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CRITICISM

EMILY'S ROSE OF LOVE: THEMATIC IMPLICATIONS OF POINT OF VIEW IN FAULKNER'S "A ROSE FOR EMILY"

HELEN E. NEBEKER*

The thesis of this paper, simply stated, is that forty years of critical study of Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily," has failed to come to grips with the problem of its narrative focus or point of view. Furthermore, I will contend that this failure to fully explore the significance of the narrative voice has obscured several essential points of the story, chief of which is the underlying horror of Faulkner's real theme, a theme which he has kept successfully hidden through the years within his deliberate structural ambiguity and behind his anonymous narrator.

As most readers are no doubt aware, the general view of critics regarding the anonymous, ubiquitous narrator is that he is a kind of innocuous, naive, passive citizen of Jefferson, who relates for the reader the story of Miss Emily's life and death. Or, in the words of one critic summing up the prevailing view, he is "... a townsman, gifted in the art of storytale-telling, shifting his identity imaginatively as he moves through the story." Or, as another group of critics states, the narrator simply records "... the progress or advance in the... knowledge of Emily's townsman... a growth from bemused tolerance, to suspicion, to knowledge, to horror..." at Emily's crime. From these more or less similar views of the narrator, the critics proceed to develop their interpretations of Miss Emily as the proud, unbending monument of the Old South who somehow triumphs over time and change, thereby evoking admiration conjoined with pity.¹

On the surface, such explanation of both narrator and theme may suffice. But if one looks sharply and critically at the point of view chosen by Faulkner, remembering that the basic structural resource of a writer is point of view which becomes, in the words of Mark Schorer, a mode of thematic definition, and if one acknowledges the mastery of Faulkner in merging person, time, place, and events, the importance of his chosen point of view should not be

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*I want to thank my colleague, Professor George Herman, with whom I first discussed these ideas, for the suggestions and encouragement he gave me in writing this article.

so lightly dismissed. However in just such dismissal, readers and critics alike have permitted themselves to be fooled by a master story-teller who lays out point by point the details of a horror far more monstrous than that of a poor demented woman who kills her lover.

For the truth of the Miss Emily episode lies, not in the character and motivation of Miss Emily, but in the identity of the narrator. And to arrive at that identity, the reader must untangle the deliberate ambiguity of the various pronoun references which control the point of view. Once this is done, the implicit horror of the story is clearly revealed, and from that horror, a new, more subtle theme emerges, revealing starkly and undeniably the significance of the “rose” of the title.

The reader of “A Rose for Emily” realizes immediately the vagueness of the pronoun focus within this story. Within all five sections we note a continual shifting of person, from our to they to we (all italics added). And this shift is further complicated by implied shifts of referents for the various pronouns. That is, our does not always have the same referent, nor do they and we! For example, in Section I, this shifting ranges from the our of the opening sentence (our whole town), which we easily equate with the townspeople, to the they of the fourth paragraph (they mailed her a tax notice), equated at this point in the story with the generation of mayors and aldermen who took power after the paternal despotism of Colonel Sartoris, the man who abrogated the taxes of Miss Emily.

In Section II, we are told that “... she vanquished them” (the generation indicated above) “just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before...” (another previous generation). And in the shifting chronology of events in this passage, their fathers becomes the they of the Board of Aldermen, “three gray beards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation,” who confer about the odor at Miss Emily’s house. Thus, in the first two sections, we have ambiguously but definably presented before us three groups—the general townspeople of the inclusive our; the they of a contemporary society functioning when Miss Emily was in her late 50s or early 60s and to whom she refused to pay taxes; and the they of an earlier group. This last group would have been a chronologically overlapping group composed of Emily’s post-war contemporaries as well as the older pre-Civil War generation—men such as Colonel Sartoris who, unable to affront a needy lady with charity, concocted a story which permitted Miss Emily to accept charity in the form of remitted taxes and a Judge Stevens, eighty years old and unable to “accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad.” Predictable Faulknerian generations: the autocratic pre-Civil War hierarchy to whom a lady is always a lady; the generation this hierarchy breeds, Emily’s generation, characterized by decay, ruin, but also reverence for the past; the unknowing, uncaring, opportunistic new breed which will dun a lady for her taxes.
But challenging this convenient categorization is the introduction in Section II of a different pronoun, the we who thought of Emily and her father 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, clutching a horsewhip...”; the we who were not pleased but vindicated when she reached thirty and was still single; the we who did not say she was crazy then because they remembered all the young men her father had driven away. Traditionally this has been accepted as a universal we, referring to the townspeople as a whole as indicated by the previous “our whole town” it supposedly is the we of public rumor, piecemeal hearsay. But this interpretation avoids an extremely pertinent question: why is this we separated from the they who, still in Section II of the story, began to feel sorry for Emily after Homer’s disappearance, remembering her great aunt’s madness; the they who pity her, alone and destitute at her father’s death; the they who buried her father quickly?

