UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Telling Community in William Faulkner´s "A Rose for Emily": A Case Study in Narrative Technique

Jak (vy)povídá komunita ve Faulknerově „Růže pro Emily": studie narativní techniky

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí diplomové práce (supervisor):
PhDr. Hana Ulmanová, PhD, M.A.

Zpracoval (author):
Filip Krtička

Studijní obor (subject):
Anglistika-amerikanistika

Praha, srpen 2013

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 19. 8. 2013

I want to thank my supervisor, Hana Ulmanová, for her keen eye thanks to which my thesis is stylistically better than it would have been without her contribution. Of course, any deficiencies are my responsibility. I also want to thank Professor John Matthews for his support in my research from the beginning two years ago. Part of his support was a provision of some critical material relevant for my research; I am very grateful for his kindness. Both of them deserve my thanks for their helpfulness and patience.

Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Table of Contents

> The land is full of melancholy spinsters like me, lost to history, blue as roaches in our ancestral homes, keeping a high shine on the copperware and laying in jam. Wooed when we were little by our masterful fathers, we are bitter vestals, spoiled for life. The childhood rape: someone should study the kernel of truth in this fancy.[1]

1. Introduction

1.1 The Aim of the Present Thesis

Though spoken by the main protagonist and narrator of J. M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda, one might very well imagine these words spoken by Emily Grierson, the eponymous character of William Faulkner's best-known short story "A Rose for Emily"; that is, if she were allowed to present her "point of view." The possibility is more than accidental. Magda lives on a farm only with her father in the middle of a veldt and, while Emily lives in Jefferson, the tableau mentioned by the narrator suggests that she lives quite isolated in the house only with her father, with limited social contact: "We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door."[2]

This passage points to another similarity between the two characters: they both live in intensely patriarchal societies. As Dominic Head observes about Coetzee's second novel, "the speaker, Magda, emerges as the symbolic daughter of colonialism" and he notes that "the personification of the law as male, and as a parasite devouring Magda's body, emphasizes the partly colonized position of the white woman in colonial structures, obliged to support a model of power to which her own identity is subordinated."[3] Both of the heroines revolt against these social structures similarly: both women commit murder and both have relationships with men who are deemed inferior to them by the values of the societies they belong to.

Though the two narratives diverge in many respects suggesting different aims of the two authors, it is important that Faulkner decided, for various reasons,

---

[1] J. M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982) 3.
[2] William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily," *Collected Stories* (New York: Vintage, 1977) 123. All quotations are from this edition; citations are hereafter quoted parenthetically within the text.
[3] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 42-44.

to deny Miss Grierson her "voice". The choice is even more important as the original text of the short story, before it was first published in April 1930, included "a rather elaborate scene between Emily and her servant that explicitly calls attention to the upstairs room and the shock the townspeople will experience when they discover what is in it."[4] As James Ferguson points out, "such a scene would have virtually destroyed the story because of its explicitness and its egregious violation of point of view."[5] The distillation of the final text points to a vital element of the story, the narrator.

There is a tension set up in the first sentence of this narrative: Faulkner's famous short story begins "[w]hen Miss Emily Grierson died."[6] Miss Emily Grierson, the "main character" of the short story dies in the first sentence of her story. The tension starts even before that, in the title: "A Rose for Emily" – Emily is the focus, the locus of attention. Whereas the recipient in the transaction of "giving" a rose is explicitly stated, the giver is only implied: a rose for Emily *by* … I want to shift attention to this "faded" presence, the narrator of the story. My main focus in the short story where Emily stands in the center of general attention channeled at her by the narrative agency will, therefore, be not the one who is gazed upon, but the gazer: I want to shift from the participation in the gaze to the scrutiny of that gaze.

I found my scrutiny upon an axiom, sadly an axiom not executed in critical literature very often, stated by Uri Margolin: "What the NA [narrative agent] says about the sujet de l'énoncé may not be accepted […] but he himself, as sujet de l'énonciation, can always be validly characterized on the basis of this act, especially as regards his 'understanding of human nature'."[7] In other words, that the resultant portrait of Miss Emily is a cross between Faulkner's Elly and Charles Dickens's Miss Havisham, does not necessarily say anything about her, but it definitely says something about the narrator.[8]

---

[4] James Ferguson, *Faulkner's Short Fiction* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991) 34.
[5] Ferguson 34.
[6] Faulkner 119.
[7] Uri Margolin, "The Doer and the Deed: Action as a Basis for Characterization in Narrative," *Poetics Today* 1986: 223.
[8] Among the many critics dealing with the short story, it is only Menakhem Perry who works with the abovementioned axiom; though only tentatively and not as an absolute of characterization statements: "[…] an additional focus of interest for the story [is] what Emily is for her fellow townspeople. There is, then, the possibility that their reactions are subjective, and that rather than revealing what Emily is truly like, these reactions will expose what Emily is for them, thus characterizing them rather than her." Menakhem Perry, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of the

I approach the narrator armed with the category of "we-narrative" as it has been developed over the last three decades by several narratologists; most importantly by Uri Margolin and Brian Richardson. The collective nature of the narrator of "A Rose for Emily" is its most patent feature. Yet, it hasn't been treated as it deserves so far. One of the most striking things about the bulk of criticism dealing with Faulkner's best-known short story that has accrued over the years is how easily the critics overlook or dismiss this important feature. This MA thesis is an answer to Brian Richardson's intended incentive to provide the theoretical formulation of "we-narratives" with concrete analyses of individual texts. It is also an attempt to "rectify" the perception of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," which owns its renown largely to its "shocking" or "spectacular" matter.

This often (over)stressed aspect of the short story has, for a long time, preempted any critical insight into the complicated structure of the text. Given the focus on the theme of community and the nature of the text – that is, its use of we-narrative, its preoccupation with the past, and the socio-historical context of the U.S. South – I utilize the interdisciplinary concept of "collective memory" to analyze and provide a new view of the short story. Since I subtitled my thesis "A Case Study in Narrative Technique" and the narrative technique under consideration is "we-narrative", a form of narrative distinguished partly on the basis of the concept of person as a grammatical category, I start with a brief treatment of the (grammatical) category of person in narrative.

1.2 Person in Narrative

1.2.1 The Person(ality) of the Narrator

The category of person in narrative concerns "[t]he set of relations between the narrator (and narratee) and the story narrated."[9] In his study, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne C. Booth remarks that "[p]erhaps the most overworked distinction is that of person. To say that a story is told in the first or the third person will tell us nothing of importance unless we become more precise and describe how the

---

Text Creates its Meanings [With an Analysis of Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily']," *Poetics Today* Autumn 1979: 314.

[9] Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991) 70.

particular qualities of the narrators relate to specific effects."[10] I absolutely agree with Booth that the classical distinction between first and third person tells nothing of importance on its own. However, I disagree with what Booth says next: "It is true that choice of the first person is sometimes unduly limiting; if the 'I' has inadequate access to necessary information, the author may be led into improbabilities."[11] It is a general problem of the grammatical category of person that it coalesces in the perception of narrative with the notional concept of person: that is, a speaking "I" is perceived as a voice belonging to a person in the sense of a human being. One may have noticed that I have used the pronoun "it" when referring to the narrator. This is a manifestation enough of my view of the narrator that concurs generally with Mieke Bal's linguistic approach to the concept of narrator:

> When, in this chapter, I discuss the narrative agent, or *narrator*, I mean the linguistic subject, a function and not a person, which expresses itself in the language that constitutes the text. […] We also do not mean a story-teller, a visible, fictive "I" who interferes in his/her account as much as s/he likes, or even participates as a character in the action. Such a "visible" narrator is a specific version of the narrator, one of the several different possibilities of manifestation. In this chapter, we shall rigorously stick to the definition of "that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text."[12]

This approach seems to me the right one in general, as well as in the specific context of considering "A Rose for Emily," as will become clear later. To put it in a nutshell (of a quip), the category of person is unduly "personified". The anthropomorphic view of the narrator is a result of the mimetic codes that operate in the perception of narrative; and it's a good thing that they do. They are, in general, vital for the understanding of the narrative (re)presentation. Nonetheless, one has to keep an open mind and realize that the category of person is a convention, and, as with all conventions, some texts rely on the violation of this convention. As Gérard Genette remarks à propos person,

> we know that the contemporary novel […] does not hesitate to establish between narrator and character(s) a variable or floating relationship, a

[10] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983) 150.
[11] Booth 150.
[12] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, transl. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 119-120.

> pronominal vertigo in tune with a freer logic and a more complex conception of "personality." The most advanced forms of this emancipation are perhaps not the most perceptible ones, because the classical attributes of "character" – proper name, physical and moral "nature" – have disappeared and along with them the signs that direct grammatical (pronominal) traffic. […] The Borgesian fantastic, in this respect emblematic of a whole modern literature, does *not accept person*.[13]

As Brian Richardson, who devotes a whole book to the narratives that transgress mimetic conventions, puts it, commenting on modern and contemporary fiction, "no more can one assume that a first person narrator would resemble a normal human being, with all its abilities and limitations (excepting, of course, a never-remarked-upon ability to produce a highly narratable story that reads just like a novel)."[14] The assumption of "normal human being" who is the "speaker" of the *I* is based on the anthropomorphic conception of the category of person. In an article devoted to the analysis of the category of "voice" in narrative, Richard Aczel observes that

> [a]s an entity attributed to (silent) written texts, the concept of voice inevitably raises questions of ontology and metaphoricity which remain inseparable from its more technical delimitation as a textual function or effect. The question of "who speaks?" in narrative discourse invites the further question of whether texts can really be said to "speak" at all, and if so what are the theoretical motivations and implications of the metaphor of "speech" for "writing"?[15]

The metaphorical understanding of text as speech is just one step away from seeing the textual *I* in terms of "a real human being": in reality, it is only people who posses the faculty of speech. Aczel's aim in his article is to posit "voice as a textual effect rather than an originary *anima*" in order to separate "between textual signs of stylistic agency and projected (metatextual) principles of narrative organization and unity." [16] Aczel distinguishes between two applications of the term "voice" in narrative:

---

[13] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980) 246-247.
[14] Brian Richardson, *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006) 1.
[15] Richard Aczel, "Hearing Voices in Narrative Texts," *New Literary History* Summer 1998: 467.
[16] Aczel 467.

