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Language, Subjectivity and Ideology in "A Rose for Emily"

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... ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (recruits them all) or "transforms" the individuals (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation I have called*interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace police (or other) hailing: "'Hey, you there!' "

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that "it was *really him* who was hailed" (and not someone else).

Louis Althusser,*Lenin and Philosophy*.

I

The object and scope of issues such as the way a reader responds to a literary text and the way s/he begins to evaluate it can not be fully grasped unless we understand the subject positions conferred upon the reader by the text itself. That is what Kaja Silverman posits in *The Subject of Semiotics* by drawing on the connections between semiotics and poststructuralist psychoanalytic film theory. This linking of the question of the constitution of meaning to that of the constitution of the subject locates the problem of interpretation in a theory of discourse. For Roger Fowler, who argues for a need to provide a description of the linguistic properties of a text which prove to be significant in literary discourse, "to treat literature as discourse is to see the text as mediating relationships between language-users. [These are n]ot only relationships of speech, but also of consciousness, ideology, role and class. The text ceases to be an object and becomes an action or process" (80).

The imbrication of discourse, subjectivity, and language is exposed in a full-fledged theory by Emile Benveniste, who describes discourse as a signifying speech act between two persons, one of whom addresses the other, and in the

process defines him/ herself. In the exercise of discourse, the individual identifies with the linguistic form "I" and is defined in opposition to "you," which signifies the addressee. Thus, Benveniste establishes that language is the condition of subjectivity because it contains linguistic forms appropriate to the expression of subjectivity. These linguistic forms become active as signs only within concrete discursive situations because they do not have conventional signifieds. The linguistic sign "I" acquires meaning only when the speaker within discourse appropriates it to him or herself and relates it to his or her "person" (227). It is important to note that Benveniste extends his notion of discourse to "every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker the intention of influencing the other in some way" (208-9).

Louis Althusser also conceives of discourse as a speech act which takes place between a person and a cultural agent entrusted with the responsibility of relaying ideological information. Althusser particularly mentions priests and educators as cultural agents. In the exercise of discourse, the cultural agent addresses the person and in the process defines the addressee's identity rather than his/her own. Althusser refers to the address as "hailing" or "interpellation," effected when the addressee recognizes him/herself in that speech and takes up a subjective residence there. In Althusser's scheme of discourse, the speaking subject is sharply differentiated from the spoken subject. However since the spoken subject would only be constituted through the subject of speech, those two categories should always be considered together (Silverman 48-49). Silverman suggests that Althusser's concept of *interpellation* is not only significant for understanding the process of ideological identification but also opens up new avenues for understanding textual identification, whereby readers identify themselves with the images and the narratives that literary texts present.

In terms of the textual strategies by means of which the drama of subjectivity is reactivated, William Faulkner's much-anthologized short story "A Rose for Emily" provides a unique example. It has been variously interpreted as a horror story, a story showing the conflict between the values of the Old and New South, as well as a portrait of a southern lady who gradually severs her ties with reality and in the process grows into something monstrous and grotesque. Miss Emily Grierson, the protagonist, is seen throughout the story in the way that the narrator, who claims to represent the townspeople of Jefferson, sees her (Voss 249). Strangely enough, critics, who have failed to recognize the story as the intended act of the narrator with a determinate ideological background, concentrate on Emily Grierson as an independent character in the narrative. They fail to realize that she is the very construct of the narrator's discourse mediating culturally and historically specific determinants such as ideology and class. Admittedly, critics such as Cleanth Brooks, Arthur Penn Warren and Judith Fetterly comment upon the narrator and find the communal nature of his voice significant. Nevertheless, they assiduously concentrate on accounting for Miss Emily's madness and her motivation in killing her lover, leaving the narrator's motivation in telling his story unattended. My

contention is that the critics' response is the natural outcome of the textual interpellation of the critic/reader, whose "gaze" is circumscribed by the position conferred upon him/her by the narrator's discourse. However, since this discursive position is already occupied by the subject of speech, i.e., the narrator, attention is deflected away from him, as the site of production, to the object of his vision, i.e., Miss Emily.

