

## Who Makes a Devil out of a Fair Lady?

—An Analysis of the Social Causes of Emily's Tragedy in *A Rose for Emily*

### QUI FAIT D'UNE DEMOISELLE DROITE UN MONSTRE ?

—UNE ANALYSE DES CAUSES SOCIALES DE LA TRAGEDIE D'EMILY DANS

#### UNE ROSE POUR EMILY

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**Abstract:** William Faulkner (1897—1962) is now regarded as the greatest American novelist of the twentieth century. “A Rose for Emily” was his first published short story in 1930. It depicts Emily Grierson, a noble old spinster, who falls in love with a Yankee, Homer, and later kills him and has slept with the dead body for forty years. Since then, Emily isolates herself from the outside world and lives lonely in her house until her death. Since its publication, “A Rose for Emily” has enjoyed great attention due to its adroit plot and impressive character, so that the readers merely view it as a Gothic novel. They are impressed and horrified by the gloomy atmosphere as well as the grotesque behavior of Emily. However, this story cannot be read merely as a detective story so as to overlook the profound meaning behind it. Emily's killing of Homer is not due to her blood-thirsty nature, rather it is the result of the southern society. After analyzing the social causes of Emily's tragic change from a lady into a devil, eventually the paper comes to a conclusion that Emily's degradation is a series of consequence of the southern social system: patriarchal chauvinism, puritan womanhood, conflict between community and individual. In fact, she is the victim of the southern tradition and culture. Through this kind of study, the reader can get a further understanding of the then American south and Faulkner's intention to write such a horrifying short story.

**Key words:** social causes, patriarchal chauvinism, puritan womanhood, sense of community, individualism

**Résumé:** William Faulkner(1897-1962) est considéré aujourd'hui comme le romancier américain le plus connu du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. *Une Rose pour Emily* est sa première nouvelle publiée en 1930. Ce livre décrit Emily Grierson, une vieille fille, qui tombe amoureux d'un Yankee, Homer, et le tue après pour dormir avec le cadavre pour 40 ans. Dès lors, elle s'isole du monde extérieur et vit solitairement dans sa maison jusqu'à la mort. Depuis sa publication, *Une Rose pour Emily* attirent beaucoup d'attention grâce à son intrigue habile et son caractère impressif, de sorte que les lecteurs le considèrent seulement comme une nouvelle gothique. Ils sont impressionnés et horrifiés par l'atmosphère sombre et le comportement grotesque d'Emily. Néanmoins, cette nouvelle ne peut nuellement être lue comme une histoire policière et on ne peut pas négliger sa signification profonde. Le meurtre d'Emily n'est pas dû à sa nature sanguinaire, il est plutôt le résultat de la société du sud. Après l'analyse des causes sociales de la tragédie d'Emily transformant d'une demoiselle en monstre, l'article parvient à la conclusion que la dégradation d'Emily est la conséquence du système social du sud : le chauvinisme patriarcal, la condition féminine puritaine, le conflit entre la communauté et l'individu. En fait, elle est la victime de la tradition et la culture du sud. A travers cette étude, le lecteur peut avoir une meilleure connaissance du sud des Etats-Nnis d'alors et de l'intention de Faulker d'écrire une telle nouvelle horrible.

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**Mots-Clés:** causes sociales, chauvinisme patriarcal, condition féminine puritaine, sens de communauté, individualisme

## 1. INTRODUCTION

By universal recognition, William Faulkner (1897—1962) is now regarded as the greatest American novelist of the twentieth century. Born in a southern family, as a regionalist writer, Faulkner has successfully turned his southern material into human fables. In his novels, he explores the problems of the South---human's relationship to the land and nature, the corruption of Christian practice and the decline in human spirit. Thus, his novels can be interpreted on different level.

As one of his representative works, since its publication in 1930, "A Rose for Emily" has enjoyed great attention due to its adroit plot and impressive characterization. In this short story, Faulkner makes best use of the Gothic devices in narration. The reader is impressed and horrified by the gloomy atmosphere as well as the grotesque behavior of Emily. Many researches on this short story are mainly focused on the Gothic elements or on Faulkner's particular point of view in narration, but less effort has been made on the analysis of the social causes of Emily's tragedy.