Upon careful consideration it seems obvious that, in this we, another group has been introduced into the personae of the story—a smaller group whose members have personally seen the tableau of daughter and father with upraised whip. Whip upraised against what? The town and life in general? Or young men in particular?—young men of Emily’s own generation, none of whom “were quite good enough for Miss Emily” and who are “vindicated” (avenged?) by her spinsterhood. It is conceivable that this we, in the context in which it is presented, is the disappointed but still devoted group of suitors that surrounded every belle of the Southern myth, suitors not socially prominent enough to be acceptable to the Old Aristocracy but of a breeding, position, and means superior to the they—the general townspeople—who must reduce Emily from an untouchable monument to an impoverished pitiable human? Is this we a select group to whom Emily is a “care” (paragraph 3) as opposed to the they to whom she is a “duty” (the older generation which believes in the protection of Southern Womanhood)? Structurally this is more than just a defensible supposition.

Entertaining this possibility, and holding in abeyance momentarily the final intriguing paragraph of Section II, let us pursue the pronoun shifting a little further.

Section III introduces Barron, the Northern Outsider, gross, arrogant, dynamic; and in connection with him, again the we. We saw Miss Emily after her illness as girlish and somewhat angelic with her short hair; we were glad she had an interest; we believed she was fallen. Juxtaposed with this we is the they of the older tradition-bound people who knew that even grief could not account for Emily’s lapse with Homer (the implication in the light of the various references to insanity is, of course, that Emily must be mad) and who began to say “Poor Emily.” And then the they of a younger and less aristocratic group who began to whisper about Emily and Homer after
the older people had set the precedent. Here again is the grouping previously mentioned (without, of course, the youngest group which is not yet grown)—the Old Order, Emily’s contemporaries, and the small, exclusive group of we.

Concluding this same Section III is an accurate, knowledgeable revelation of Miss Emily buying the arsenic, a scene dramatic in presentation, without equivocation. What observer witnessed that scene? Who remembered and repeated the exact words? Who could possibly report that when Miss Emily opened the box of poison at home she found written on it the notation, “For rats”? To explain this knowledge as public rumor, common gossip, is to ignore the care of Faulkner as an artist and to grossly oversimplify the narrative structure of this story. Reasonably, only the druggist could have known the facts of the rat poison episode and it seems obvious that it was the druggist who looked down at her and saw her face like a “strained flag.” Now would the druggist, having tacitly violated the law (and even believing that Emily would commit suicide), have made this episode public gossip? If so, he not only indict[s] himself, but the whole town quite literally connives at murder. Thus this interpretation seems unlikely. He might, however, have revealed it confidentially to an intimate or two, those who, like him, “watched over” (and spied upon) Miss Emily.

With this idea in mind, refer back to Section II which relates an episode which took place two years after the death of Emily’s father, after her purchase of the poison, and a short time after the disappearance of Homer Barron. Because of complaints about the smell at Emily’s house, the Board of Aldermen, “three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation,” have met. Subsequently four men skulked about her house, sniffing, sowing lime. In a week or two the smell went away. Interesting questions are raised here. First of all, who are the four men prowling outside Miss Emily’s house, even breaking into the cellar to sprinkle the lime? The Board of Aldermen, spied upon by an outsider who later reveals the episode? But how would an outsider know of the earlier Board meeting in such detail? Is it just possible that the younger man of the Board, assisted by three cohorts who have been alerted to the situation, acts to forestall further investigation? Do we have at least a tenable clue to the ambiguous we when we link this episode with that of the rat poison? Can we imagine the rising young alderman and the druggist (with at least two others) as conspirators who speculate, discuss the events of Emily’s life among themselves? At any rate, whatever their identity, these four men act to protect Miss Emily. Why? What do these men suspect? And why, “after a week or two,” does the smell go away? It takes weeks for the smell of a decomposing body to dissipate—and we the readers know that the lime has