Indeed, the narrative in "A Rose for Emily" circles around Miss Emily as spectacle. Alive, she is the object of unceasing attention. Her actions draw visual attention to herself. The events are filtered through the narrator's obtrusive point of view which gradually encroaches upon Emily's private sphere. His voice articulates a desire to invade her living space. "[T]o see inside her house" (1771) is the compulsive desire of the inhabitants of Jefferson, both male and female. Her death gives them the occasion to obliterate the site which she had protected so fiercely against their intrusion. "Already we knew that there was one room above stairs which no one had seen in forty years and which would have to be forced. They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it" (1776-1777).

The narrator's use of temporal clauses such as "When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Baron ..." (1775), "When we next saw her ..." (1775) and "Now and then we would see her ..." (1776), which contain verbs of sight, establishes her status as spectacle and lends a cinematic quality to his narrative. The scopic nature of the narrative situates the reader in a discursive position similar to that of the viewing subject in cinematic discourse. Silverman points out that the classic film text distinguishes between the male and female subjects and that it does so on the basis of vision. The male subject is defined as a voyeur and the female as an exhibitionist (222). In this connection, since Miss Emily emerges in terms of her capacity to attract the male gaze, she represents, as passive agent, the absence of control and thus the absence of power. Again, Silverman indicates that the discovery of the female subject's "lack" (which I discuss in section II) helps to define the source of the gaze as potent (223). It is this gaze which implicates the viewing subject in voyeurism. I would like to argue that it is this alignment of the narrator's "potent" gaze with Miss Emily's "castrated" condition that textually allows the narrator to assume power. At the same time, this alignment makes available for the reader the position from which power is exercised. In my view, the discursive properties of the text as a speech act merit due attention since they structure the reader's response. I attempt to expose in this paper the interpersonal and illocutionary aspects of the narrator's discourse in "A Rose for Emily," in order to lay bare the textual strategies by means of which the reader, as the spoken subject, is "recruited" to the discursive domain of the text. As indicated by Fowler, this analysis also requires paying attention to the sequential aspects of language, regarded as shaping the reader's temporal experience.

II

In many ways, the opening sentence of "A Rose for Emily" plays a significant role in structuring the reader's response:

> 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, which no one save an old man servant--a combined gardener and cook--had seen in at least ten years. (1771)

This sentence immediately provides a point of insertion into the discourse. The use of the possessive plural pronoun "our" triggers a discursive process which assumes an implicit listener. The reader, who agrees to "listen" to the narrator's story, simultaneously identifies with the subject of speech and takes up residence in the syntax of the discourse, which defines his/her subjectivity. Since this subjective position is already occupied by the narrator himself , the listener agrees to recognize him/herself in the narrator's discourse. Thus, "what he [the listener] is given to see, understand, do, fear and hope" (Pécheux 113) constitutes his social reality while reading the story.

The interpersonal level of the discourse is sustained through the repeated use of pronominal forms such as "we" and "us," which help to define the narrator's position in a given socio-historical moment. The insistence on the pronominal forms clearly signals a collective orientation, rather than a personal one. The narrator defines himself as a member of the townspeople and speaks from within the "rising generation," in which he finds his subjectivity and social reality. It is in this same social reality that the reader recognizes his/her reality while reading the story. The repeated use of the pronominal forms mark a narrative space not only for the narrator, and by extension to the townspeople, but also for the reader. In other words, the narrator's reality constitutes the reader's reality. Pécheux, in *Language , Semantics and Ideology* , argues that the subject is "constituted by his 'forgetting' of what determines him" (114). I suggest that as a result of this operation, the reader, who identifies with the narrator's discourse, forgets that s/he is constituted by the ideology that dominates the narrator's discourse. Hence, there emerges "a kind of complicity between the speaker and the addressee as a condition of meaning" (Pécheux 76) for the story. As an effect of this complicity, the reader partakes in an illocutionary stance which is diametrically opposed to that of Emily Grierson. Speaker and addressee together partake in a discourse whose ultimate aim is to subjugate her.

