaginary stage into the Symbolic order is a failing process as she cannot accept the rupture or loss in her life when she is denied the symbolic phallus. Correspondingly, denying the reality of her father’s death and keeping his corpse, Miss Emily is fixed in a pre-oedipal and preverbal stage which highly depends on patriarchal presence. Moreover, keeping the corpses of her father testifies to the woman’s delusion and evidences her blurred vision of reality. To satisfy her desire for the symbolic phallus<sup>5</sup> after her father’s death, Emily poisons Homer Barron so that she can not only force him to stay with her but also to ensure the presence of “Name/No of the father” metaphor which provides her with a sense of self-esteem and pride.

Besides, Miss Emily’s silent and delusional life after her father’s death is developed into a state of “psychosis.” Lacan defines psychosis as a clinical structure defined by “foreclosure” or the absence of the Symbolic Father (Evans 66). The Symbolic Father, which is present in the unconscious but not functioning, results in a hole left in the Symbolic order

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<sup>4</sup> To Lacan, the Symbolic stage marks the beginning of the “Name/No-of the father,” a paternal metaphor that establishes the “Law of the Father” and ruptures the mother-child symbiotic unity during the Imaginary stage. The “Law of the Father” is based upon division and difference and permits no return to the Imaginary or mirror stage. The “Name/No of the Father metaphor,” starting with the Symbolic order, identifies the image of the father as the figure representing authority and law (Apollon & Feldstein 106). The “Name/No of the Father” metaphor builds prohibitive and permitting rules in the subject’s mind and drives a person to conform to social norms.

<sup>5</sup> Lacan explains that, as a symbol, the phallus is described as not only a signifier of the desire of the Other or sexual jouissance but also as “the signifier intend[s] to designate as a whole the effects of the signified” (qtd. in Evans 145). Correspondingly, the Symbolic phallus should be understood as designating “the phallic functions” (145) associated with the “Name/No of the Father” metaphor through which a person is inscribed into the socio-symbolic community governed, in most societies, by the *nom/non du père* or the Law of the Father.

(157). In the absence of the father figure in the symbolic order, the subject does not confront the regulating paternal signifier and the result is a demonstration of delusions and hallucinations leading to a psychotic state. In the absence of her father, Miss Emily becomes torn between the “Name/No of the Father” metaphor and her sexual desires. Such a dilemma triggers the lady’s state of psychosis clearly noticed in her behavior, retaining her father’s corpse for three days, and even her appearance, cutting her hair in a manly style.

Likewise, Miss Emily’s psychotic state is concretely demonstrated in her murderous act of Homer Barron. Barron, “a big, dark, ready man, with a big voice and eyes lighter than his face [. . .] with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove” (A Rose 53-55) represents the Symbolic phallus that the feminine desires. However, the man’s sexual perversion leaves Miss Emily with a deep feeling of disappointment: “Then we said, ‘she will persuade him yet,’ because Homer himself had remarked– he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks’ Club– that he was not a marrying man” (55). Barron’s homosexuality is to Miss Emily a second death of the Symbolic father. It aggravates her serious psychosomatic problems and eventually deepens her psychotic state. Caught in such a dilemma, Miss Emily opts for concretizing “foreclosure” or the exclusion of the Symbolic father, and poisons Homer Barron.

Killing Homer Barron, Miss Emily becomes deeply psychotic. Severe psychosis is concretely demonstrated by the fact that she spent years with the corpse of her lover and found in this act her most desired pleasure. Though she kills Homer Barron, Miss Emily perpetually believes he is still alive, an attitude she had with the corpse of her father, which testifies to her deep psychotic state. Nonetheless, seen from a Lacanian perspective, psychosis is not a sign of weakness. It can rather be a symptom of power and resistance. Although Lacan uses the term to directly refer to madness, “psychosis [. . .] corresponds to what has always been called and legitimately continues to be called madness” (qtd. in Evans 132), he insists that that term ought not to be considered as degrading, stressing its “poetic resonance” and significance and suggesting that “there is no reason to deny oneself the luxury of this word” (132). Therefore, it is justifiable to consider Miss Emily’s psychosis as a powerful condition through which she defies the patriarchal logic and establishes herself as an emblem of silence and resistance.