> In one crucial sense, of course, voice is always and only identifiable with the subject of enunciation, with the "hors texte" bracketed off by deconstruction. But this unitary, originary voice is not homologous with the configuration of idiomatic signals in the text which the reader reconstructs and attributes to textual speakers or speech-styles. Voice, in this latter sense, is of necessity a metaphorical term, and cannot be equated with the irretrievable originary voice of the producer (author) of a written text. Furthermore, this metaphorical sense of voice is the only meaningful sense of the term in (written) textual applications and any attempt to forge a synonymity between textual and spoken voice – that is, between vehicle and tenor, model and modeled – is by definition self-defeating.[17]

As the consideration of the category of voice, serving as a model for the consideration of the category of person(ality) of the narrator, has shown, the conception of the narrator (in the guise of an *I*) as a speaker, that is, of "a normal human being, with all its abilities and limitations" can be conceived of only metaphorically. Addressing this problem was necessary for the further discussion of the concept of person in narrative as well as a necessary provision for my later claim about the narrator in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily". In this section, the discussion was based on the category of "first person narrative," because it is this category that raises the problem of the person(ality) of the narrator most conspicuously. In the next section, the discussion of person in narrative will be extended by addressing the distinction between the so-called "first person" and "third person" narratives.

1.2.2 First Person vs. Third Person Narrative

The traditional distinction between "first person" and "third person" narrative says nothing more than that "I am I" and that "they are they." It is an absolute truth revealing nothing, because it is merely tautological. The distinction is founded on a double standard. The "first person narrative" is distinguished by the reference of the narrator to himself as "I". The "third person narrative" is distinguished by the reference of the narrator to others as "he/she/it/they". Applying different measures to the two types of narration means that they cannot even occupy the same category. Indeed, this statement of the problem amounts to the distinction Émile

[17] Aczel 476.

Benveniste has made in his classic article "The Nature of Pronouns." Stated succinctly, Benveniste claims that the category of "'[p]erson' belongs only to *I/you* and is lacking in *he*."[18] Benveniste bases his distinction on the reference of the pronouns. Regarding the first person, he observes that "the instances of the use of *I* do not constitute a class of reference since there is no 'object' definable as *I* to which these instances can refer in identical fashion. Each *I* has its own reference and corresponds each time to a unique being who is set up as such."[19]

Asking about the reference of *I* and *you*, Benveniste comes to the conclusion that these pronouns refer to individual instances of discourse:

> What then is the reality to which *I* or *you* refers? It is solely a "reality of discourse," and this is a very strange thing. *I* cannot be defined except in terms of "locution," not in terms of objects as a nominal sign is. *I* signifies "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing I." This instance is unique by definition and has validity only in its uniqueness. […] *I* can only be identified by the instance of discourse that contains it and by that alone. It has no value except in the instance in which it is produced. But in the same way it is also as an instance of form that *I* must be taken; the form of *I* has no linguistic existence except in the act of speaking in which it is uttered. There is thus a combined double instance in this process: the instance of *I* as referent and the instance of discourse containing *I* as the referee. The definition can now be stated precisely as: *I* is "the individual who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance *I*."[20]

This passage points out two important things. Firstly, the first person pronoun potentially changes identity from one instance of occurrence to another. If the reference of personal pronouns is the instance of their discourse, then one cannot know, without contextual information, who is uttering *I*. Secondly, one must differentiate between the subject as the narrative agent and the subject as the experiencing agent (see below). Based on his previous observations, Benveniste maintains that the third person pronouns

---

[18] Émile Benveniste, "The Nature of Pronouns," *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971) 217.
[19] Benveniste, "Pronouns" 218.
[20] Benveniste, "Pronouns" 218.

> are utterances in discourse that escape the condition of person in spite of their individual nature; that is, they refer not to themselves but to an "objective" situation. This is the domain that we call the "third person."
>
> The "third person" in fact represents the unmarked member of the correlation of person. […] Thus, in the formal class of pronouns, those said to be of the "third person" are, by their function and by their nature, completely different from *I* and *you.*[21]

Benveniste observes that the reason for the difference of the third person pronoun from *I* and *you* is "a function of syntactic 'representation' which extends to terms taken from different 'parts of speech' and which answers to a need for economy by replacing one segment of the utterance, or even an entire utterance, with a more manageable substitute."[22] In another article, concerned with the category of person in verbs, Benveniste goes so far as to call the third person "nonpersonal": "It follows that, very generally, person is inherent only in the positions 'I' and 'you.' The third person, by virtue of its very structure, is the nonpersonal form of verbal inflection."[23]

Merely the use of the pronouns of the first person and third person by a narrator cannot be a distinguishing factor, because their use is unavoidable. For Benveniste, personal pronouns – that is, *I* and *you* – are indexical, since "[t]he use thus has as a condition the situation of discourse and no other. […] a unique but mobile sign, *I,* which can be assumed by each speaker on the condition that he refers each time only to the instance of his own discourse."[24] Roman Jakobson, drawing also on Benveniste, calls these linguistic units, after Jespersen, "shifters" and notes that "the general meaning of a shifter cannot be defined without a reference to the message. […] the word *I* designating the utterer is existentially related to his utterance, and hence functions as an index."[25] Indexicals, shifters, also called deictics "share in common that they usually point at or demonstrate

---

[21] Benveniste, "Pronouns" 221.
[22] Benvenist, "Pronouns" 221.
[23] Émile Benveniste, "Relationships of Person in the Verb," *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971) 199.
[24] Benveniste, "Pronouns" 220.
[25] Roman Jakobson, "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb," *Selected Writings II: Word and Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971) 131-132.

their object."[26] The use of the pronouns of the first person and of the third person is a necessary result of the deictic field which

> consists of the combined dimensions of space, time, person, perception, discourse, and perspective which jointly define the immediate setting in which utterances are produced. At the centre of this field is the indexical ground or *origo* relative to which relations of proximity, temporality, perceptual access, givenness in discourse, and prospection and retrospection are arrayed. This field is the elementary frame of reference, itself embedded in a broader setting by way of contextual or textual elements.[27]

Thus, the narrator, placed at the origo of the deictic field has no other choice than to refer to itself as "I" and to others as "he," "she" etc. Benveniste puts it succinctly when he observes that "in saying 'I,' I cannot *not* be speaking of myself."[28] This linguistic inevitability hasn't been lost on (some) narratologists. In his seminal narratological study, Gérard Genette comments on the distinction between first person and third person narratives: "[…] these common locutions seem to me inadequate, in that they stress variation in the element of the narrative situation that is in fact invariant – to wit, the presence (explicit or implicit) of the 'person' of the narrator. This presence is invariant because the narrator can be in his narrative (like every subject of an enunciating in his enunciated statement) only in the 'first-person'."[29]

The problem of the first person and the third person narrators is in narratology connected to the larger question about the presence or absence of the narrator in narrative. In Anglo-American narrative theory, the presence of the narrator is determined by the distinction between "showing" and "telling":

> Direct presentation presumes a kind of overhearing by the audience. Mediated narration, on the other hand, presumes a more or less express communication from narrator to audience. This is essentially Plato's distinction between *mimesis* and *diegesis*, in modern terms between showing

[26] William F. Hanks, "Deixis," *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2008) 99.
[27] Hanks 99. Benveniste himself treats the personal pronouns in terms of the deictic field while talking about what he calls "indicators": "The essential thing, then, is the relation between the indicator (of person, time, place, object shown, etc.) and the *present* instance of discourse." Benveniste, "Pronouns" 219.
[28] Benveniste, "Relationships" 197.
[29] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 243-244.

and telling. Insofar as there is telling, there must be a teller, a narrating voice.[30]

Though Seymour Chatman acknowledges that "[i]n the strict sense, of course, all statements are 'mediated,' since they are composed by someone,"[31] this "someone" is for him not the narrator, but the author: "Every narrative, even one wholly 'shown' or unmediated, finally has an author, the one who devised it. But 'narrator' should not be used in that sense."[32] For Chatman, the distinction between showing and telling is a viable one. Not so much for Genette who correctly, at least in terms of narrative theory, leaves the author out of the picture and rightly collapses the opposition between the two terms: "'Showing' can be only a *way of telling*, and this way consists of both *saying about it* as much as one can, and *saying this 'much'* as little as possible."[33]

Mieke Bal, whose approach is linguistic, has put the case most extremely. According to her, every sentence of a narrative can be transcribed beginning with "I say:" or "I narrate:," because for her "[a]s soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject."[34] If the narrator is always present in the narrative, as common sense would suggest and as I agree there is, and one can logically transcribe all the sentences of narrative with the beginning "I say:," then there is one fundamental consequence: "Insofar as the narrator can at any instant intervene *as such* in the narrative, every narrating is, by definition, to all intents and purposes presented in the first person."[35]

Indeed, this is not only a theoretical possibility: there are narratives that intentionally play on the opposition of first and third person narrative only to disrupt it. One example for all is Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* in which the narrator

---

[30] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980) 146.
[31] Chatman 33.
[32] Chatman 33.
[33] Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 166.
[34] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 121-122. Gérard Genette puts the matter in similar terms: "[…] there is an enunciating instance – the narrating – with its narrator and its narratee, fictive or not, represented or not, silent or chatty, but always present in what is indeed for me, I fear, an act of communication. […] In the most unobtrusive narrative, someone is speaking to me, is telling me a story, is inviting me to listen to it as he tells it, and this 'invitation' – confiding or urging – constitutes an undeniable stance of narrating, and therefore a narrator." Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) 101.
[35] Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 244.

poses as a traditional "third person" narrator with the appendage of (seeming) "omniscience", but is then revealed to be a "first person" narrator through self-reference and at the end of the narrative even appears as a character to meet the hero of his story. If all it takes to destroy the boundary between the two "types" of narrative is one *I*, then the distinction really is untenable.[36]

As Mieke Bal confirms, "[i]n principle, it does not make a difference *to the status of the narration* whether a narrator refers to itself or not. […] From a grammatical point of view, this is *always* a 'first person.' In fact, the term 'third-person narrator' is absurd: a narrator is not a 'he' or 'she.'"[37] Nevertheless, Bal is quick to add, and rightly so, that "[o]f course, this does not imply that the distinction between 'first-person' and 'third-person' narratives is invalid."[38] What she has in mind is not the distinction rejected here, but the distinction made by Genette. Genette moves the categorization into "first" and "third" person narratives when he distinguishes them on the basis of the narrator's participation in the narrated story:

> The novelist's choice, unlike the narrator's, is not between two grammatical forms, but between two narrative postures (whose grammatical forms are simply an automatic consequence): to have the story told by one of its "characters," or to have it told by a narrator outside of the story. The presence of first-person verbs in a narrative text can therefore refer to two very different situations which grammar renders identical but which narrative analysis must distinguish: the narrator's own designation of himself as such […] or else the identity of the person between the narrator and one of the characters in the story […] The term "first-person narrative" refers, quite obviously, only to the second of these situations, and this dissymmetry confirms its unfitness.[39]