The narrator's discourse displays a surprizing variety of tones and stances. It orchestrates voices that alternately become spiteful, pitiful, vindictive, proud and disapproving. These emotions have different expressive values for the narrator and

define for him shifting points of subjectivity in which the reader is also involved. By means of textual strategies, the narrator "braids" these voices into a single one, that is a fabric of discursive ideological process, and implicates the reader in its effects. His voice fosters the illusion that truth precedes its enunciation.

Roland Barthes uses in *S/Z* the metaphor of a braid to illustrate the process carried out simultaneously at five different levels that define textuality. The convergence of these levels at multiple points constitutes the text:

> The grouping of codes as they enter into the work, into the movement of the reading, constitute a braid (text, fabric, braid : the same thing); each thread, each code is a voice; these braided--or braiding--voices form the writing: when it is alone the voice does no labor, transforms nothing; it *expresses*; but as soon as the hand intervenes to gather and intertwine the inert threads, there is labor, there is transformation. [160]

Besides providing a locus for insertion, the first sentence of the story also thematizes the proper name Emily Grierson through the operations of the codes, or levels of connotation that Barthes defines in *S/Z* . The narrator's preliminary reference to Emily anticipates the story which follows. The events which make up the story are in this way already mapped out by the activities of the semic, cultural, symbolic, and hermeneutic codes. The semic code, which functions to define character and place through adjectives as well as through larger conceptions such as metaphor and metonymy, establishes Miss Emily's significance in the narrative. Her funeral is clearly of a communal nature, which reveals her equally central role in Jefferson. Her symbolic value as a fetishized object of veneration is contained within the striking collocation "fallen monument," which immediately reveals the narrator's ambivalent attitude towards her. The enigmatic nature of this veneration activates the hermeneutic code which operates as an agency of initiating and resolving enigmas. The opening sentence is also significant in that it contains generic statements about men and women. Fowler suggests that generic statements constitute only one of several discursive elements that establish an interpersonal level of meaning. Such statements suggest that the reader is also expected to conform to the generalizations which emanate from a "shared" cultural background.

The description of Emily's house plays a significant role in thematizing her through a metonymic operation:

> 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 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 the gasoline pumps--an eyesore among eye sores. (1771)

The signifiers, or what Barthes would call "semes," which cluster around Emily's house, invoke a "lack" in her condition even before she is fully introduced. "The coquettish decay" of her house stands in defiance of submersion and cancellation brought about by the economic activities that change Jefferson's socio-economic

texture. The passage of time has brought an irrevocable change. The dialogic use of two-time spheres, which refer to the depicted events and the time of narration, gives rise to an impression of an "estranged past". The repeated use of the lexeme "once" invokes the impression that "things are not like that now" (Fowler 122). In other words, the once privileged status of the house, and by extension that of Emily, has been eradicated by the intrusion of new elements that characterize a socio-historical moment of change with its new relations of production. The semes "encroached and obliterated" introduce the story's central opposition: encroaching/encroached. This opposition structures the description of what follows, so that everything we learn about Emily Grierson's house emerges in relation to an irrevocable history of plenitude. Thus, right from the beginning, we grasp Emily 's character in terms of loss. The epigrammatic effect of the incongruous combination in the seme "coquettish decay," utilized for the house, reflects obliquely on its owner. It seems to be articulated with a compulsive desire to ridicule Emily herself, and as such, certainly brings out her pitiful condition.

The narrator takes pains to associate Emily's name with the "august" names who have played a central role in Jefferson's history. When Emily dies, she takes her place among these people "who fell at the battle of Jefferson" (1771). Through an operation of condensation, the narrator establishes similarity between Emily and this class of men who obviously had values to fight for. Silverman affirms that condensation establishes relationships of similarity because similarity persists even after contiguity has been interrupted. Moreover, "it lends itself to what Freud calls `considerations of represent ability' " (100). Thus, Emily is defined as a person who bears a "family resemblance" to those she represents. As such, she functions as a signifier pointing, beyond herself as female, to a social order whose representatives have already vanished. I believe that this operation results in the collapse of the code of sexual difference and permits the emergence of class difference as a condition of meaning in the story. In the same way, although the narrator's voice seems to articulate a private consciousness, its communal character helps it to go beyond this limitation and acquire a collective consciousness whose object of denigration is not Emily as a female subject, but a class of people. Nevertheless, the nature of the narrator's discourse needs Emily's body to inscribe its ideological bias.