2Note in the light of the rest of this discussion, the implications of the druggist’s willingness to let her commit suicide—or perhaps to suggest by means of his label that the poison might better be used on someone else.
never touched the source of the corruption! What happens to stop the odor unless the body is either completely destroyed or sealed off in an airless room? And who seals it: Miss Emily alerted by the skulking men? Cohorts in crime who advise Miss Emily that something must be done to prevent public action? Hold these points in reserve temporarily.

Now we must look for a moment at the structural and chronological significance of Section II. As we have already discovered, in this section the various groups within Jefferson have been carefully, if obscurely, introduced. But more than this, every major episode except Emily’s death has also been introduced, merged within a kind of ebbing and flowing continuum of time—a structural technique essential to Faulkner’s purpose. Note that in the first paragraph we start with a reference to a fairly recent occurrence, the attempt to collect Emily’s taxes, and shift in the same sentence to a reference concerning the smell which occurred after her father’s death and Homer’s disappearance. Then we slip back to her father’s death (interestingly juxtaposed by a semicolon to her sweetheart’s going away), the consequent visit of the ladies, the reference to the Negro servant who is Emily’s lone retainer, and from him to the smell again, which is accepted by the ladies as conclusive proof that no man could keep a kitchen properly. All of this in ten lines. And from this chronological jump-off, we learn of the secret night visit by the four men.

Then, in the eleventh paragraph of Section II, we read, “That was when people had begun to feel really sorry for her,” remembering how insanity ran in Emily’s family. But in the confusing chronological sequence just indicated, to what time period does that sentence refer? Surely not to the preceding line, “After a week or two the smell went away.” Does it refer to her father’s death? To Homer’s disappearance? It is impossible to tell in the merging of events presented to our view. But two paragraphs later we are told about Emily’s refusal to admit her father’s death, and how they, about to resort to force, were finally permitted by Miss Emily to dispose of the body. Then that curious last paragraph which we were holding in abeyance:

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

Again we carefully separated from they. And again the question, to what period of time does that paragraph refer? I suggest that it not only refers to Emily’s attempt to keep her father’s body, but, in an already established pattern of time transmance, to events following his death—the purchase of the poison, the disappearance of Homer, and the development of the smell. In other words, we did not admit that she was crazy then—when she kept the body of her father, when she bought the poison; we knew
she had to do *that*—keep her father’s body, buy the poison. But note the full implications of *then* and *that*. When did we say that she was crazy? After we realized the significance of the smell? When we knew that she had murdered Homer? We knew she had to do that—deny the death of her father, keep her lover’s body, her lover who had robbed her of even her pride (her father having deprived her of all hope of an acceptable form of love because of his family pride). In the unfolding horror of these possibilities lies the defense for what has been criticized as an unnecessarily complicated structure and chronology. Through this structure and chronology with its merging and confusing of events and participants, Faulkner permits his first person narrator to mask not only his identity but also to conceal from us the knowledge he or rather they have concerning Emily’s horrible crime. This is the genius of Faulkner. The clues are all there as early as the second section, even though we will continue through three more sections, still unaware of the magnitude of the horror unfolding before us.

In Section IV, the merging of time and events continues. Following the purchase of the poison, “we all said” (note the clue here that the select *we* group is larger than the two already identified) that Emily would kill herself “and that would be the best thing”. (That is, the tradition of aristocratic honor must not be violated.) Time then telescopes to the whole affair between Emily and Homer. The pronouns in this section are much less confusing. The whole town knows about the affair; everyone sees Emily and Homer. The minority *we* becomes more or less a part of the general *we*, and all of us side with Miss Emily against the outside Griersons who “were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been.” And then Homer disappears after having been seen entering the kitchen door at dusk—the front door is closed and Miss Emily does not appear on the street for six months. Then when *we* next see her, she has grown fat and gray; her front door remains closed for some years until she opens it to give painting lessons to a few of her contemporaries and their children. (Chronologically, Emily is approximately thirty-two when Homer disappears, forty-ish when she fits up her studio.)