However, most of Faulkner's novels concern the conflict and collision between his characters and society. Faulkner senses that corruption in religion and culture is responsible for the tragic downfall of his characters, thus he is inspired to depict in his novels the human tragedy made by social evils. Based on this idea, this paper tries to examine thoroughly Faulkner's portrayal in this individual work of the way Emily is twisted into a devil by males and by the southern social system. Through this kind of study, the reader can get a further understanding of the then American South and Faulkner's intention to write such a horrifying short story.

## 2. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO A ROSE FOR EMILY

*A Rose for Emily* was Faulkner's first published short story in 1930. It is set in the town of Jefferson in Yoknapatawpha County. Emily Grierson, the central character, is a victim. Dominated by her father and his rigid ideas of social status, she has been prevented from marrying during his lifetime, therefore, after his death she is left alone and penniless. Later, she falls in love with a Yankee, Homer Barron, who is disregarded by the whole town and her relatives. Being a member of the stubborn Grierson's family, Emily arrogantly defies her relatives and the community by insisting on marrying

Homer. Unfortunately, Miss Emily finds that Homer has no intention to marry her. Desperately, Emily kills Homer and has slept with the dead body for forty years. Since then, Emily isolates herself from the outside world and lives lonely in her house until her death.

## 3. A GENERAL VIEW OF THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Faulkner was a regionalist writer. In his "Yoknapatawpha kingdom", he gives a vivid description of the southern society from its foundation of plantation system to the decline of the South. In order to gain a better understanding of his short stories and novels, a general view of the American south cannot be omitted.

Historically, the American south comprised the States Virginia, North and South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida and Texas. Due to the special geographical factors, from the beginning, the South was an agrarian society. And when the wealthy Cavaliers came to the America, the growth of the aristocratic plantation system was stimulated. In the mid-1800s, the South was still a predominated agrarian society depending on a large mass of slaves for its economic development. With its large plantations, the South gradually assumed an independence that finally asserted itself against the rest of the country. In the meantime, southern culture and tradition came into being. Because most of the early immigrants were puritans, they brought in the puritan beliefs and morality. Calvinism, which required a stern moral code, a rigid doctrine of original sin and predestination, has exerted a profound influence in all aspects of the American south. Under the Calvinist influence, sex discrimination was particular pervasive in the South, and numerous innocent women fall victim to the sex bias.

Though the culture and tradition received hard blows during the Civil War and went into decline during the "Reconstruction" period which followed it, the whole South was still living in its past glories and achievements. After the Civil War, the invasion of the northern industry and commercialization caused great tension among the southerners and changed their codes of morality and ways of life, which had been established in the past two hundred years.

Being aware of these economic and social changes, Faulkner presented in his novels the transition of the southern society, the decline of the southern plantations and the consequence of modern industrialization. And this particular social background also provides the very setting of *A Rose for Emily*. A

typical southern town in the nineteenth century, in Jefferson the southern tradition was dying off and the northern industrialization was invading the life of the southerners, but people were still living in the past glories of the South and such social injustices as sex discrimination were still deeply ingrained. Thus, tension between the new and the old order arouses great agony in people's mind, as in the case of Miss Emily in "A Rose for Emily" .

#### 4. SOCIAL CAUSES OF EMILY'S TRAGEDY

In "A Rose for Emily", Emily kills her lover, Homer, and since then has slept with the dead body for forty years, which horrifies the reader a lot. However, Emily's extreme action cannot be simply attributed to her grotesque and cruel nature, rather, it is the ruthless southern social system---patriarchal chauvinism, puritan womanhood and the conflict between community and individual that drive Emily to her tragedy.

##### 4.1 Patriarchal chauvinism

Patriarchal chauvinism means that it is the father who enjoys the absolute power in deciding every family affair. And one of the causes that attribute to Emily's tragedy is the tyrannical upbringing by her father. In her family, Emily is dominated by her father even after his death. Strongly influenced by her despotic father, Emily is eccentric and stubborn; isolated by his father, she cannot properly handle her relationship with others. Father's absolute control has obstructed Emily's way to understand the world.