The organisation of the following paragraphs helps to activate two cultural codes: the code of patriarchy and the code of class struggle. Both codes derive impetus from the "fathered" which describes Colonel Sartoris's behavior as the mayor who exempted Emily from paying taxes in Jefferson. Emily's position as a "hereditary obligation" for the town dates from "that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor--he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron on--remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father into perpetuity" (1771). The concatenation of the words "fathered" and "father" is crucial, for it insists on the essential similarity between Colonel Sartoris and Emily's father, i.e., the similarity between the symbolic and the actual father. Obviously, these two overlap because they constitute a

paradigmatic set at the level of the symbolic order.--Stares suggests that an entire symbolic network can be elaborated on the familial scheme. In this scheme, the family is perceived primarily in terms of its capacity to confer subjective positions on its members. Biological connections are irrelevant, except insofar as its categories overlap with cultural ones. Colonel steps in to fill in the vacancy left by the actual father's death, in order to compensate for the lack Emily suffers on her father's demise. Emily's need to be looked after as the female subject, that is her lack, helps to define the father as "potent." In this connection, Colonel Sartoris, who assumes the responsibility of restoring the actual father's potency, represents the paternal signifier, who in turn represents the Phallus. Phallus, according to Lacan, designates "all those values which are opposed to lack" (Silverman 182-183). Indeed, Colonel Sartoris's position as mayor inserts his name in a network of signification which includes other privileged signifiers such as "law," "power," "authority" and "administration." As the mayor "who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron," he is in a position to dictate the legal and ideological relations that organise inter subjective relations. The brief reference to the Negro woman as the prohibited subject obliquely alludes to the relations of unevenness--contradiction and subordination that characterise the social matrix of Colonel Sartoris's generation, with their corresponding superstructure characteristics (legal, ideological and political). It alludes to the link between the economic infrastructure based on slavery and the repressive state apparatus, i.e., the legal-political apparatus, which assigns living spaces and checks identities in order to control and "perpetuate" the existing order in the year "1894" in "Jefferson". Thus, temporal and spatial indicators create a sense of reality. Emily's acceptance of the arrangement designed by Colonel Sartoris signifies her agreement to be constituted by the discursive practices of that historical moment and space. Yet, as a result of this arrangement, she becomes a burden, a "hereditary obligation" on the town. This passage significantly ends with the narrator's intrusive voice which subverts the image of plenitude enjoyed by Colonel Sartoris and his generation. The generic statement "Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it" carries undertones of devaluation if not disparagement. It derives its power of definition by exposing a transaction between a special species of men ("Colonel Sartoris' generation") and a woman who is a member of a class which is associated with irrationality and eccentricity, and "everyone," including the reader, knows that myth. It is a transaction, therefore, which renders this specific group of men irrational and eccentric. The narrator, thus, deploys generic statements to surreptitiously justify his ideological position, which is opposed to Colonel Sartoris's generation.

The code of power relations, between Colonel Sartoris's generation and the following generation set in motion by this generic statement, is driven home with the first sentence of the following passage: "When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction." The comparative form "more modern ideas" implicitly

reinforces the dichotomy established between "Colonel Sartoris' generation" and "the next generation." Speaking in this mode, the narrator's voice invokes two historically specific moments, each with its own set of values, the earlier surpassed and about to be eradicated by the "better" qualities of the latter. The next generation, as mayors and aldermen, is now in control of the state apparatuses. Law is issued at the site of the new generation which obviously the world according to its own interests. The arrangement designed by the former generation creates dissatisfaction because the privilege it grants to Emily simply means that she finds her subjectivity in the domain which must be eradicated so that the new generation can establish its unchallenged supremacy. In order to complete its mission, the discourse of the new generation must "transform" Emily into a subject. The formal letter "asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience" can be understood as the operation of "hailing" that mentions. However, Emily refuses to hear the "hailing: 'Hey you there!'" The note of reply she finally writes to the insistent call of the Mayor is a definitive refusal to the call. However, the force of the refusal loses its effect by the information given about the paper on which the note of reply is written. It is written "on a paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all." The signifiers "archaic" and "faded ink" connote obsolescence, which is to define Emily by way of metonymy in the remainder of the narration.