Then, the “newer generation”—a second generation from Emily—succeeds as the “spirit of the town,” a generation to whom Emily is neither “tradition” nor “duty” and certainly not “care” in the sense of any kind of attention or personal involvement, and so the front door closes irrevocably. When the town gets free postal delivery (symbolic of the new order), Emily will not let *them* attach the numbers and mailbox above her door. Years pass as *we* watch her Negro grow older. Now *we*—not *they*—send her a tax notice each December. With the passage of years, only Emily, symbolic of the indomitable but dying Old South in all its decadence, pride, refusal to admit the changing order, remains distinguishable, definable. We have admitted the change, accepted it, merged into it, become a part of the *they*. Only Emily “passed from generation to generation—dear [to the old order],
inescapable [to her contemporary protectors], impervious [to the new order], tranquil [in her madness], and perverse [turned to the illusory past instead of reality].” And so she dies, alone, *scarcely remembered*, “in the house filled with dust and shadows . . . .”

And with her death, the town gathers. The Negro attendant admits the first visitors and then, knowing the horrible secret of that upper room, walks out of the house and disappears forever. The female cousins arrive. The very old men, last of the Great Confederacy, gather to pay honor to a myth of the past, convincing themselves that they had danced with and courted Emily, although she had in reality belonged to a younger generation. They reminisce, “confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road, but, instead, a huge meadow . . . .” (Note that in these lines Faulkner has clearly revealed his structural intent and his narrative secret.) Emily lies beneath a mass of “bought flowers,” not flowers gathered by caring hands from lovingly tended gardens, but “bought flowers” tendered by a crass, unknowing, uncaring generation. Symbolically, the New South has triumphed.

But in the midst of this triumph, once more, clearly and finally, the emergence of that separate *we*. “Already we knew that there was one room in that region above stairs which no one had seen in forty years and which would have to be forced.” The implications here are overwhelming. We knew what was in that room; *we* had known it for forty years! Emily died at seventy-four; her father had died when she was approximately thirty-one or thirty-two; Homer had disappeared two years later. And someone had seen that room after his death, forty years earlier, or had suspected what it contained. Now the reader understands clearly what has been suggested earlier—that the room had been sealed shortly after decomposition of Homer’s body had begun, either by Miss Emily herself or by accomplices after-the-fact.\(^3\) Someone had locked that door; someone had disposed of the key so that they would have to break down the door after Miss Emily was decently in the ground. Now if Miss Emily had locked the door herself and thrown away the key, how do *we* know that the room must be forced; how do *we* know that no one has seen that room in forty years? Have not *we*, knowing her horrible crime, concurring in it, even abetting it, stood guard, protected, cherished these many years this putrescent symbol of a way of life long dead, almost forgotten? Do *we*, almost as lovers, offer this last appalling act of devotion—the keeping of her ghastly secret—as a final tribute, as our “rose for Emily”? A rose in sharp, poignant, horrible contrast to the “bought flowers” of a new generation? In other words, as alien outside forces seemingly triumph over Emily in death, have not *we*, in reality, finally cuckolded *they*.

\(^3\)This writer’s mother recalls clearly, as a child in the South, the sealing up of a room in which a sister had died of diphtheria. She remembers that it was a time-consuming and difficult task for her father and believes it would have been impossible for the strength of her mother.
in the keeping of our macabre secret? And in preserving—or using—Emily, we have kept un tarnished the honor and myth of the South!

Now, in this last act of the drama, as they force the door, we note the remembered (or anticipated) details of the room, almost as though a camera slowly moved from point to point. The violence of the falling door seems to fill the room with dust. The smell of the tomb pervades the bridal room, lying upon the faded rose of the bed curtains, the rose-shaded lights, the tarnished silver of the toilet articles, the men’s clothes. And then the body. Rotting, grimacing, “cuckolded” by death (as well as by aged lovers?) lies Homer Barron. No shock, no surprise as we view the scene, just careful attention to every detail. And then, “one of us” lifts something from the pillow, a long strand of Emily’s iron-gray hair.