Since the terminology of "first person" and "third person" narrative is rendered unfit for Genette, he distinguishes between "two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells […] the other with the narrator present as a character in the story he tells […] I call the first type, for obvious reasons, *heterodiegetic*, and the second type, *homodiegetic*."[40] Richard Walsh has

[36] Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 97.
[37] Bal 121-122.
[38] Bal 122.
[39] Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 244. Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 105.
[40] Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 244-245.

gone so far as to claim, based on a criticism of Genette's typology and the fictional pact established by the acceptance of the fictional narrator, that the narrator is either a character in the story or, in the case of Genette's extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator, the author himself/herself.[41] Another criticism of Genette, provided by Aczel this time, shows the way to the analysis of narrators preferred here. Aczel, concerned with the critique of Genette's use of the term (narrator's) "voice," insists on an analysis of narrators viewed "as an umbrella term for a cluster of possible functions, of which some are necessary (the selection, organization, and presentation of narrative elements) and others optional (such as self-personification as teller, comment, and direct reader/narratee address). One of the provinces of the study of voice is precisely the identification and differentiation of these varying functions."[42]

Of course, Genette is the last one to be satisfied with an analysis of a narrator that would stop at the statement of the narrator's status as either homodiegetic or heterodiegetic. Nonetheless, Aczel proclaims that "[w]hatever one makes of such an argument, the overestimation of the first-person pronoun as the paradigmatic marker of narratorial presence is clearly unhelpful in the identification and characterization of narrative voice. […] 'voice' must, if it is to deserve the designation, signify a far more distinctive corpus of subjectivity effects."[43] Though Aczel does not agree with the hierarchy chosen by Chatman and opts for a proper analysis of the narrator's "stylistic idiom," Chatman concurs with Aczel in the view of the narrator: "The teller, the transmitting source, is best accounted for, I think, as a spectrum of possibilities, going from narrators who are least audible to those who are most so."[44] After all, Chatman voices a sentiment similar to Aczel's criticism of the use of the term voice: "It is less important to categorize types of narrators than to identify the features that mark their degrees of audibility."[45] Chatman devotes one chapter in his book to provide his "overt" narrator with "a spectrum of features, ranging from least to most obtrusive

[41] See Richard Walsh, "Who Is the Narrator?," *Poetics Today* Winter 1997: 495-513.
[42] Aczel 492.
[43] Aczel 489-490.
[44] Chatman 146. One of the possibilities of the narrator is its use of self-reference: "[…] of course, the 'I,' the reporter, who must be the narrating subject of such sentences, may not refer to himself, so that the *pronoun* 'I' need not actually appear." Chatman 201. Thus even Chatman suggests that the distinction of "first person" and "third person" narratives is misguided.
[45] Chatman 196. By audibility, Chatman means the overt traits of a narrator's presence in the text: intrusive comments, self-reference, pronouncing judgments on characters etc.

markers: from set descriptions and reports of what characters did *not* say or think, to the various kinds of commentary – interpretation, judgment, generalization."[46]

Even according to Mieke Bal, for whom all narrators are *I*, one must inspect the narrative situations of these *I*'s to analyze the narrator properly, since, as she puts it, there are "all kinds of 'I's."[47] At the beginning of his study, Michał Glowiński bluntly states that the significance of personal pronouns in the novel "is undoubtedly a matter of enormous importance. The choice of a personal pronoun affects many subsequent choices."[48] As he observes, "[t]he semantic design of impersonal narration where the characters are called by the third-person pronoun 'he' or its equivalents, such as proper names (Vautrin, Castorp, Schweik), is totally different from the semantic design in which the narrator speaks in the first person."[49] Statements like these can be accepted only once they are qualified by a close analysis of the narrator's functions, of the narrator's characteristics. This is what I intend to provide for the narrator of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" with a close analysis of its features.

1.3 Unnatural Narratology

I assume an "unnatural" approach to the narrator in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily". By this statement it might be said that I pledge allegiance to the recent development of "unnatural narratology." Richardson remarks on the unnaturalness of modern narrators that "no more can one assume that a first person narrator would resemble a normal human being, with all its abilities and limitations (excepting, of course, a never-remarked-upon ability to produce a highly narratable story that reads just like a novel)."[50] In a recent article by a group of unnatural narratologists (including Richardson), a straightforward definition of unnatural narratology is given: "The study of unnatural narrative is directed against what one might call 'mimetic reductionism,' that is, the argument that each and every aspect of narrative can be explained on the basis of our real-world knowledge and resulting cognitive parameters."[51] As one can see, this approach

[46] Chatman 197.
[47] Bal 123.
[48] Michał Głowiński, "On the First-Person Novel," trans. Rochelle Stone, *New Literary History* Autumn 1977: 103
[49] Głowiński 103.
[50] Richardson, *Unnatural* 1.
[51] Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Brian Richardson, "Unnatural Voices, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models," *Narrative* May 2010: 113-136. Cf. Richardson

does not preach a break with the reality we are embedded in; it merely points out the fact that fiction is a realm where this reality can be and often is transcended.

As Richardson puts it, addressing Joseph Conrad's *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* there are "still attempts to provide a mimetic framework that can explain these phenomena. But there is no need to insist on such a framework […] If Conrad's depictions of his crew's sensibilities are inherently unresolvable given the existing models based on realist conventions, then we should not limit ourselves to realist conventions when grounding our theories."[52] The narrative agency in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" demands such a framework, though it might not be as unnatural as post-mortem narratives or as talking ice-creams in contemporary commercials. Of course, the appreciation and a suitable analysis of "A Rose for Emily" or the appreciation of the singularities and imaginative feats of literature in general do not require the acceptance of the framework of unnatural narratology. I mention and utilize this narratological development because the authors I draw on for the analysis of we-narrative belong to the leading scholars in this field and because providing a narratological analysis of Faulkner's texts I saw it fit to support my argument by introducing this field of narrative theory. Of course, claims about the autonomy of literature and art have been made before.

1.4 The Structure and Evolution of the Present Thesis

The heavily narratological and linguistic introduction was necessary for the discussion of collective narrative in the next chapter that builds on the information given in this introduction. Chapter II starts with the general analysis of we-narrative, an introduction to the poetics of saying "we" in narrative. In this section the observations on personal pronouns, the discussion of person in narrative and the distinction of "first person" and "third person" narrative becomes relevant since the dynamics of the employment of "first person plural narrative" are discussed. The third chapter is devoted solely to the analysis of "A Rose for

---

(2006) 5-6. There has been a continuous growth in literature about unnatural narratives and/or unnatural narratology. For more see the collection of essays Jan Alber and Rüdiger Heinze, eds., *Unnatural Narratives – Unnatural Narratology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011). For a criticism of unnatural narratology see Monika Fludernik, "How Natural Is 'Unnatural Narratology'; or, What is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology?" *Narrative* Oct. 2012: 357-370.

[52] Brian Richardson, "Plural Focalization, Singular Voices: Wandering Perspectives in 'We'-Narration," *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization: Modeling Mediation in Narrative*, eds. Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid and Jörg Schönert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009) 153.

Emily" in terms of we-narrative. Here, the claim about unnaturalness in narrative will be recalled in support of my argument about the narrator of the short story. In the fourth chapter I introduce the interdisciplinary concept of collective memory. First, I introduce the concept and sketch out the theory. Secondly, I draw parallels between collective memory and we-narrative. Thirdly, I analyze "A Rose for Emily" in terms of collective memory with particular attention to ideology, community formation and maintenance, the (re)construction of the past and the theme of the individual vs. society. The concluding chapter provides a summary of my findings and hopefully provides some vistas for analyses of collectivity in Faulkner's work.

Before I proceed to other matters related to Emily, a few words about the distillation of the present text seem to be in order. This thesis is born out of an essay written for Prof. John T. Matthews's seminar on Faulkner that he led as a Fulbright scholar at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague. At the time of thinking about the essay I was to write, I was intrigued by Brian Richardson's chapter on we-narrative in his book *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* and Uri Margolin's article "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology."[53] These texts and Brian Richardson's article "Plural Focalization, Singular Voices: Wandering Perspectives in 'We'-Narration" were the only theoretical sources I drew on when writing the essay. When, at the end of that essay, I concluded that what one witnesses in "A Rose for Emily" is an instance of "collective memory," I had no idea that such a concept even exists. It was only later, while I was reading more on we-narrative that I found out that such a concept has already been used in the humanities for several decades having its origin in Maurice Halbwachs's 1925 *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*.

When I delved into the available literature on collective memory, I found out that my "intuitive" use of the term resonated with the interdisciplinary concept which did not transform my use, or understanding, of the concept, but only extended it. The same applies for the sources I use that are explicitly concerned with the short story itself. At the time of writing the essay, I used only three

[53] See Richardson, *Unnatural* and Uri Margolin, "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology," *Poetics Today* Fall 2000: 591-618.

different interpretations of "A Rose for Emily."[54] Since then I have read various interpretations of the story, though still a fraction of what has ever been written about the short story, and found out that some of them have made similar points as I am making in this thesis. Once again, these interpretations have enriched my reading without altering the basic interpretation I have provided for the story and are thus also treated extensively in the form of footnotes to provide views both similar to and differing from mine. It is for this reason that in the chapter "Telling Community in William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'" I present the modified text of my essay of the same title and treat the short story within the context of collective memory in the following chapter. Another reason is that I thus separate the narratological analysis of the text dealing largely with the identification of the narrator and its features from the social and historical dimension of the text provided by its consideration within the framework of collective memory. This separation is not, of course, clear-cut and is only artificial, made only for analytical reasons.

[54] Helen E. Nebeker, "Emily's Rose of Love: Thematic Implications of Point of View in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* Mar. 1970: 3-13; Hans H. Skei, *William Faulkner: The Novelist as Short Story Writer* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985); Hans H. Skei, *Reading Faulkner's Best Short Stories* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); and Perry.