The co-existence of two cultural codes, i.e., that of the patriarchal order and that of the class struggle, helps bring out the fact that there are no stable subject positions that a person can fill. suggests that the subject must be constantly reconstructed through discourse. In this connection, the discursive position available for Emily in the patriarchal order ensures her an economically secure position, although this security depends totally on the availability of a father figure. Yet, the emergence of the next generation, "with its more modern ideas," generates a new discursive position for her. She is expected to conform to the new social order. Hence, the dialogue relationship in terms between the two cultural codes expresses itself through two contradictory sets of subject positions for Emily, "which reflect all sorts of economic, political, sexual, artistic determinants" (Silverman 199).

Emily's economic uselessness is revealed when a deputation knocks "at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china painting lessons eight or ten years earlier" (1772). The description of the house is a superb example of a metonym operation further consolidating the connections between Emily and her house. The gaze of the narrator gradually moves inside the house, revealing obnoxious details which point towards death. The house smells of "dust and disuse." When the man servant opens the blinds, a "single sun-ray" reveals "a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father" (1772)--the emblem of power and authority. Yet, the father is already dead and the house is nothing but a tomb. The idea of death is latent in the description of Emily who looks "bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue" (1772). Her distorted image and unnatural color invoke the image of a corpse about to decay, immediately

recalling the "coquettish decay of her house," in turn resulting in a linguistic operation which associates her with decay and fall. The voice repeatedly attaches the signifiers "fallen," "decaying," and "disuse" to the proper name Emily, thereby establishing a permanent connection between them and her. This operation provides Emily as a signifier with its semantic value. Her physical appearance further reinforces this image. She is misshapen and disagreeable to the eye. Since her skeleton is small, "what would have been plumpness," and therefore agreeable in another person, is "obesity in her." Her eyes are "like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough" (1772). This description grants a highly privileged status to the signifiers that point to the grotesque.

The clustering of that connote the grotesque around her serves to establish a highly repressive operation of signification. Silverman points out that operations of signification can only be understood in relation to subjectivity. In this connection, Pécheux argues that "words, expressions, propositions etc. change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them" (111). It is significant to note that the language that describes Emily as grotesque issues from the site of the narrator. This operation places a boundary around Emily and articulates a sense of closure. Thus, the narrator's description, which "defines" Emily as bizarre, emerges as a repressive code inscribing what would call "power-relations" into his discourse. Consequently, the narrator's site becomes the position from which power is exercised. And the reader takes his/her position in this game of power relations, as the accomplice of the subject of speech, simply by 'forgetting' that the images with which s/he identifies Emily are produced at the site of the narrator.

The passage that relates the deputation's call on Emily vividly reveals the power relations between her and the townspeople. Her attitude towards them is marked by condescension. She does not ask them to sit, her refusal to meet them on equal terms. Her discourse relegates them to a bunch of people who pretend to represent town authorities. Authority and control can only be constituted through the consensus of inter subjects. Yet, Emily has no wish to concede to that effect. When the spokesman states their errand and asks her to pay her taxes, she replies in a cold voice: "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourself" (1772). She simply refuses to hear the spokesperson's protest which conveys helplessness and the inability to grasp why Miss Emily can not understand that they represent the city authorities: "But we have. We are the city authorities, Miss Emily. Didn't you get a notice from the sheriff, signed by him?" (1772). The call of the townspeople disrupt the stability of the pre-existing order by calling into question the of its subject positions. Their visit reveals the insecurity of Emily's subject position within the emerging social order. Yet, Emily refuses to recognize herself in their discourse by suggesting that she is `already a subject' in the discourse marked by Colonel Sartoris. "See Colonel Sartoris," she repeats, apparently unable to comprehend that Colonel Sartoris has been dead for almost ten years and that she is the only remnant of that social order. She tragically fails to understand that it is

"collectivity, as a pre-existing entity, that imposes its ideological stamp on each subject in the form of `socialization' of the individual in `social relations' conceived of as intersubjective relations" (Pécheux 106). Thus, the insistent use of the pronoun "we" in the spokesperson's reply assumes significance because it characterizes the inevitability of the emerging social order by underscoring "collectivity."