Now, upon the threshold of that room and from the obscurities and complexities of structure and personae, the truth of time and circumstance emerges for the reader. From that room the odor of death and corruption assaults our senses and we, the readers, know the final horror. The guilt of a crazed old lady is clear, horrible but comprehensible in the light of her loss, her insanity. But the odor of the “rose of love” proffered Emily by those aged lovers, sickens, suffocates, is beyond our comprehension. The composite we looms monstrous, corrupt. And through that monstrous we, Faulkner offers us a frightening comment on the moral fabric of the Southern social structure.

For thus he tells us that the immediate post-war remnant of the Old Southern hierarchy—symbolized in the person of Emily—lies dead, buried, even pardoned in the light of her heritage, her madness, her incorruptible endurance. But another remnant of this Old South—symbolized in the persons of the anonymous ancient suitors—lives on, linked only tenuously and superficially to that now-dead, indomitable aristocracy. Inferior in every way to the clans of Sartoris and Grierson (perhaps even to the minor aristocracy of Barrons), this order yet lusts and covets consummation. Torn between envy and revulsion, love and hate, it protects and extends the myth of its idol. Robbed of everything else, even as Emily had been robbed, it clings to the rott ing body of the loved one—just as Emily had clung to the dead body of her father (the past) and the rotted body of her lover (the present and future)—cherishing it even as it putrefies and maddens before its eyes, even as it dies.

Insidious, monstrous, unforgivably corrupt, this sub-culture merges into the innocuous they of respectability and modernity. In the form of Emily’s secret protectors, sane, deliberate, knowing, this group stands self-righteously and horribly amid the final debacle, proffering to Emily—at once its victim and its care—its loathsome rose of love.

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4See footnote 2 above
Addendum

To those who respond to the thesis of this paper with the question, “But how do you explain the gray hair on the pillow?” may I point out that forty years of critical attention has not been able to settle this problem. Nor can this question, in the context of the story, ever be fully clarified.

However, three specific points can be made. First of all, this critical question of the gray hair has served as a red herring for Faulkner through the years, almost completely diverting attention from the real problem of the story, the narrative focus. Secondly, we can point out that there is one obvious point of confusion in the critical studies in relation to the time at which Miss Emily’s hair turned gray. This error is rooted in Section IV of the story, after Homer had been admitted at dusk and Miss Emily disappears from public view for “almost six months.” There follows another sentence and then the next paragraph begins,

When we next saw Miss Emily, she had grown fat and her hair was turning gray. During the next few years it grew grayer and grayer until it obtained an even pepper-and-salt iron gray, when it ceased turning. Up to the day of her death at seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-gray . . .

Critics have confused Miss Emily’s appearance after the six-month interval with the time when we (in the context of this paper’s thesis) next saw her. There is no way of absolutely equating the references nor of accurately pin-pointing how long after Homer’s death Emily’s hair began to turn. We can say, however, that at some time subsequent to the sealing up of the room and after the smell of the corpse had dissipated, Emily had found a way to enter the room and had lain—whether briefly or often we cannot know (because the narrator cannot know!)—beside the corpse. When that room is entered, the only thing seemingly unanticipated by the narrator-group is that long strand of iron-gray hair which one of us lifts from the pillow.

Thus, carrying my thesis to its furthest conclusion: just as we (the Old South) have cuckolded they (the new), triumphing over them in this moment of death, so has Emily ultimately cuckolded us (the old lovers) and Faulkner’s theme is brought full circle. We, the readers, are left in complete knowledge that Emily’s South, though dead and buried and forgiven, has left its horror imprinted forever on the structure and in the persons of the present.