> The rest of this is composite. It is what we (groundlings, dwellers in and backbone of a small town interchangeable with and duplicate of ten thousand little dead clottings of human life about the land) saw, refined and clarified by the expert, the man who had himself seen his own lonely and scudding shadow upon the face of the puny and remote earth.[55]

2. Saying "We" in Narrative

2.1 We Narration: The Poetics of Collective Narrative

Western literature is centered on the individual, on "the stories of one individual in isolation or of a limited number of interacting individuals."[56] Thus, collective narratives in the form of "we" narration represent a minority, being still a marked type in relation to the traditional first and third person narratives. Therefore, as Richardson observes, collective narratives "foreground [their] difference from the autonomous individual consciousness associated with the rise of the novel in England."[57] In the last two decades, scholars not only from the province of narratology or even of literary studies have provided new examples and analyses of collective narrative.[58] Richardson claims that "'[w]e' narration, a common strategy in contemporary fiction, also has a relatively long though little known history that extends for over a century"[59] and traces the history of the first person plural narrative from Conrad to recent postcolonial and feminist literature.

It might seem that by criticizing the category of grammatical person as a viable distinctive mark for a typology of narratives I handed the critic a stick to beat me with. However, as I hope to show, the crux of the matter lies elsewhere regarding collective narrative. Uri Margolin and Brian Richardson have shown that collective narrative is a narrative technique *sui generis* that deserves special attention and cannot be encompassed by the traditional characterization of first-person narrative, or third-person narrative for that matter. In what follows I try to sketch out the "poetics" of the first-person plural narrative, based largely but not

[55] William Faulkner, "Death Drag," *Collected Stories* (New York: Vintage, 1977) 197-198.
[56] Margolin 592.
[57] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 56.
[58] See for example William Sanger Campbell, *The "We" Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) and Dawn Fulton, "'Roman de Nous': The First Person Plural and Collective Identity in Martinique," *The French Review* May 2003: 1104-1114.
[59] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 37.

exclusively on the works of the two aforementioned narratologists, and some of the interesting challenges it poses for the schematic division of narratives into first-person or third-person.

Though what follows is presented as poetics of the narrative technique and the realm of poetics is the general and the universal, a note against generality has to be made at the outset. As I have already suggested, collective narrative is categorically different from first-person (and third-person) narrative. However, there are collective narratives where the distinction made on the basis of number fails and the treatment of we narration as properly collective is not at odds with seeing the narrative issuing from a single speaker ("we" is used conventionally to recount personal experience): "In certain non-Western cultures, by contrast, the idea of a separate consciousness is perceived as a fatal error. The error is not just conceptual, but what is more important, practical, since it threatens the solidarity and cohesiveness of the community."[60] What always has to be considered is the context (culture, gender, class etc) as well as the efforts of imaginative writers trying to challenge established norms. As Amit Marcus states, drawing on Susan Lanser's observation of the culturally embedded views of consciousness, the problem of collective narrative "is thus political-ideological, rather than (merely) epistemological."[61]

For example, some of the feminist uses of "we" are not necessarily expressions of literal collectivity, but rather acknowledgments of the multiplicity of subjective consciousness. Morris Adalaide observes, commenting on the uses of pronouns employed in recent feminist fiction, that "we must acknowledge the multiple connections that make us all divided and contradictory beings." [62] Building on the notion of identity as essentially composite, these uses try to subvert the male notion of "the authoritarian ego" and show that the ego "we have taken to be monolithic is, in fact, multiple."[63] In effect, the collective pronouns as employed by feminist authors are "site[s] where disparate subjectivities collide, converge, and continue to coexist."[64]

---

[60] Amit Marcus, "A Contextual View of Narrative Fiction in the First Person Plural," *Narrative* January 2008: 50.
[61] Marcus 51.
[62] Morris Adalaide, "First Persons Plural in Contemporary Feminist Fiction," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* Spring 1992: 15.
[63] Adalaide 16.
[64] Adalaide 17.

As Richardson's quote on the opposition of collective narrative to the individual narrative associated with the rise of the novel in England suggests, the following characteristics of collective narrative are formulated largely, but not exclusively, within and in opposition to the Western, male dominated mode of narrative. My own effort in this thesis is to connect the employment of "we" narration as a form of collective narrative to the specific cultural context of the US South as presented in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." After all, I agree with Adalaide in her assumption which sees contextual specificity as inherent to the use of "we" and pronouns in general:

> It is my assumption here that pronouns, like all narrative strategies, carry out the tasks Jane Tompkins has termed "cultural work." The pronouns we select to stand in for us both respond to and shape our position in the social order: they react to specific historical pressures; they articulate problems and propose solutions; they summon others toward us or shove them away.[65]

2.1.1 What Is Collective Narrative?: *I* and *We* in Collective Narrative

First, I have to make a terminological clarification. The designation "'we' narration" used by Richardson might be misleading in suggesting that it concerns narratives where the first person plural pronoun, "we" occurs exclusively. The term "first person plural narrative" is more inclusive since it encompasses the various inflections of the pronoun "we". The best term, as it properly designates the problem at hand and includes all the various possibilities of designations of the collective narrator is Margolin's "collective narrative". However, the terms "'we' narration" and "collective narrative" are largely overlapping and the reader is invited to think of the other as well when I use one of them.[66]

Given what I have just observed, it is evident that the key difference which disables the category of first-person narrative to cover "we" narration is the category of number. "We" narrative is first person *plural* narrative. Uri Margolin defines "a collective narrative agent (CNA)" as "a group of two or more individuals represented as a singular higher order entity or agent, a collective individual so to speak, with global properties or actions."[67] One can immediately

[65] Adalaide 11.
[66] This is mainly because when Margolin uses the term "collective narrative" he is speaking of "'we' narration" most of the time and so the two terms designate, at least for him, basically the same territory.
[67] Margolin 592.

see that what is distinctive about a CNA is not only quantity ("two or more"), but also quality ("higher order entity"): "'Us' or 'we' in this sense is different from I + you + him/her."[68] However, the collective designation "we," as well as other designations, can serve to mask an individual voice referring to it and others. In this case, to paraphrase Margolin, "us" or "we" is not different from, but designates, in various combinations, I + you + him/her.

Margolin provides quite a rigid definition of "collective narrative (CN)."[69] Firstly, there must be "a collective narrative agent (CNA)." For Margolin, three conditions have to be conjointly satisfied for the occurrence of a collective narrative agent:

> A. The argument position in numerous narrative propositions evoking this domain, whether textually explicit or reader formulated, is occupied by an expression designating a collectivity, plurality, or group of some kind. […]
>
> B. The predicate position in narrative propositions fulfilling condition A is occupied by cumulative or by nondistributive predicates […] These predicates apply to a group as a whole, as one unit, but not to any of its members severally. […]
>
> C. The collectivity or group occupying the argument position is ascribed as a whole, as one unit, a range of thematic roles in the overall course of actions being narrated. A thematic role may be defined as a basic way in which individuals or groups participate in or are related to the events, activities, or states described: agent […] experiencer […] or patient […].[70]

As Margolin concludes, commenting on these conditions, the "case will ultimately rest on the relative prominence in the given text of narrative propositions satisfying (A) to (C)."[71] William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" satisfies all of Margolin's conditions of a CNA. Firstly, the narrator uses exclusively collective designations to refer to itself: "our whole town" (119), "our" (*passim*) and most often "we" (*passim*). Even when the narrator wants to demarcate a smaller section of the totality that forms it, it uses collective designations like "people" or "they" (*passim*). Indeed, very few individuals stand out in the story and except for Miss Emily, Homer Barron and Tobe, their

[68] Margolin 598.
[69] Margolin 594.
[70] Margolin 593-594.
[71] Margolin 594.

presence in the text is only temporary. Secondly, there are many collective predicates employed to designate various actions. To give a few examples, "our whole town went to her funeral" (119), "We did not say […] We believed […] we saw […]" (125). Finally, suffice it to say for now that the collective narrator, apart from being a narrator, is ascribed all the thematic roles that Margolin lists: agent, experiencer and patient (for more, see chapter III).

If a narrator classifies as a collective narrative agent, one more condition has to be fulfilled to classify a narrative as a collective narrative:

> A narrative is a full-fledged collective narrative (CN) if one or more collective narrative agents occur in it and if, in addition, the narrative as a whole is first and foremost the story of these CNAs. […] The difference between standard narrative and CNs resides therefore not in the very presence of a CNA but in the reversal of the usual proportion and central/peripheral relation between collective and individual agents.[72]

One might challenge my classification of "A Rose for Emily" as a "collective narrative" on the basis that the main protagonist of the short story is clearly an individual, Emily Grierson. However, as I have already stated in the first chapter, the narrative of the short story is self-reflexive in the sense that through the story of Emily Grierson, the collective narrator reflects upon itself, that is, it produces a narrative that is first and foremost concerned with itself: with the "we," the "our whole town," the collective.

"A Rose for Emily" satisfies all of Margolin's conditions and thus it constitutes a collective narrative with a collective narrative agent. These are construed by the employment of "'we' narration." Brian Richardson does not give an extensive definition of "we" narration. For him, any use of the pronoun "we" by the narrator qualifies as an instance of "we" narration. However, this does not mean that any use of "we" by the narrator is equal to all other existing uses. Richardson provides a typology of "we" narrations "differentiated according to the degree to which they diverge from the poetics of realism"[73] yielding the following four categories of "we" narration:

> 1) Conventional: the unproblematic case of a single narrator describing events experienced by him- or herself and others […] 2) Standard: largely realistic narration that nevertheless stretches verisimilitude at key points,

[72] Margolin 594-595.
[73] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 59.

especially when the narrator discloses the inner thoughts or feelings of a group […] 3) Nonrealistic: in the texts by Conrad, Wright, Armah, and Mda we have flagrant violations of the parameters of realistic representation. […] 4) Anti-mimetic: the texts of Sarraute and Adams eschew realism altogether, and function instead as experimental constructions of multiple discourses that can inhabit a "we."[74]

One can immediately see that Richardson's approach provides a gradation that allows for a nuanced analysis of collective narratives. Of course, this typology is only one possible typology and the last instance in analyzing collective narratives is the individual text. In his article "Plural Focalization, Singular Voices: Wandering Perspectives in 'We'-Narration" from 2009, Richardson provides only a three-level typology of "we" narration getting rid of the first category, the "conventional" type.[75] This is because, as Richardson puts it in the article, he is concerned with narratives that "differ from natural narratives insofar as they produce a tension concerning the identity, speech situation, or knowledge claimed by the 'we' voice," that is, with narratives that "are distinctively literary uses and are not normally found in natural narratives."[76]

Richardson thus draws a line of propriety dividing the first category from the other categories. He does so when he comments on the conventional type saying that "[t]echnically, this is not really a 'we' narration as I use the term above, but a first person singular narration that includes reference to others."[77] He underscores this statement by the reduction of his typology. Margolin also draws the line of propriety within his typology. Though providing different typologies, Margolin and Richardson both articulate one common, and a most important, feature. Both recognize that collective narrative or "we" narration can originate with an individual or with a collective. Thus they make a qualitative distinction within their multi-level classifications that allows one to split their typologies based on the distinctive feature of individiuality/collectivity.