##### 4.1.1 Cause of patriarchal chauvinism: aristocratic plantation system

The American south was characteristically agrarian, which set the tone of economic and social life in the South. As Xiao Minghan states that this kind of agricultural economy, especially plantation system, in essence, is a self-sufficient and family-centered economy, as a result, families play an important role in the South, and a strong feeling for family has been traditionally observed than anywhere else in America. (肖明翰,1998) Besides, women were discriminated and put in a dominated place by men. They were instructed to be submissive to men. Thus, a father undoubtedly becomes the head of a family, may it be a distinguished one or a poor one, and exercises his dominant power intolerant of any challenges. In his novels, Faulkner has created a series of despotic fathers, from Stupen in *Absalom, Absalom!* Mccaslin in *Go down, Moses* to Mr. Grierson in "A Rose for Emily". From a literary point, Faulkner explored the destructive influence and trammels of those tyrannical fathers on the younger

generation.

##### 4.1.2 Patriarchal chauvinistic influence on Emily

In "A Rose for Emily", Emily is such a tragic figure who forever lives under her father's domination, even after his death. The reader can have a general impression of the relationship between Emily and her father from the description as follows:

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 backflung front door. (Faulkner, 1985:437)

In the picture, Mr.Grierson is big and tall, standing in a conspicuous position; in contrast, Emily is small and delicate, retreating in the background. The horsewhip in Mr. Grierson's hand, the writer thinks, symbolizes his dominant power as a father. Being strict and overbearing, he "protects" Emily from the world and the "young men". Mr.Grierson is a despot and treats his daughter as a personal possession. Being a tyrant, arrogant and cold, he deliberately makes Emily lonely, afraid, so he can dominate her completely and becomes her only security, her only master, and her world. Although the Grierson family is not as rich in material life as before, for "the daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries were sent to her [Emily] with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church on Sundays with a twenty-five-cent piece of the collection plate"(Faulkner, 1985:441), they stubbornly try to keep the fame of the noble family. Mr. Grierson in his lifetime prevents any town youth from marrying his daughter for the young men are not from a distinguished family like the Grierson. As the town people comments: "...the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such."(Faulkner, 1985:437) As a result, Mr. Grierson deprives Emily of her woman's happiness and isolates her from the outside world. Even after her father's death, Emily still lives under his shadow and also the shadow of her father's aristocratic family---the Grierson. She refuses to dispose of her father's body after his death. Emily's whole world, the one her father has made for her, ends when he died. Her father has deserted her, leaving her nothing but the decay of the one white house. Therefore Emily has to cling to the only thing that she has known ---his dead body. Some readers think Emily clings to the old tradition rather than to his father. In fact, her father has occupied her whole life, symbolized by the fact that Emily put her father's portrait in an eye-catching place. What is more, Emily boldly challenges the old tradition by dating with a Yankee, so Emily is more closely related to her father than to the old tradition.

Brought up in a distinguished family and isolated by a despotic father, Emily forever maintains her

aristocratic dignity and loses the ability to properly handle her relationship with others. When the town representatives visit her for tax affairs, she receives them calmly and coldly. Her coal-like eyes “moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.”(Faulkner, 1985:435) Emily lives in isolation and is imprisoned in the past. In her mind, she does not think it necessary or likely for her to adjust to the changing society. In “A Rose for Emily”, Emily refuses to pay tax and justifies herself by saying Colonel Sartoris has exempted her from the duty. What she does not know or pretends not is “Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.”(Faulkner, 1985:435) Her upbringing in a closed society and family “has contributed to her inability to deal with reality and to separate truth from illusion.” (Toming, 2002:233)

The distinct aristocratic plantation system endows a father with unquestionable domination in a southern family. He has supreme power in deciding every family affair. Having grown up in the shadow and protection of her father, Emily is eliminated man's chance of responding naturally to her surroundings. She witnesses the northern industrialization penetrating the South, but her inherited southern aristocracy forbids her acceptance of the new order of life. She does not accept the passing of time; neither does she accept change, nor the loss that accompany her, symbolized by the fact that she refuses to cooperate with modernization in the postal service, answering the tax notice on “paper of an archaic shape in a then flowing calligraphy in faded ink.”(Faulkner, 1985:434) Refusing to adapt to the new way of life, Emily has to suffer from the loneliness and bitterness of being apart from the outside world. All these factors ultimately attribute to Emily's cold-bloodedness and strong desire for revenge. Her father exerts a destructive influence on Emily, because her aristocratic consciousness inherited from her father has thwarted her woman's life many times. Faulkner once said that Emily's life is probably destroyed by a selfish father. (quoted in 苗群鹰, 2002)