Chronology of "A Rose for Emily"

1863 (ca.) Emily born.
1893 Emily’s father dies. (Emily is just past thirty.)
1894 Taxes are remitted by Colonel Sartoris retroactive to his death. (Probably a time lapse of approximately a year for tax notices.)
1895-96 Homer disappears, the smell develops. Emily is past thirty, her father has been dead two years. Emily is not seen on the streets for
almost six months. Contrary to general criticism, taken contextually one cannot assume definitely that Emily was turning gray when she appeared after six months. Although the paragraph following this reference to the six-month time lapse begins, “When we next saw Miss Emily, she had grown fat and her hair was turning gray,” we have no way of knowing whether a further time lapse is involved or not.

1895-96 N.B.: The room must have been sealed almost immediately following the sprinkling of the lime. No lime ever touches the body and the smell of a rotting corpse lingers for weeks!

1902-10 Emily is about forty when she begins to give china-painting lessons. This would be one of the few genteel avenues of income for a destitute “lady” of her time.

1910 Colonel Sartoris dies about this time. This would account for the falling off of her pupils—he can no longer influence his children and friends to subsidize Miss Emily, just as he will no longer be able to control the matter of her taxes.

1920-25 A second Board of Aldermen calls upon her personally about her taxes. This is thirty years after their fathers had dealt with the problem of the smell (approx. 1925) or eight to ten years after she ceased giving painting lessons (approx. 1920). Emily would be between fifty-seven and sixty-two.

1937 (ca.) Emily dies. Although the narrator tells us that no one had entered her house for at least ten years, since no mention is made of any specific visit, we might assume that in the chronology of the seventy-four years of Emily’s life and the forty-four years encompassed since her father’s death some discrepancy of time is to be expected—especially when one recognizes the secret of the narrator—and that the visit by the tax collectors was the last time her doors were opened.

OVERLAPPING (Predictably Faulknerian) GENERATIONS (ca.) 1830-1936

I. OLD ARISTOCRACY—Pre-Civil War (The proud, indomitable autocracy with its belief in “its flower of Southern Womanhood”; those to whom Emily is “a duty”)

Colonel Sartoris
Grierson
Judge Stevens
The “very old men” in their Confederate uniforms at the funeral
They who know that even grief cannot account for Emily’s lapse with Homer

II. POST-WAR GENERATION (those to whom Emily is “a care”)

A. Aristocratic descendants of Old Aristocracy
Emily

B. Less socially acceptable but “spiritual heirs” of the Old South
1. The they “who meet about the smell”
   (a) three old graybeards (Judge Stevens)
   (b) one younger man, a member of the rising generation
2. The they who begin to whisper about Emily and Homer after the older people set the precedent
3. The “narrative we,” obviously a chronological if not social peer group
   (a) we see Emily and her father as a tableau—note sexual over-
   tones of that scene
   (b) we are “vindicated” when she is not married at 30
   (c) we are there at her death and when the room is opened
   (d) we (one of us) lift the hair from the pillow
C. The Negro servant
   A young male Negro who serves Miss Emily until her death at 74,
   when he, “a doddering old man,” disappears. He obviously knows the
   horrid secret, but we can forgive him for not betraying his mistress in
   the tradition of the old Negro servitor—just as we can forgive her in
   the knowledge of her madness. But, can he be the only one who
   knows the horror of that upstairs room?
III. A NEWER RISING GENERATION (Those to whom Emily is “a tra-
   dition”)
   A. They mailed her tax notices but treated her respectfully, and Emily “van-
      quished them” when they called on her (again, an overlapping age
      group)
   B. The daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris’ contemporaries
      who “were sent” to her as painting pupils
IV. A NEWER SECOND GENERATION (Those to whom Emily is neither
   duty nor tradition nor care)
   A. They become the backbone and spirit of the town (Section IV)
   B. The granddaughters (See III-B above) who grow up and do not send
      their children to her
   C. They try to fasten the numbers over her door and attach a mailbox to it
   D. They send “bought” flowers (not carefully nurtured, garden-grown flow-
      ers)
V. A COMPOSITE PRODUCT
   A sub-culture we, which is linked tenuously and superficially to the Old
   Aristocracy; which is a product of the Post-War Generation; which be-
   comes a part of the Newer Rising Generation, which, in turn, ultimately
   merges with the Newer Second Generation to become the innocuous they
   of respectability and modernity. This we now sends her tax notices in
   the name of civic duty even as we had dutifully compounded her crime
   in the name of Southern honor.