Both Richardson and Margolin qualify their terms with the adjective "proper" when the type of narrative originates in a collective voice or agent. Based on these articulations of propriety, I draw a line between a "we" narration

[74] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 59-60.
[75] Brian Richardson, "Plural Focalization" 148.
[76] Richardson, "Plural Focalization" 144.
[77] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 59.

that (re)presents individual discourse, that is, narratives produced by an individual narrative agent referring to itself and others, and a "we" narration that (re)presents collective discourse, that is, narratives produced by a group, a collective. While Richardson formulates the distinction in terms of "mimesis," Margolin formulates the distinction in relation to individual and holistic levels of group phenomena. He states the "propriety" of collectivity in collective narrative explicitly when he provides his typology of collective narrative agents.

Margolin's typology is based on "the nature and strength of the bond between members of a group"[78] yielding five types. The first type is "an instantiation class: the class of all individuals who possess a certain property or fulfill a certain condition."[79] The second type is "a temporary, more or less random, assemblage or aggregate of unrelated individuals who share a brief space-time interval."[80] It is only the third type that is a proper collective narrative agent: "The CNA proper begins with the third variety, consisting of a collection of individuals acting as a plural subject or we-group […] defined with respect to its ability to perform collective actions […] Such a social action group also possesses supervenient action-related properties that cannot be distributed, that is, ascribed to its members severally."[81] The fourth type "is represented by a community: a group of people who each possess a shared, collectively negotiated sense of identity within a bounded whole."[82] The fifth and last type is "the collective structure as such, abstracted from any individuals who may embody it. […] An impression is created of an independent entity with a power, a will, and a logic of action all its own, one that goes on inexorably."[83]

Margolin sees as proper only those collective narrative agents that have holistic properties. While Richardson sees as proper "we" narrations that violate the rules of mimesis, it can be seen that both frameworks, holistic and mimetic, are symptoms of the same matter: ontology. Once defined at the holistic level, the collective narrative becomes enmeshed in a variety of problems. These problems result from the simultaneity of individual and holistic levels observed by Margolin:

[78] Margolin 606.
[79] Margolin 606.
[80] Margolin 606.
[81] Margolin 606-607.
[82] Margolin 607.
[83] Margolin 607. With this last type, Margolin reaches a boundary level of collective narrative agents since "it can only be referred to as a monolithic 'it' and described from the outside but can never constitute a 'we' or 'us' group based on joint intentions or consensus, nor can it be portrayed from inside the group" (Margolin 608).

he claims that "[t]here can obviously be no groups without individuals who embody them, but groups can and do have attributes that belong to the holistic level only. In other words, shifting from individual to group-level predicates involves a logical type shift."[84] These problems are, said together with Richardson, problems of "the poetics of realism" since they are problems of representation. The stress on the holistic level, on the collectivity that lies at the core of collective narratives is "tantamount to switching to a different ontological level, thereby creating the impression that we are dealing with an entirely different kind of entity, with a life, willpower, and power of action of its own."[85] Thus, Richardson's proper types of "we" narration and Margolin's proper collective narrative agents, that is, higher order entities can occur unproblematically only in fiction.[86]

2.1.2 *We* Is More than *I*: "We" Narration and the (Re)presentation of Collectives

It is a logical outcome of collective narrative that its plurality lays grounds for portraying groups and collectives. Put in different words, collective narrative has the potential to evoke the holistic level of phenomena. As Richardson asserts, "[i]t is certainly the case that it is an excellent vehicle for expressing a collective consciousness."[87] The holistic level evoked by collective narrative is the main reason why the classification of "we" narratives as "first person narratives," practiced by the majority of scholars dealing with "A Rose for Emily" as well, comes short of properly grasping the essence and distinctiveness of this narrative technique. Margolin describes the problem precisely when he says that "[t]he views or goals of two or more individuals considered as a unit or plural subject thus do not break down into a set of personal goals and commitments. 'Us' or 'we' in this sense is different from I + you + him/her."[88]

Non-narratologists dealing with collective narratives also perceive the technique of "we" narration as predisposed to portray and thus form and sustain (or not) collectives. In her article focused "on the use of narrative voice as a way of articulating a fictional community," Dawn Fulton stresses that the first person

[84] Margolin 598.
[85] Margolin 600.
[86] I postpone further elucidation of this point for chapter IV dealing with collective memory, because the problem of ontology recurs with this concept as well and I correlate the two concepts (collective narrative and collective memory) there.
[87] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 56.
[88] Margolin 597.

plural narrative voice is "a formal technique that seems exceptionally well suited to the investigation of questions of collective identity."[89] Indeed, as Richardson's diachronic overview of "we" narration shows, there are no limits to the various groups that the narrative technique cannot evoke: in his account, Richardson lists, among others, "seamen whose lives may depend on each man performing his tasks […] isolated rural communities […] circle of revolutionaries […] segregated urban poor […] soldiers […] children's sensibility […] crass cliques […] black Africans and members of the African diaspora."[90]

Fulton, who deals with the evocation and questioning of the Martinican collective identity in the novels by Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, breaks down the effect by which the first person plural pronoun serves as "a discursive tool" of community formation: "By definition it [*we*] gathers subjectivities together and allows them to speak as one. Repeated use of the pronoun reinforces the idea of solidarity, as each verb, each sentence marked by the first person plural suggests common thought and common action."[91] As I have shown above, "proper" collective narratives, that is, those evincing holistic properties, indeed allow the "gathered subjectivities" to "speak as one."

Although collective narrative has the potential, and it is its distinctive feature, to evoke (create, imagine) collectives or groups, it does so in no unambiguous terms. One has to remember what has been observed about personal pronouns in the first chapter of this thesis: being indexical, a personal pronoun "has no value except in the instance in which it is produced."[92] Referring solely to the particular instance of discourse they are used in, there are no other "such alienable terms as the personal pronouns."[93] Though plural, "we" carries along all the characteristics observed by Benveniste and others about singular personal pronouns. If anything, the plurality of "we" makes things even more complicated. The writers who have used the narrative technique of collective narrative and "we" narration do not make things easier either since, as Richardson observes, there is "a convention of 'we' narration: virtually no first person plural narrative

[89] Fulton 1105.
[90] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 56.
[91] Fulton 1106.
[92] Benveniste, "Pronouns" 218.
[93] Jakobson 132.

discloses its membership at the outset; there is always a bit of drama as the reader determines just who this 'we' is."[94]

The first person plural personal pronoun is, on its own, distinguished by essentially unstable referentiality. As William Sanger Campbell puts it, "we" possesses an "elasticity of its potential referents."[95] Fulton connects this feature with the linguistic classification of the pronoun "we" into the "inclusive" type that includes the speaker and the addressee, and into the "exclusive" type that includes the speaker and a third party (i.e. third person), but excludes the addressee, when she observes that "the first person plural connotes a particularly fluid referential field because it refers implicitly to other pronouns as well. The interpretive instability of the pronoun can thus increase exponentially depending on how it is used."[96] This problem can be amended by some extra, contextual information identifying the "we," but "[w]ithout specific reference to particular other persons, it is impossible to define the exact group signaled by the *we*."[97] Of course, some narratives, including "A Rose for Emily," do not unveil the identity of the "we" at all, not only "at the outset," as Richardson observes.

Since the reference of personal pronouns is always located exclusively in the particular position in the discourse in which they are employed, the groups evoked, referred to by "we" are potentially ever shifting with each use of the collective designation. Nevertheless, Fulton observes that "[t]he value of the *we* as a discursive strategy, particularly in the conceptualization of a homogeneous community, has thus been primarily its capacity to connote stability, timelessness, and permanence."[98] There is thus a double pull present in the use of the collective designations: the uniformity of the collective signifier, its sameness in form across various uses, impresses upon the perceiver the semblance of sameness while the signified potentially and, sometimes, actually changes and thus disrupts the surface identity of the form. In terms of evoking community, the "[c]ollective, plural terms designating groups may have variable extensions or reference classes on different textual occurrences, even though the same group is being designated by all of them."[99] This means that the same designation of a group doesn't

[94] Richardson 38.
[95] Campbell 34.
[96] Fulton 1106.
[97] Fulton 1106. Cf. Campbell 34.
[98] Fulton 1106.
[99] Margolin 598.

necessarily mean that it is comprised of the same members. Importantly, the surface, or formal identity of "we" is a vital aspect of collective references as it provides means to create, preserve and perpetuate a sense of collective identity across time since it "can thus extend backward and forward in time, restoring continuity, or, in a sense, providing the illusion that this continuity was never lost."[100]

Consider, for example, the notorious use of a collective reference at the beginning of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution: "We the People of the United States […]."[101] The designation is appealing in creating a sense of community. By imagining a single group behind the "we", the preamble transforms the separate states into a single political entity: "The preamble was significantly revised by the committee of style during the final days of the convention. Instead of referring to the people of the states listed individually, the final wording imagined a single American people exercising their sovereign power […]." [102] Yet, one can legitimately ask who are "we". As Rakove notes, "[t]he Constitution was a product of a particular historical moment,"[103] but if it is to perform its proper function, the community invoked by the "we" has to apply to "the People of the United States" across time. Obviously the collective reference encompassed very different members in 1787 from those that are encompassed by it nowadays.

For such references to function across time, there has to be some invariable that persists: the group designated at the time of the creation of the Constitution and the group that is governed by it more than two hundred years later have to share some vital features. In other words, although the members are changed, the "essence" of the group they comprise stays the same. Though obscure and problematic, the referential instability has its positive aspect. However the pronoun is employed, "[i]t is the very ambiguity and fluctuations of the precise identity of the 'we'," Richardson notes, "that are among its most interesting, dramatic, and appealing features, and most apposite for an age that

[100] Fulton 1106.
[101] Jack N. Rakove, ed., *The Annotated U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009)107.
[102] Rakove 106. Though convenient for its time, this phrase isn't without its problems. As Rakove further notes, "[i]n the early nineteenth century, the question of whether the formula 'We the People' improperly usurped the innate sovereignty of the original states became a heated topic of constitutional dispute and political debate." Rakove 106.
[103] Rakove 3.

eschews fixed essences." [104] The referential instability of the collective designations has a serious consequence in an area that has been already much discussed regarding the first-person and third-person narratives: the question of (un)reliability.