## 2. Miss Emily’s silent life: The little “other” vs. the big “Other”

Miss Emily is constructed as the only target of the townspeople’s gaze. To avoid people’s eyes, the woman finds refuge in her remote house and her silence. From this perspective, the townspeople’s eyes are indicative of the big Other’s intrusion into the little other<sup>6</sup>, which constitutes another cause of her psychological problems. In Lacanian hypothesis, the eye pertains to the field of consciousness and is the crossing point between the inner desire and the outer milieu. Eyes are the window between the interior and the exterior world. They also unite the single subject and other subjects and create a common cosmos, called the Other. As a member of this cosmos, Emily should conform to the common

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<sup>6</sup> Lacan draws a distinction between the “little other” and the “big Other.” The “big Other” is designated A (upper case for the French “Autre”) and the “little other” is designated a (lower case for the French “autre”). The “little other” is the other who is not really other” (Evans 135), meaning that it is a reflection of the EGO: (other=EGO). The “little other” is entirely inscribed in the imaginary order while the “big Other” designates “radical alterity,” an otherness which cannot be assimilated through identification. Lacan equates “radical alterity” with language and the law and therefore the “big Other” is inscribed in the order of the Symbolic (136).



consciousness, the Superego of the town, or else she will be considered as a pervert outsider and a silenced other, for “to say a woman is other is to render her to silence” (Weinstein 91).

The tableau analogy establishes Miss Emily as a single subject appropriately conforming the Other’s law and order, being submissive and inferior to the law of the patriarch. Nevertheless, after her father’s death, signaling the absence of the Symbolic phallus and the lack of the “Name/No of the Father” metaphor, Emily unconsciously starts to prohibit herself to conform to the “Other” or the set of moral conventions in Jefferson. She starts to be reclusive, avoiding communication with the townspeople, in an effort to hinder the establishment of an “inter-subjective” common cosmos.

Accordingly, Miss Emily’s deliberate silence reflects a conflict between her, as the “other,” and her community or the “Other”. Such a conflict becomes inevitable in the absence the “Name/No of the Father” metaphor in which the “Other” finds an effective way to silence and subjugate the “other.” Many instances in the text concretize the conflict between the little “other” and the big “Other.” From the first conflict, induced by the occurrence of the “smell” (A Rose 50-51), to the “tax” incident (49-50), to the clash with the druggist (54) and until she eventually dies (58), a silent yet brutal confrontation takes place between the other who resists in her silence the Other’s attempts to contain and confine her.

The conflict between Miss Emily’s “other” and the community’s “Other” can equally be traced in what Lacan terms the “master/slave dialectic,” in which the “Other” is the master and the “other” is the slave, and which is the automatic result of the human desire for recognition. So as to achieve recognition, the subject must impose the idea that he has of himself on the other. However, having the same desire for recognition, the other will do the same and consequently starts a battle for the same recognition. Lacan argues that this fight for recognition and for “pure prestige” must be a fight to the death (Evans 283). The struggle ends when one of the two opponents gives up the desire for recognition and surrenders to the other. The defeated party recognizes the victor as the master and becomes the slave.

Lacan’s “master/slave dialectic” is easily detectable in “A Rose for Emily.” In fact, Miss Emily’s relationship with her patriarchal community is based upon the subject’s attempt to impose the idea that he/she has of himself/herself on the other. For instance, Miss Emily never ceases playing the role of an aristocratic lady. Recurrently, “she carried her head high enough” (A Rose 53) to the extent that she became a “*noblesse oblige*” (emphasis in original 53) and “a tradition, a duty, and a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town” (47). In her battle for recognition and “pure prestige” with the other, Miss Emily confronts a similar fight. In its fight for recognition, the patriarchal community strives to establish the reality that Miss Emily is a poor woman who needs pity and sympathy:

When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. (52)

In their battle for recognition, the townspeople attempt to legitimize their obsession with Miss Emily and cover it with an argument of pity and sympathy, placing her in an inferior position and making her the slave of their desired mastery. Nevertheless, the community’s constant gaze targeting Miss Emily and their addiction to her silence turn them into slaves who unwillingly recognize the woman as victor and master.