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EMILY'S ROSE OF LOVE: A POSTSCRIPT

HELEN E. NEBEKER

(Professor Nebeker offers the following emendation to her earlier article, "Emily's Rose of Love," which appeared in the March, 1970 issue of the Bulletin.)

Regarding my article, "Emily's Rose of Love: Thematic Implications of Point of View in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily,'" March 1970, I must submit, with an admixture of delight at discovery and chagrin at original obtuseness, a slight emendation in the chronology offered at the end of the article, pp. 11-12. This correction eliminates the only real discrepancy in the time sequence—that is, that the date of Emily's death, approximately 1937, is some seven years after the date of the first publication of the story in 1930. I, as well as other critics, have passed over this discrepancy as part of the license permitted any story-teller, whether Faulkner or his narrator. Closer contextual analysis discloses, however, that we need not grant Faulkner even this much license in this carefully constructed story. The fact is that we err in assuming that the date of 1894, mentioned so casually in the third paragraph of the story, refers to the date of the death of Emily's father, who died, we know, when Emily was about thirty. It simply does not! Rather it specifically refers to the date when Colonel Sartoris "remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity." That the death and the remission of taxes are not coincident becomes obvious in Section IV when we are told in the seventh paragraph that at the age of about forty, for six or seven years, Emily gave china-painting lessons to the daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris who "were sent to her with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church on Sunday with a twenty-five-cent piece for the collection plate." The following—and last—line of the paragraph reads: "Meanwhile [italics added] her taxes had been remitted." Since "meanwhile" by definition means "in or during the intervening time" or "at the same time," the date of 1894 obviously refers to that period when Emily is in her forties and so destitute, having been left nothing by her father but the house, that she must take in day-pupils. At this time, Colonel Sartoris, who could not insult a lady by offering her charity, abrogates her taxes which have undoubtedly been accruing for some ten years.

Now, using 1894 as a date when Emily is in her forties, her birth date must be advanced to approximately 1854 and all other dates changed accordingly. Emily died around 1928 and Faulkner's narrator is still relating his shocking story two years later in general accord with the publication date, not from some point in the future. In view of this basic correction, I offer the following amended chronology:

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1854 (ca.) Emily is born.
1884 Emily's father dies.
1886 Homer disappears; the smell develops; the room is sealed.
1894 Emily gives painting lessons. *During this time, Colonel Sartoris remits her taxes.*
1906 Colonel Sartoris dies.
1916 The city fathers call on her personally about her taxes, thirty years after their fathers had dealt with the problem of the smell (1886). "Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years." (Section I)
1928 (ca.) Emily dies. No one has seen the inside of the house for at least ten years. (Section I)
1930 Story written and published in 1930. Section I clearly indicates that Emily had died sometime previous to the time of narration.

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**FROM THE SECRETARIAT**

As newly elected Executive Secretary of the RMMLA I cannot appropriately begin my term of office without expressing my deep appreciation for the efforts of those who have preceded me. I am particularly grateful to Professors Henry Pettit and Edward Nolan; their past aid has helped me immeasurably during my interim appointment and their future counsel will be no less welcome and valuable.

In past years the RMMLA has developed from a small and relatively informal organization into an association which—both in size and diversity—has come to represent fully the interests of the entire Rocky Mountain area; its *Bulletin* has matured into a significant journal of scholarly and professional interest; and its annual meeting has grown into a forum for the interchange of scholarly ideas, pedagogical techniques, and professional information. I fervently hope that the RMMLA will continue to thrive and prosper in the future as it has in the past.

In a sense, however, our past successes may prove to be a danger to our future development. For nothing would be easier than to rest on our laurels, to point with justifiable pride to our accomplishments while ignoring the demands the future will place upon us. We must remember that the essence of growth is continual change, and as our organization grows larger in size it must remain aware of the need for constant flexibility. An old but nonetheless apt illustration is the dinosaur, whose increase in size was concomitant with his inability to adapt to changing times.

The simple growth of our organization can perhaps become almost automatic, but its development cannot. Organizational change depends upon a dialogue between the membership and their elected officers. May I urge you all to prevent any breakdown in this dialogue.