

Roses for who essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Faulkner's extensive authorial power in "A Rose for Emily" looms evident in the design of a large Southern gothic house, in the outline of three complex generations of a Southern community, and in the development of a plot that dutifully weaves and unweaves a mystery through a limited omniscient point of view.

However, Faulkner also reveals and revels in an authorial lack of knowledge when presented with writing a "lady" into a patriarchal Southern text.

Although sole author of "A Rose for Emily," this writer knows little about what went on in his lady's, Miss Emily Grierson's, household. Knowledge of Emily proves unavailable to him (and consequently to the reader) for about thirty years before we meet her — before her father dies and lets her out of the house — and also for the last twenty-seven years of her life. He writes, "her front door remained closed," (Faulkner, p. 24) and with these words, he both instigates and reveals an extended period of limited knowledge. William Faulkner opens "A Rose for Emily" with a lengthy fifty-six-word single sentence that both encapsulates a community's reaction to death and displays an immediate authorial compulsion to describe a scene through gender differences. This author situates his story in a line-up of men and women conjoined in the desire to attend Miss Emily's funeral but divided in the motivation assigned by the author: "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 manservant – a combined gardener and cook – had seen in at least ten years". (Faulkner, p.

119) Gender motivation splits between respect and curiosity, affection for a representation and intention to view the insides of a house. The subordinate object of the sentence is “ Miss ? mily,” the woman who provides the reason to feel “ affection” and to “ see,” and “ our whole town” hovers as subject of the sentence. The stylistics of Faulkner’s language thus serves to subordinate ? mily, ostensibly the subject of the tale, and to elevate the town as the truer subject. Reading ? mily as subordinate subject matter to the town renders peripheral much criticism regarding the story, for most of the scholarship addresses the motives for ? mily’s actions toward Homer Barron. These motives range from sexual repression and Oedipal issues to provision of symbols designating the passing of the Old South to the new. While scholars have treated the story as a murder mystery and have struggled with the revelation of ? mily’s “ secret,” a more pervasive secret reigns over the story: why does Faulkner create a narrator with indefinable gender to tell this particular story? Until recently the narrator has been relegated to a marginal place of importance in the tale. Hal Blythe’s 1988 essay offers provocative discussion of the narrator; however, Blythe assumes the narrator to be male. Michael Burduck’s 1990 essay critiques Blythe’s article on exactly this count and argues for a female narrator.

( Blythe, p. 4) Both of these approaches preserve the binary positions that words such as “ male” and “ female” signify in language. Because Faulkner has left the gender of the narrator undetermined in the text, it seems that postmodern critics assume he meant one or the other and that part of the conundrum of the tale is to solve the gender of the narrator. The often

unspoken concern underlying the quest for gender resolution in this tale is  
Faulkner's "feminism." ...