The battle for recognition, Lacan points out, illustrates a sense of aggressivity inherent in the dual relationship between the “Ego” and the “Other.” Aggressivity is a key feature in Miss Emily’s relationship with the Other. The father’s horsewhip as well as Homer Barron’s

whip are patriarchal aggressive tools employed by the “Other” in his battle of recognition against the “other.” Likewise, Miss Emily’s (other) silence is so aggressive to the townspeople (Other) that it tortures their curiosity. Such a sense of aggressivity is manifested through the belligerent invasion of Miss Emily’s room after her death and “the violence of breaking down the door [ . . . ], fill[ing] this room with pervading dust” (58). Moreover, the fact that Miss Emily keeps the corpse of her patriarch until it becomes rotten is indeed the other’s aggressive act against the Other. Whether it is the “Law of the Father” or a masculine-biased patriarchal society, the Other is the vanquished while Miss Emily’s other is the victor. The Other’s defeat is illustrated in the townspeople continuing complaints about the uncontainable smell which emanates from Miss Emily’s house:

A neighbor, [ . . . ] complained to the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old.

‘But what will you have me do about it [ . . . ]?’ he said.

‘Why, send her a word to stop it, [ . . . ] isn’t there a law?’

‘I’m sure that won’t be necessary,’ Judge Stevens said [ . . . ]. The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in different deprecation. ‘We really must do something about it, Judge. I’d be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we we’ve got to do something’. (50-51)

Keeping the corpse of her father until it starts decomposing is a symbolic act that signals the triumph of the lady over the patriarch or the victory of the little other over the big Other which is signaled not only by the death of the opponent but also by its putrefaction.

Though, in a masculine-biased society, it is always an indestructible rule that the Other will always be the master and the winner in the battle for recognition, Miss Emily breaks the rule by virtue of her resistive silence. Among other critics, Cleanth Brooks describes Miss Emily’s isolation as an essential escapist attempt to get away from the gaze of the Other and to avoid engaging in the master/slave war: “Miss Emily’s isolation from the community and the consequences of her being cut away from it give substance as well as definition to her story” (203). Nevertheless, seen from a psychoanalytical perspective, Miss Emily, by virtue of her resistive silence, occupies a privileged position in her battle for recognition with the Other.

When the townspeople forced the Baptist minister to call upon Emily, he never revealed the situation of the interview and refused to go back again (55) and when the druggist confronted Miss Emily in the name of law, he failed in front of her silent stare:

Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look at him eye to eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The

Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn’t come back. (54)

This suggests that both the minister and the druggist fail in their mission with Miss Emily who always places herself in a superior position in her battle of recognition with the Other. Therefore, although the Other is considered as the indomitable master in the “master/ slave relationship,” its binding power turns into a handicap in front the other’s subject because of a powerfully resistive silence and the lack of “Name/No of the Father.”

### **Conclusion:**

Leading a silent life, Miss Emily Grierson becomes uncontainable and uncontrollable by the patriarchal society she is a part of. Her linguistically inexplicable existence constructs her as a counter discourse against the Law of the Father. Dreaming of a lost body and lost desires

inside a tomb-like father's house, Emily's hysteric state disrupts the dominant male discourse of the text and establishes a voice of a silenced body and a repressed sexuality.

Among other Faulkner's women characters, Miss Emily exhibits an unusual capacity to escape to a mirror stage or a pre-gendered, pre-Symbolic order, where silence and bodily desires substitute the Symbolic Law of the Father. Such a deliberate escape is seen from the town of Jefferson's patriarchal lenses as a psychological trauma while it is meant by the woman to be an instrument of sedition and resistance.

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