2.1.3 Collective Narrative and (Un)reliability: We Narration Between First-Person and Third-Person Narratives

Brian Richardson expresses the distortive potential of a collective narrative most bluntly when he states that "the 'we' perspective affirms what it wishes to believe even when it knows it is mistaken."[105] The problem of (un)reliability in the first person plural narrative has actually two facets that are distinct to a certain extent, yet, connected to each other. The first one is related to the problem of the authority invested in the collective narrative "voice," the narrative agent producing "we." This is a problem arising from the plurality or singularity of the collective narrative, that is, it is a question whether the narrator is individual or collective. The second aspect is a theoretical, narratological problem and is related to epistemological issues associated with subjectivity and the position of "we" narration in relation to the first person and third person narratives.

It is interesting to note that even though Margolin and Richardson deal with collective narratives, both of them betray signs that they think about these plural narratives in terms of individual voice, or consciousness when it comes to the problem of (un)reliability.[106] This is especially striking in Richardson's case in view of his promotion of "unnatural narratology." However, one has to wonder even in Margolin's case when one reads the following passage from his study:

> When a narrator says "We did X," on the other hand, it is clear he is referring to a (con)textually defined group of which he is a member, but it is not clear whether he himself participated in this action, since "We [as a group] did X" is compatible with "But I did not," as we have seen earlier. Once more, when an individual speaker makes any "we" claims, he is

[104] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 56.
[105] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 40.
[106] Campbell, for example, sees the first person plural narrative as originating with an individual voice: "The first person plural presents the narrator as the spokesperson for the group that shares the narrative experience in the 'we' passages […]." Campbell 47. This is due to the corpus of texts Campbell analyzes: they do not construct Richardson's "unrealistic" and/or "anti-mimetic" we narratives and neither do they construct Margolin's collective narrative agents as higher order entities.

> obviously speaking about a group of which he is a member but not necessarily for it or on its behalf. If he is empowered to speak on behalf of the reference class as a whole, his claims convey a joint communicative intent, the "we" designates both topic entity and originator of the discourse, and his utterance possesses the status of group or collective speech act. But if the speaker is not so empowered, the "we" tokens in his discourse designate topic entity only, and the authority, communicative intent, and illocutionary force of his "we" speech act rest with him individually.[107]

The analysis is precise, if the plural pronoun "we" is used by an individual speaker who employs it also in reference to others. The problem is the presupposition that "[w]hen a narrator says 'We did X'," he is, as this passage suggests, inherently individual, a member of a group. This is somewhat striking, given that Margolin's typology of possible collective narrative agents includes also "a collective structure as such, abstracted from any individuals who may embody it."[108] In this case, the whole collective is so homogenous and so "collected" that its whole becomes an "individual": it is impossible to speak of individual members.

An interesting aspect noted by Margolin that comes into play and potentially problematizes the assessment of the (un)reliability of the collective narrative is the non-distributivity of collective propositions – the idea that "[t]he views or goals of two or more individuals considered as a unit or plural subject thus do not break down into a set of personal goals and commitments"[109]:

> Formally put, propositions including collective terms in their argument positions do not imply that every member, or any particular member of the group individually, is under the scope of any predication involving this group as a whole […] two or more people can, as a body, accept a given decision, view, or goal as their joint stance, without it being the personal view or goal of any of them individually (our view as a group vs. my personal view).[110]

Still relevant for the first facet of collective (un)reliability, Richardson addresses the referential instability as potentially laying basis for the interpretation

[107] Margolin 599.
[108] Margolin 599.
[109] Margolin 598.
[110] Margolin 597-598.

of the narrative/narrator as unreliable: "'We' may represent an intimate or a vast group, and its composition may – and usually does – change during the course of the fiction. […] important question is how homogeneous or disparate the 'we' cluster is, and how it becomes more or less inclusive as the text progresses."[111] However, Richardson treats mainly the second facet of the (un)reliability of collective narrators as he remarks upon "the transgression that 'we'-narration always threatens to enact: the collapsing of the boundary between the first and the third persons and thereby minimizing the foundational difference between the implicit fallibility of all first person narration and the inherent infallibility of third person fiction."[112]

Richardson thus posits the boundaries of "we" narration as the conventional epistemological limitations of first-person narrators and the conventional, and obscurant, omniscience of third-person narrators.[113] Indeed, Richardson positions "we" narration on the boundary between the two classical types of narrative: for him, "we" narratives "are thus simultaneously first *and* third person discourses, and transcend either subtly or flagrantly the foundational oppositions"[114] associated with them. He continues to note that "'we' narration curiously occupies both [these poles] at once."[115]

This placement allows Richardson to address the ability of narrators to report on other characters' thoughts more sensitively than Margolin. When it comes to the collective narrator's reports on mental states of other characters, Margolin states that "[a]n uneasy and unstable hybrid is created in 'we' narratives originating with a single speaker whenever they contain statements about inner action: mental states, events, or attitudes of any kind, from perceptual to

[111] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 38.
[112] Richardson, "Plural Focalization" 153.
[113] For a criticism of the category of "omniscience" in narrative see, for example, Jonathan Culler, "Omniscience," *Narrative* January 2004: 22-34.
[114] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 60.
[115] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 60. Cf. the following quote: "It is most useful to see the 'we' narrator as a different kind of figure from the realistic type of first person narrator and more like a postmodern first person narrator who is not bound by the epistemological rules of realism. I argue that 'we' is an essentially dialectical perspective that typically (and most successfully) plays with its own boundaries. […] Much of the drama of reading such a work comes from observing the fluctuations in the group that constitutes the 'we,' assessing its explicit epistemological statements concerning the origin and veracity of its beliefs, attending to moves away from realism and toward a more paradoxical discourse, and noting fundamental changes in the general reliability of the 'we' narrator." Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 58.

cognitive."[116] When Margolin observes that "[t]he problem disappears in an impersonally narrated 'they' narrative, which, in analogy to third-person singular narratives, allows the narrating voice unrestricted mental access,"[117] he reveals his reliance on the conventional division of first and third person narratives and the appendage that is associated with them.

Richardson also sees a problem in the collective narrator's reports on other characters' thoughts. Nonetheless, he acknowledges the collective dimension of this problem: "The 'we' form also raises interesting issues concerning reliability: insofar as it is a subjective form, it is enmeshed in issues of reliability and discordance, but these are issues that are potentially different from those in first person singular narratives since they may involve more accurate intersubjective beliefs as well as communal misprisions or even mass delusion."[118] Richardson is more context-sensitive than Margolin when it comes to general theoretical statements about collective narrative[119]: Richardson notes a possible gradation noting that "'we' narrators can attain a highly probable intersubjective sense of things or they can produce an unreliable narration that is bounded by the epistemological limitations of the group they belong to."[120]

Richardson's sensitivity to variation and gradation seems to stem also from his positive, even celebratory approach to infractions of conventional forms:

> Rather than an inherently flawed technique, it seems to me to be instead an extremely flexible strategy that works precisely because of its variable referents. The drama created for the reader is thus to determine how literally and how figuratively to take each such expression of shared mental events. The "we" glides between the lone individual and the entire collective; between a strict and a more lax denotation; and between mental experiences that are entirely, partially, or minimally shared.[121]

---

[116] Margolin 599. As Margolin continues, "[a] basic convention of literary narrative is that every personalized speaker has direct, immediate access to his own mental states but not to those of his coagents, which he must infer (fallibly!) from their intersubjectively accessible behavior and statements. […] One part of the statement rests on one's own direct experience, while the other consists of experiences attributed to others from the outside." Margolin 599.

[117] Margolin 599.

[118] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 38.

[119] See Marcus 46.

[120] Richardson 40.

[121] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 57-58. Richardson's view of mental reports thus stands midway between Margolin's categorical differentiation between inferences about one's own mind and the minds of others and Amit Marcus's view that is in keeping with recent views of psychologists on this problem and that blurs the line between the two types of inferences: "The inference of other people's states of consciousness based on their speech and conduct, despite its relatively high

Though Richardson's views of collective narrative are more context-sensitive than Margolin's, Richardson is not able to embrace the consequences of the collectivity of we narration: "[…] whenever a text uses a first person plural narrator to depict the thoughts of others, it necessarily straddles the line between first and third person fiction, as a homodiegetic character narrator discloses that which can only be known by an external heterodiegetic intelligence."[122] The phrasing Richardson uses seems to go against the ideas of unnatural narratology he has promoted in recent years: why should it be a homodiegetic narrator who "usurps power" of the heterodiegetic narrator? If indeed the "we" narrative "occupies both positions at once," as Richardson claims, it also occupies none of them inherently more than the other: *we* is a curious mix of the two techniques (or rather the conventions that go with the choice of the pronoun) and vary from text to text.

Richardson defines "we" narrative as occupying "simultaneously first *and* third person discourses" as a follow-up of the above quoted passage. Thus, he defines it as occupying both of these discourses only when collective narrative features reports on thoughts of "other" characters. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, "we" narration can be said to straddle the line between first and third person narratives only if it's one of the first two types Richardson provides in his typology: those "we" narrations where realistic poetics are adhered to and where there is only a singular speaker behind the collective voice. Secondly, and following from the first reservation, if "we" narrative is a proper one, that is, if it is produced by a collective entity, there can be no "others" of whose thoughts it can report. In such narratives the narrator, being essentially collective, occupies all the positions of the individuals that compose the collective and, thus, has access to the consciousness of all the individuals composing it.

In such cases, the narrator can be said to straddle the line between first and third person narratives only in comparison to other texts. The narrator itself

---

fallibility, is not usually considered implausible or unreliable, neither in ordinary life nor in literature. A large part of the information that each of us gathers about others relies on such conjectures. Yet similar conjectures are made about one's own self. I do not mean to deny the essential difference that exists between one's knowledge of the state of mind of another person, which is based solely on external signs, and one's knowledge of their own state of mind, which is founded on internal factors as well. Nor do I reject the privileged position of the self in closely inspecting one's 'stream' of mental images, thoughts, and sensations. However, no mind is transparent, except perhaps in some literary narratives […]." Marcus 48-49. My adherence to the view shared by Marcus also comes from my essential acknowledgment of the plurality/collectivity of we-narrators.

[122] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 60.

cannot be designated as "a homodiegetic character narrator" disclosing what "can only be known by an external heterodiegetic intelligence" since this designation unnecessarily splits the collective narrative agent, a higher order entity, into lower order entities construed according to the poetics of realism. As Richardson says himself, if the text employs unnatural narrative techniques, the critic should employ unnatural frameworks. A collective narrator reporting on thoughts of characters of the story it narrates does not, at least not always, commit an "epistemic slippage,"[123] as Richardson has called it.