The information that Miss Emily is out of touch with `reality' radically alters the understanding of the remainder of the narrative. It brings her tragic condition into sharper relief through the emphasis which the narrator places upon the characterization of Emily as powerful. Not realizing that she finds her reality in a socio-historical domain that has already receded into history, Miss Emily enjoys an imaginary plenitude. Ironically, she is characterized as having an iron will that defeats every attempt to breach her borders. She presents an invincible point of resistance that "vanquishes the men on horse and foot" and an iron determination to keep "out" the ladies who have "the temerity to call." The very insistence on the lexeme "vanquished" invests it with a diametrically opposite meaning and becomes ridiculous because Miss Emily derives this power from an imaginary site.

Obviously, Emily inherits this power from her family, "the high and mighty Griersons." The name Grierson marks a living space which inaugurates both veneration and vindication in the townspeople. It invites veneration from the older people because it signifies Aristocracy, which in turn signifies the discursive position that have shaped their ideological domain. The images and representations they have identified themselves with have been manufactured at the site of Aristocracy. It is the code of chivalry that compels Judge Stevens, who is 80 years old, to protest: "Dammit sir ..." and ask, "will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?" (1773), when complaints pour in about the smell that develops in her home a short time after Homer Baron, her sweetheart, is believed to have deserted her. On the other hand, the name Grierson invites vindication from the younger generation because they feel that their rise to power (hence the repeated phrase "rising generation") will not be complete unless the interpellation of all subjects in Jefferson is completed. They subconsciously understand that Emily's interpellation will be effected when she is constituted as the "subject in law," to echo Pécheux. Hence, when the smell develops, they insist that they have "got to do something" about it. It provides an excellent opportunity to encroach upon her private sphere. The dynamics between the former and superseding generations determine the outcome of the discussion about the course of action to be taken to stop the smell. For the rising generation, the action to be taken is evident and transparent. In reply to Judge Stevens' question, "But what will you have me do about it, madam ?", the neighbor says "*Why*, send her word to stop it," adding quite naturally, "Isn't there a law?" (1773. Emphasis mine). Obviously, Emily represents different subjective positions for Judge Stevens and the neighbor, who is a woman. For Judge Stevens, Emily's living space enjoys an extra-legal position; in contrast, for the woman, law binds everyone without exceptions and everyone knows this.

The acknowledgement and transparency of meaning encapsulated in the question-word "why" helps conceal the ideological stance of the speaker and generates a sense that legal-ideological social relations are atemporal. In this connection, Pécheux posits that "every discursive formation, by the transparency of the meaning constituted in it, conceals its dependence on the `complex whole in dominance' of discursive formations, itself imbricated with the complex of ideological formations" (113). Although the answer is equally "simple enough" for the member of the rising generation who happens to be on the Board of Aldermen, the course of action is decided according to the votes of the "three gray-beards" that outnumber him. Clearly, the rising generation is not yet fully empowered to dictate its own world view. So the next night, they cross Emily's lawn "like burglars" and sprinkle lime in her cellar to stop the mysterious smell.

That night the Board of Aldermen met--three gray-beards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation.

"It's simple enough," he said "Send her a 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?" (1773)

The slander conveyed in the seme "gray-beards" reactivates the ideological stance of the narrator with respect to the older generation. Thus, the narrative assumes a dialogic character in Bakhtinian terms by accommodating unresolved, contradictory ideologies. The opposing voices embodied by Judge Stevens and the members of the rising generation, a woman and a man, express conflicting world views which resist submersion and effacement. These conflicting voices enact their struggle on Miss Emily's body. While the former provides protection and institutional support to her so that she continues to enjoy the privileges granted to her by a former legal-ideological social order, the latter awaits its moment of disparagement, totally engrossed in a sadistic desire to see her "fallen."