## 4.2 Puritan womanhood

Among all the tradition, sex discrimination was particularly common in the South. Influenced by the beliefs of Puritanism, women were condemned as the causes of all evil and troubles in the world, thus, framed and judged by norms laid down by men. The distinct code of behavior for southern women, i.e., puritan womanhood, is another social cause that is responsible for Emily's tragedy.

### 4.2.1 Southern womanhood under puritan influence

Religion is more important to more people in the South. A higher proportion of southerners are active believers than in other parts of the country. “The South is known as the Bible Belt, the region of the country where the Bible still has a stronghold.” (Hart, 1998:119) The first

settlers who became the founding fathers of the American nation were quite a few of them puritans, thus, a key factor in understanding southern society and tradition is Puritanism. The American puritans accepted the doctrine of predestination, original sin and total depravity, and limited atonement through a special infusion of grace from God. Puritans' lives were extremely disciplined and hard.” (Tindall, 1984: 31) As a culture heritage, Puritanism does have a profound influence on the early American mind.

According to the Bible, because of Eve's curiosity, humans were driven out of the Garden of Eden. Hence women were condemned as the causes of all evils and troubles in the world. This view became more serious in the South because most southerners much more firmly believed in Puritanism compared with their European forefathers. Therefore, a woman was required to be submissive and loyal to her father or husband and never allowed to keep her own individuality. Southern women were discriminated and inhibited by the southern males who laid down many rules for them. Their virginity was viewed as sacred as their lives and they were never allowed to go out for their pleasures. Any active desires or behaviors concerning sex were regarded as degradation or corruption. They were taught to regard sex as dirty, and their virginity is more important than their lives or the values of being human beings. In order to live, southern women had to control their desires or thoughts that did not match the principles in the southern tradition. As a result, many of them were twisted.

### 4.2.2 Emily: a victim of the southern womanhood

In Faulkner's “A Rose for Emily”, Miss Emily is one of the victims of the southern womanhood. She never has her own life, and never controls her fate. She just lives in the world according to the norms and standards formed by tradition and society. Dominated by a selfish and despotic father, Emily never enjoys the happiness of a woman's life. Born in a distinguished family, Emily has been instructed and cultivated to be a “pure woman” who should not have emotion or sex desire. In fact, she is only regarded as a tool to decorate her family: in the opinion of the town people, “alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town,” (Faulkner, 1985:433) and when she died, the whole town went to her funeral, “the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument.” (433) For the town people, she is the symbol of the old times, and her death signifies the fall of the old tradition. In their opinion, Emily is a lady who must fulfill her “noblesse oblige” instead of being a woman, a wife or a mother. She should feel ashamed if she dares have any sex desire, because she is “with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows.” (438) This romantic illusion exempts her from any responsibility but at the same time deprives of her right to enjoy life.

Women in the South are described as pure, holy, the best, and the most refined example of their culture. Southern men put them on pedestals. However, James A. Snead, says: "For many southern white women, exaltation is merely another kind of division, a state in which, as Lillian Smith so aptly states, 'protection' is tantamount to 'enslavement.'" (Snead, 1986:5) Emily is supposed to be weak and pure, thus, needs protection. But excessive protection actually deprives Emily of her own individuality and put her in a position as a slave.

In this novel, Emily is set as a monument, the symbol of a tradition, a class, a way of life and certain values. Although her noble Grierson family is on its decline, Emily forever lives under the shadow of her father and after his death has been under the "protection" of other fathers, as is shown in the novel, Colonel Sartoris and his peers have to tell a kind lie to Emily so as to look after the single lady without insulting her dignity. As a symbol, Emily has to mind her aristocratic behavior and set an excellent example to other women in town. She is mythologized as a pure angel instead of a human being. With regard to her dating with a Yankee, Homer, the town people comments: "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer," (Faulkner, 1985:438) and older people say that "even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige." (438) What is more, the ladies force the Baptist minister to call upon Emily to interfere with the dating, but in vain. At last, the minister's wife writes to Miss Emily's relatives in Alabama to stop her disgraceful behavior.