The whole narratological debate of (un)reliability has a most interesting complementation in William Sanger Campbell's observations on "we" narrative passages in *The Acts of the Apostles* and in the ancient histories of Thucydides, Polybius and Flavius Josephus. Although Campbell uses narratological sources, though not specifically the framework of collective narrative, his observations regard rather rhetorical effects of "we" narrative passages in relation to (un)reliability. Campbell states that "[m]uch like the first person singular, first person plural creates a personal narrative tone that projects the involvement of the narrators in their stories and storytelling, that is, their closeness to and knowledge of events and, thus, their authority and competence to narrate the story."[124] This is interesting since in standard narratological parlance, first person narrator is considered to be inherently fallible and unreliable. As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan summarizes it, "[t]he main sources of unreliability are the narrator's limited knowledge, his personal involvement, and his problematic value-scheme."[125] All of these are problems in which first person narrators, being (considered) subjective individuals, are enmeshed.

Campbell observes a distinctive feature of first person plural narrators that first person singular narrators lack. Campbell states that

> [t]he effect of this use of first-person plural style is that it simultaneously accentuates the authority of the narrator (similar to first person singular) while at the same time tempering it by including his experience with that of

[123] Richardson, "Plural Focalization" 153.
[124] Campbell 44. Cf. the following quote: "Use of narrators' own voices projects personal confidence in their knowledge of the stories, and that sense of narrative authority increases narrators believability. At the same time, defense of their work boosts the personal credibility of narrators. […] The narrator's assurances create an atmosphere of trust in him and, because of his credibility, in the account he presents." Campbell 68.
[125] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd Edition (Routledge: New York, 2002) 104.

> others through the use of the collective "we." […] first person plural makes and at the same time moderates claims that may be open to challenge as exaggerated or excessive by others with different perspectives on or information about events.[126]

This moderation can turn into its opposite and become an amplification since Campbell observes that "referring to the narrator as 'we' in those ancient texts projects a sense of corroboration concerning the narrative eyewitness's version of the story: it is not just 'my' word, but 'our' word."[127]

Campbell's observations are valuable since they show the other side of the coin of first-person narrative epistemology: first-person narrators are not only limited and fallible, but also trustworthy and reliable: "If third person is the grammatical style of objectivity, first person singular is the style of personal integrity and trustworthiness."[128] This view of the "subjective" narrative technique stems from the corpus of texts under Campbell's scrutiny: since he is concerned with historical texts, first-person narrative figures in his view mainly in its witness role. The first person narrator is invested with authority as the one who can say "I was there, I saw it." Considering the witness role of the first person narrator, one can observe that it is not specific to historical narratives.

It follows from the definition of first-person, or homodiegetic narrator as a "narrator present as a character in the story he tells"[129] that the fictional use of the first person narrative also has a witness status. As the convention of third person narrative draws on the abstract notion of omniscience which sanctions its authority, the convention of first person narrative acquires authority as the autobiographical report of "one being present at the unfolding events." This is, of course, not the only authority of the first person narrative: various types of sources (hearsay, written accounts, recordings etc.) may come into play. However, if sources are not specified, their lack is taken as an indication of the "personal" involvement of the first person narrative agent.

I conclude this passage with a discussion of the reader's identification with the "we" of the narrative text since it relates to the problem of (un)reliability.

---

[126] Campbell 31. Cf. the following quote: "Unlike first person singular, however, first person plural moderates the emphasis on the narrators and, therefore, the responsibility for narrative claims by subsuming their individuality into the collective sense of first person plural." Campbell 44-45.
[127] Campbell 47.
[128] Campbell 89.
[129] Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 244-245.

Campbell imputes to "we" narrative the feature of the readers' identification with the first person plural narrator. Campbell claims that

> first person plural suggests familiarity and a shared purpose. Readers sense that they know or should recognize who 'we' are and, in addition, that at some level they are part of the collective voice. Even when the narrative context explicitly defines or limits referents, readers experience a connection to the 'we,' whether it be the narrator only, other characters or narrative participants, or other persons or groups with which the narrator might be associated. Even when the precise identity of 'we' is unclear, the sense of personal involvement with first-person referents that readers experience often engenders a more sympathetic disposition toward first-person plural referents, and that can lead to a more empathetic reading perspective.[130]

While I concede that the subjective aspect of first person plural narrative may cue readers toward "a more sympathetic reading perspective," the "connection" readers experience is highly variable because it is (con)text dependent. There is a variety of conditions at play, some of which are expressed by Margolin: "One decisive factor seems to be readers' social self-categorizations as members of a given actual world group […] A second factor could be the match between the properties and destiny of the textually inscribed CNA and those occurring in readers' social self-categorizations. […] Another factor may be the cultural status of the CN text."[131] Indeed, I am going to show that in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," the collective references work counter Campbell's assertion and distance the reader from the text and the inscribed community rather than include the reader.

A claim parallel to Campbell's, this time not on the receptive level, but on the fictional level of we narrative, has been made by Richardson: "The vast majority of 'we' texts valorize collective identity in no uncertain terms; 'we' is almost always a favored term and a desirable subject position that is to be sought out and inhabited."[132] Again, the favorability of "we" differs from text to text. It might apply in pragmatic terms once the "we" group occupies the sought for social status, wealth etc., but even this is variable. Amit Marcus, providing an analysis of collective narrative in Israeli fiction, points out that Richardson's

[130] Campbell 35.
[131] Margolin 612.
[132] Richardson, *Unnatural Voices* 50.

claim is a result of the texts he analyzes. Marcus contends that "[p]erhaps this generalization is accurate when applied to the postcolonial 'we' fiction analyzed by Richardson. Yet it is inaccurate as regards Israeli 'we' fiction, which has actualized the subversive potential of this grammatical form to critically examine collective norms, as well as the authority and knowledge of a collective source of narration."[133] In my analysis, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" provides a "we" narration that is not straightforward as it subverts itself.

The problems and intricacies of collective narrative and we narration are not, of course, exhausted by this chapter. Some of the themes in this section of my thesis might seem to be left off at places where one would like to go further. I will treat other general and theoretical aspects of the narrative technique at relevant places; when the analysis of Faulkner's work calls for it. Some of the threads beginning in this section lead into areas that I reserve for a discussion of later, albeit related matters.

[133] Marcus 60.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,
  The story as it should be,—
As if the story of a house
  Were told, or ever could be;
We'll have no kindly veil between
Her visions and those we have seen,—
As if we guessed what hers have been
  Or what they are, or would be.[134]

3. Telling Community in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"

I have three main aims in this chapter. Firstly, based on my approach, I want to "identify," that is, characterize the narrator of the short story. Since I maintain that the narrator is essentially collective, my main effort is to delimit the membership in the community it constitutes: I want to posit the boundaries of the community based on its epistemological limits. This goes hand in hand with my second aim to inspect the theme of community in the short story represented not only by the narrator, but also by other groups and collectives. The two most remarkable features of the short story are the aforementioned narrator and the "temporal" ordering of the narrative – all the critics dealing with "A Rose for Emily" remark on these two aspects of the short story. My third aim is to show how these two features dovetail with each other as a successful presentation of collective memory at work.

My approach to "A Rose for Emily" has an important implication for the perception of the short story. Without dismissing the "spectacular" (gothic) quality of the short story (Emily as a locus of attention), since it is an integral part of it, I claim that the function of "Miss Emily Grierson" is, at least, twofold. Emily's story is not only a spectacular show for the town of Jefferson and the reader, but, as a representative of the concept of Southern Lady, Emily provides a particularly meaningful standard by which the community of Jefferson, itself a representative of the South, can be measured, or defined through the formulation of its relation to Emily.

[134] Edwin Arlington Robinson, "Eros Turannos," *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*, ed. David Lehman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 201.

Just how central and venerated the "Southern Lady" was can be seen in the following poetic, yet precise description by W. J. Cash in his classic study of the Southern society, *The Mind of the South*:

> The upshot, in this land of spreading notions of chivalry, was downright gyneolatry. She was the South's Palladium, this Southern woman – the shield-bearing Athena gleaming whitely in the clouds, the standard for its rallying, the mystic symbol of its nationality in face of the foe. She was the lily-pure maid of Astolat and the hunting goddess of the Boeotian hill. And – she was the pitiful Mother of God. Merely to mention her was to send strong men into tears – or shouts. There was hardly a sermon that did not begin and end with tributes in her honour, hardly a brave speech that did not open and close with the clashing of shields and the flourishing of swords for her glory.[135]

Cash's rendering of the Southern woman's symbolic significance conveys the elevated position she held in the officially proffered ideology of the society. By employing the mythical imagery in describing the woman's view, Cash also successfully conveys the extent to which this view of the woman was a fiction.[136] The short story's words "looking or not looking at us" (128) are particularly apt as a description of the dynamics of gaze and the narrative at large in the short story told by a narrator "under the guise" of various collective references: looking at Emily, one sees through her the community which is the mediating agent of her image.

The employment of collective narrative with its inherent evocation of community has an important stylistic feature as a consequence. This is, as Margolin notes, "the adoption of a collective perspective with respect to individual group members' properties, actions, and interactions." [137] This collective perspective has a vital, albeit logical consequence for the presentation of a narrative, specifically the characters: "The individuals in question are thus presented as being essentially members or constituents of a group or collectivity, as social selves rather than private ones. Their actions are regarded not as those of

[135] W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973) 105-106.
[136] Cash 105.
[137] Margolin 595.

autonomous, unique individuals but as those of members of a group […] who bear certain defined roles in it."[138]

This is precisely what one witnesses in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." The focus on the strangeness of Emily's behavior and the "shock" experienced by both the community of Jefferson and (supposedly) the readers at the end of the story seems to stress Emily's "individuality": Emily's actions alienate her from the rest and put her in the spotlight. The reactions of the narrator and the members of the community of Jefferson that are presented in the narrative appear precisely because Emily is treated as a member of a specific community by which her actions and behavior are judged: Emily is individuated and differentiated on the background of the homogeneous collective.