The voices that braid the narrator's discourse reveal their identity by expressing themselves through images and representations which are historically and culturally specific. It is worth noting that the narrator uses the collective word "people" transparently, as if it is "evident" that it signifies the younger generation. When he articulates the younger generation's ideas and emotions, his voice expresses pleasure, spite, and vindication:

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. (1773)

However, he expresses discomfort when Miss Emily fails to live up to the historically specific ideal image of Southern Aristocracy and goes out with an improper suitor who is not only a Northerner but a day laborer as well. The narrator

carefully supplies that such sentiments are generated at the site of the older generation:

> But there were still others, the 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." (1774)

The information that Emily belongs to Aristocracy needs no reiteration simply because it is contained transparently in the signifier "kinsfolk," that is, it is known by everyone. The cluster of signifiers such as "august," "haughty," "kinsfolk" and "noblesse oblige" strongly establish Emily's semantic value--that she functions as a signifier for Aristocracy. The association permits metonymic transfer of traits from one to another, so that the proper name Emily accommodates conflicting properties. The power she inherits from the class of Aristocracy secures an extra-legal position, a social space which no one dares to transgress, which enables her to get away with murder. Yet, precisely because she is a female, she in turn lends to the name the traits associated with the condition of being a female subject inscribed in the code of patriarchy. As the result of intense cultural coding, she signifies the absence of the phallus (i.e., of control, power, and privilege). Emily and her father have been coded in the collective memory of Jefferson as a "tableau; 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" (1773). The "tableau" inscribes the operations of patriarchy whose central opposition derives from sexual difference and the mise-en-scéne reflects their respective positions in the symbolic order. It is only as the result of this intense cultural coding that the qualities associated with Emily come to seem "natural" and transparent.

The narrator's discourse describing Emily as crazy and economically useless embodies all the familiar ways of describing a woman. She signifies the lack. It is in this attitude of the narrator, as the subject of speech, that the reader, as the spoken subject, recognizes him/herself. In other words, the narrator voices what is "always-already known." Thus, the proper name Emily functions as "a special case of the phenomena of paraphrase and reformulation (as a general form of the relationship between substitutables) which are constitutive of a given discursive formulation in which the subjects it dominates recognize one another as mirrors for each other" (Pécheux 118). In this sense, Emily functions in violation rather than in support of the attributes associated with Aristocracy. Her lack translates into Aristocracy's lack of phallus. Her legacy to Aristocracy signifies Aristocracy's "fall." Her claim to potency is nothing but a gross pretension: "she carried her head high enough--even when we believed that she was fallen." In this context, her economic uselessness translates into Aristocracy' helpless condition on the verge of evanescence, coinciding with the time of events narrated. When the newer generation appropriates the space left by the previous generation and becomes "the backbone and spirit of the town," that is to say, the site of ideological enunciation,

they strike the final blow by severing Emily's means of sustenance. They stop sending "their children to her with boxes of color and tedious brushes and pictures cut from the ladies' magazines" (1776), driving Emily to total confinement. The condescension in the narrator's voice becomes overt in the signifier "tedious." Speaking in this mode, the narrator's discourse becomes a relentless operation of ridicule whose final point is Emily's cancellation. Indeed, the narrator's voice incurs decency only after Miss Emily is "decently" buried. Now that she is neatly tucked away in her grave, the narrator can indulge himself in being courteous and leave "a rose for Emily" on her grave. Yet the rising generation has to break the door of the room "in that region above the room" that has resisted for forty years in order to finalize its claim to power.

Thus, the discourse of the narrator becomes a monstrous operation of signification. Its activities are concealed by the operation of the hermeneutic code which discloses a story of murder and necrophilia. Emily is simply the innocent victim who serves as a displacement for Aristocracy whose fall, or eradication for that matter, is the ultimate desire of the narrator, who finds his subjectivity in the class that is about to replace it. The narrator transfers all his pyschic energy to Emily and invests in her all the scorn and contempt which he properly aims at Aristocracy. His scorn and contempt find their linguistic expression in presenting Emily as a grotesque figure. The narrator's language, which exposes Emily as a distorted figure, becomes a vehicle for subverting Aristocracy's claim to potency and serves as a disguise for the discursive ideological process of articulation. The reader, as the spoken subject constituted by the narrator's discourse, directs his/her attention to Emily, forgetting thus that the monstrous images s/he sees are produced by the narrator's discursive activities and unwittingly becoming an accomplice in a struggle against Aristocracy.

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