Emily, though arrogant and stubborn, grows up in a conservative society where puritan womanhood is firmly believed, so she is well aware of the power of tradition. Not only does she know the gossips concerning her dating with a Yankee, but also cares a lot about those rumors, as described in the novel "She carried her head high enough---even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson." (Faulkner, 1985:439) Emily never has the intention to hurt anybody's feeling. Like other young girls, all she needs is a family and a loving husband. It seems that her dating with Homer is the last chance to begin a new life, but this goes against traditional southern womanhood, because a pure, holy southern lady should not have any active desire to peruse her happiness. Her arrogance, in fact, is a helpless woman's psychological defense against tradition and the only means to protect her right as a woman.

Gradual changes have taken place in the South, and the invasion of the northern industrialization has also found its way in the southern society and intruded into the minds of the southerners. But the southerners are still associated with the outdated traditional modes of thought; they are desperately submitted to the old way of life. Miss Emily is the victim of the southern womanhood. In a society where women are described as gracious, refined belles; where their virginity is cared to

extreme extent, women in the South are actually in a miserable position. This old fashion not only causes bias towards women, but also becomes a principle to frame women's thoughts and behaviors. What southern women could do is to obey the principle and rules in the southern tradition. In the end, the great pains caused by the inhibitions of their desires and the conflicts with the social requirement put them in a miserable position, and even turn them into "devils".

### **4.3 Conflict between community and individual**

Every human lives in social environment and is influenced by surrounding community, but as individual, he also possesses his unique character. When the two come into conflict, it surely will cause great confrontation and if the power of the community is strong enough, it often results in the destruction of the individual. Emily's tragedy is in part the result of this conflict.

#### **4.3.1 Cause of the conflict between community and individual**

In an agricultural society, on one hand, people develop a strong association with their land. A common way of life brings them together and gradually forms a relatively stable community. Thus, a strong sense of community gradually roots in their heart. Once they sense a threatening danger coming inside or outside their community, they are bound by a common hatred and will take immediate action to defend their innate traditions. This united force, though invisible, sometimes can be destructive even beyond imagination. On the other hand, despite the fact that the strong sense of community plays an important role in the southern culture, another aspect of plantation system gives birth to a contrary yet equally powerful concept, which is also crucial in understanding the American South: a strong consciousness of individuality. Unlike the North, the southern economy, tradition and life all centered on plantations or farms. People live in their own dominions and enjoy a great independence and autonomy. This way of life is a breeding ground of individualism. What is more, during the early development of the South, tough geographic conditions forced people to depend on themselves to fight for their lives. This factor also brought about the development of individualism. Community and individual, though seem to be contradictory, they coexist in the mind of the southerners. As Xiao Minghan summarizes that they are interdependent and also mutually complementary, and in some way, the southern culture advances in the unity of the two opposite concepts. (肖明翰, 1998)

#### **4.3.2 Consequence of the conflict on Emily**

As a southern native, Faulkner is well aware of the unity as well as the opposition between community and individual. With his literary creation, Faulkner presents

in his novels the moral confusion and social decay that followed in images of haunting power and violence. Most characters in his novels are often deeply disturbed and in some sense, driven. Certainly they are in conflict: with themselves, with each other, with the present forces that lie beyond their control and yet so relentlessly shape their destinies. In "A Rose for Emily", the community is just the present force that Emily tries to resist but in vain. The opening sentence of "A Rose for Emily" well illustrates this:

When Miss Emily 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, which no one save an old man-servant---a combined gardener and cook---had seen in at least ten years. (Faulkner, 1985:433)

It introduces to the reader both Miss Emily Grierson and the town in which she lives. The narrator's opening statement, tells the reader about the town's reaction to Miss Emily's death---the grudging deference granted her by the men of the town and the curiosity of its women. The opening paragraph seems to be a rather frank account of those facts of Emily's life that is known to the town people. Yet, again and again, from the seemingly neutral descriptions of an objective narrator emerge certain damning conclusions about the town that he represents. The narrator who speaks on behalf of "we" (the town people) makes the reader sense a tension between Emily and the community and this tension is implied many times in this novel. Miss Emily's house, the narrator tells us, is surrounded by "garages and cotton gins," "an eyesore among eyesores." Having been regarded at first as a "duty and obligation" by the town people, Emily lives to become an affliction to a new generation which disdains even to send its daughters to her for the traditional china painting lessons. The reader is presented with a proud image of the "last of the Griersons," who walks with her head held high as a symbol of the dignity of her class. Actually, "poor Miss Emily" is criticized by all sides; yet with a "stubborn and coquettish" decadence, she insists upon her heritage of eminence amidst the "garages and cotton gins," symbolizing modern industrialization. This stubborn defense of "noblesse oblige" is unforgivable in the town's opinion.

Although Emily is clearly insane and her actions grotesque, she is not portrayed as an isolated freak with no relation to human beings in general, and to her community in particular. This is largely due to the narrator who unquestionably speaks for the community. Miss Emily, though a recluse does not act in a social or moral vacuum, all that she does is observed, and reacted by the community as represented through the narrator, and therefore she is inevitably linked to it and forms part of it. Gary Carey, when explaining the relationship between the individual and the community, says that the community serves as the field for man's action and the norm by which his action is judged and regulated, and it

is a force which man tries to assail or avoid, therefore, the responses of the community to the individual that became significant. (Carey, 1966)

The community provides the room for man's behavior and judges his behavior according to the universally recognized principles. The individual is influenced, corrected and formed by the community. The response and comment of the community towards the individual's action will inevitably direct his views and actions.

Although the narrator is not aware of any responsibility on the part of the town people towards Emily's madness, actually, the community does play a negative role on Emily's tragedy due to its disapproval of her dating with a Yankee, and the lack of true compassion. As Cleanth Brooks states:

The community is nearly everywhere in Faulkner's work as an important force and, diffused and anonymous though it be, it becomes one of the most important elements in the story. A clear illustration of the importance of the community is to be found in 'A Rose for Emily', Miss Emily Grierson is one of the numerous characters in Faulkner's work who are warped by their inheritance from the past and who are cut off from the community--sometimes by their own will---to their detriment. (Brooks, 1974:1564)

Miss Emily's madness is in part a consequence of the injury done her by the fact of isolation, but it is also related to her pride, her aristocratic independence. She is so consciously aristocratic that she defies the town's supervision of her behavior, especially with regard to their disapproval of her dating with a Yankee. But the force of her community is so powerful that, especially when she later learns that Homer is "not a marrying man," she is forced into action. Emily's defiance of the community and her refusal to accept Homer's desertion develops into such obsession and finally, homicidal mania that she kills Homer and keeps the body, which support her to pass the isolated and lonely life until her death.

## 5. CONCLUSION

William Faulkner ranks among the leading American authors of the twentieth century. He is a regionalist, who spends most of his life in the south, writing about the scenes and people he knows best. "A Rose for Emily" is a representative of his short stories. In this short story, Faulkner depicts the tragic downfall of Emily from a gracious lady into a devil. After a thorough examination, it can be concluded the causes resulting in Emily's tragedy: patriarchal chauvinism, puritan womanhood and conflict between community and individual, all of which are the character of the American South. In a society where women are discriminated and dominated

by men, where women's own desires are accused by their community, it is no doubt that women will be twisted and even turned into devils. Faulkner has realized the inhibited yet destructive ideas on southern women and managed to expose it through his novels. In this individual work, Faulkner exposes the way Emily is twisted into a devil by her tyrannical father and by the southern social system. But for the deliberate isolation done her by her despotic father, the illusive myth of southern women's purity, and the collective accusation of her affection for an inferior Yankee, Emily may not

be a hateful devil. Her killing of Homer is hateful yet pitiful. In fact, she is the victim of the cruelty and brutality of the southern system. In this novel, Faulkner shows a bleak picture of human society. However his intention is to show the evil harsh event in order to alert people and to alter the society in his particular way. He has tried his best to change the evil side of the society through his novels, and his real aim is to make people realize the harsh reality and reform it. This inspiring idea distinguishes Faulkner as one of the most outstanding writers in the twentieth century.

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