This confirms my view of the narrative as a self-reflexive formulation of community identity through Emily who represents and at the same time violates the social role of the Southern belle: a symptomatic role positioned at the centre of the social matrix of the community, one that allows a meaningful signpost of identity for(mul)ation. Thus, the short story presents a typical case of the "collective perspective" since in it "[i]ndividual actions are considered primarily for the impact they have on the individual's relative position and role in the group […] on the nature, internal structure, and cohesion of the group as a whole, and on its standing vis-à-vis an outside individual or group."[139]

3.1 The Narrator and the Critics

It would be negligent to pass over the critics' views of the narrator expressed partly in their pronominal references to it without comment in an interpretation of "A Rose for Emily" that is based on a careful reading of pronominal usage. In this part, I focus on the narrator and the critics. Charting the critical literature about the short story will help to bring my own interpretation and approach into focus. Moreover, some overview is appropriate since Faulkner's most anthologized short story has attracted a variety of critics and generated a vast body of critical literature since its publication in 1930. In his 1985 article, John L. Skinner estimated "some hundred articles devoted to it."[140]

---

[138] Margolin 595.
[139] Margolin 596.
[140] John L. Skinner, "'A Rose for Emily': Against Interpretation," *The Journal of Narrative Technique* Winter 1985: 42

Commenting on the criticism preceding him, Skinner says that "the characters may be made to represent past versus present, North versus South, old versus new or almost any other conflict."[141] He instructs that "there may even be good reason for *not* interpreting the story any more – at least in traditional terms of character and theme – and for turning instead to more formal considerations."[142] However, the text's resistance to a single interpretation that Skinner registers is not limited to the theme and characters, but extends to the "formal considerations" he proposes to inspect. It seems that one cannot uniquely identify not only the theme of the short story, but also the "identity" of the narrator.

Most critics agree that the narrator is essentially individual, in fact, an individual in Jefferson: "[t]he story is told by one of the townspeople,"[143] "[t]he story seems to be told by a participant in at least some of the events described,"[144] "[t]he story is told by an anonymous, first-person narrator in the plural ('we') who seems also to be a marginal character in the story"[145]; the narrator is "some unidentified neighbor of the protagonist,"[146] "a resident of the town who is no intimate of Miss Emily."[147] If the critics consider the collectivity of the narrator, they concede a collective "point of view": the narrator is seen as a "spokesperson for a group,"[148] "an anonymous citizen who presents the collective views of the town,"[149] while "the events are being described by a resident of Jefferson – a representative of the community's collective understanding of Emily's life."[150]

---

[141] Skinner 42-43.
[142] Skinner 42.
[143] Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, "An Interpretation of 'A Rose for Emily'," *William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily,"* ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 27.
[144] Terry Heller, "The Telltale Hair: A Critical Study of William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Arizona Quarterly* Winter 1972: 311.
[145] Skei, *Reading* 155.
[146] Kenneth Payson Thompson, "From *The Short Story*," *William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily,"* ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 30.
[147] John V. Hagopian, W. Gordon Cunliffe and Martin Dolch, "'A Rose for Emily'," *William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily,"* ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 78.
[148] Pierre Bourdieu, "A Theory of Reading in Practice," *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) 325.
[149] Dennis W. Allen, "Horror and Perverse Delight: Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Modern Fiction Studies* Winter 1984: 692.
[150] Jack Scherting, "Emily Grierson's Oedipus Complex: Motif, Motive and Meaning in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Studies in Short Fiction* Sep. 1980: 397. As it would make a long footnote to list all critics who see the narrator as an individual, I refer the reader to the "Bibliography". All critics in the "Bibliography," apart from those explicitly mentioned below as seeing the narrator as collective, assume that the narrator is an individual.

Once one moves beyond the "person" of the narrator to its "personality," one finds that the identity of the narrator proves to be a most divisive issue. On the one hand, the narrator is seen as sympathetic to the object of his narration: for Heller, the narrator is distinguished by a "consistent narrative sympathy for Emily."[151] On the other hand, he is seen as Emily's victimizer: Judith Fetterley sees the narrator as "the last of the patriarchs who take upon themselves the burden of defining Emily's life, and his violence toward her is the most subtle of all."[152] While for Fetterley the narrator is a father-figure, Ruth Sullivan maintains that the narrator is psychically a child, that "his psychic development is infantile."[153] Lawrence Rodgers claims that "the unnamed narrator that pieces together the fragmented decline of the Grierson lineage […] provides a kind of detective."[154]

While many critics see the narrator as a man, this view is based rather on extra-textual evidence. Firstly, it is a convention to assume that an unidentified narrator is male: a narrator is usually considered to be male until proven otherwise.[155] After all, it is standard to refer to the narrative function called "narrator" as *he*. Secondly, given the cultural context, the narrator is presumed to be male on the basis of the Southern society's structure the short story depicts. Thirdly, critics assume that the narrator is male based on the beliefs and opinions it betrays in its narration: for Skinner, "behind the patronizing comment on male respect and female curiosity must lurk a male narrator."[156] On the other hand, one can also see the narrator as a woman: Jennings Mace observes that "the story has all the trappings of a tale told by a gossiping woman (A stereotype, yes, and one that probably wouldn't have bothered Faulkner at all.) to a visiting cousin, complete with fractured chronology, dead ends, and a genuine snapper of an

[151] Heller 313.
[152] Judith Fetterley, "A Rose for 'A Rose for Emily'," *Literary Theory in Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987) 273.
[153] Ruth Sullivan, "The Narrator in 'A Rose for Emily'," *The Journal of Narrative Technique* Sep. 1971: 166.
[154] Lawrence R. Rodgers, "'We all said, "she will kill herself"': The Narrator/Detective in William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Ariel* 16.1 (1995): 120.
[155] There are, however, contextual features that come into play. For example, Jane Austen's narrators, by the fact of the author being a woman, are considered to be female. I am, of course, talking about the narrative agent not embodied in the narrative itself: the embodiment (usually) clarifies the gender.
[156] Skinner 49.

ending."[157] Yet, as Norman N. Holland observes, "one cannot tell whether the narrator of the story is male or female, old or young."[158]

I have come across several critics who treat the narrator in collective terms, though they have not embraced the collective nature of the narrator fully. I will discuss them now briefly in order to show how my analysis differs from their views. For Nikolaus Happel, the narrator "doesn't emerge as an 'I' in the foreground, but he places himself as the 'we' within the circle of the townspeople, and becomes a participatory witness and observer. […] His being is a part of the viable whole of the town; he participates in the events of this community and pulls the reader into this participation."[159] Happel doesn't say that the narrator is an individual who is part of a group, like other critics, but his discussion of the collectivity of the narrator is too vague to specify if he has really taken the step to claim a collective narrator.

A recent perception of the collective narrator comes from Alice Robertson who sees the narrative as expressing "the communal point of view represented by the composite narrative voice."[160] Robertson also states that "the collective 'we' narrative voice, a segment of the townspeople, never narrows into a single 'spokesman for the community'."[161] However, her analysis contains several observations that contradict this statement of the narrator's collectivity. For Robertson, the we narration represents a "limited character stance [which] cannot logically provide interior privilege into the protagonist's consciousness."[162] Though the narrator, indeed, cannot provide "interior privilege" into Emily's consciousness, this is not an inherent trait of the technique, but is a motivated

[157] Jennings Mace, "Waterboarding Homer Barron," *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Spring 2008: 124. As a coda to the various views of the narrator in the story, one might add the following observation by Perry: "[…] when the narrator is not one of the main characters of a work, the reader does not concretize him to the same degree of completeness and clarity as he would for such characters. The narrator need not, therefore, pass those stringent tests of coherence that elements comprising a character in a work must undergo. Such narrators are functional constructs and as such are permitted a chameleon-like personality." Perry 345-346.

[158] Norman N. Holland, "Fantasy and Defense in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Hartford Studies in Literature* 1972: 6. Cf. Kempton 31. As Menakhem Perry observes, in his careful analysis of the story, "[t]he story gives no exact age-indicators relating to the narrator, but at various stages of the story the impression received is that the narrator is one of the younger men even though all these stages cover a period of more than forty years." Perry 345.

[159] Nikolaus Happel, "William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily,"* ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 68-69.

[160] Alice Robertson, "The Ultimate Voyeur: The Communal Narrator of 'A Rose for Emily'," *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Apr. 2006: 156.

[161] Robertson 157.

[162] Robertson 157.

feature of the narrative. Besides other misreadings, the most important one is Robertson's claim that the narrator "can't be 'the citizens of Jefferson'."[163]

Though concerned more with the detective story structure in "A Rose for Emily," Lawrence Rodgers observes that "the narrator himself is speaking as a representative voice of Jefferson (or, in using the 'we' pronoun throughout, perhaps even as the collective voice of the town)."[164] Rodgers speaks of the narrator as of "this *vox populi*"[165] or "the collective sensibility the narrator represents"[166]; nonetheless, given his focus, he does not provide any insight into the collective nature of the narrator. Ruth Sullivan provides a rare example of a critic who takes the obvious textual evidence into consideration and derives from it the logical conclusion: "Who is the narrator? Not a single person because Faulkner uses a first-person plural point of view, 'we'; that 'we' is townspeople […]."[167]

How is it then, that such an obvious interpretation has been missed by so many critics? I think there are two main reasons why the majority of the critics take the individuality of the narrator as apparent despite the narrator's explicit and exclusive use of collective denominations, mainly *we*, in reference to itself. Firstly, those critics who see the narrator as "one of the townspeople,"[168] subscribe to the traditional distinction of narrative into first- and third-person. For them, identifying the narrator is part of the "fundamental question involved in 'where to stand'," which involves "the basic choice between first- and third-person narration."[169] Thus the critics are trapped; they are stuck with two possibilities neither of which is appropriate for "A Rose for Emily".

Secondly, stemming from the first reason, critics who have marked the narrator as an individual, misread passages of the narrative based on their view of the narrator and create unnecessary problems challenging their readings. Even though interpreting the narrator in individual terms, the critics cannot escape the collective nature of the narrator presented in the narrative and are lead to palpable contradictions in their arguments. An emblematic statement expressing the

---

[163] Robertson 162.
[164] Rodgers 122.
[165] Rodgers 120.
[166] Rodgers 123.
[167] Sullivan 160. Though Sullivan lapses into mimetic constraints in his identification of the narrator immediately following the above quote, his article is rather perceptive.
[168] Perry 343-344. See also pages 311, 336 or 345-346.
[169] Joseph W. Reed Jr., *Faulkner's Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) 30.

paradox lying in the supposition of the narrator's individuality is the following definition of the narrator by Joseph Reed: "The story is told by an unspecified first-person speaker, apparently an individual, but one who always speaks as *we*."[170] The paradox is obvious: how can it be "*apparently* an individual" if the narrator "always speaks as *we*"?

Critics writing about "A Rose for Emily" do not take into account that the short story is an instance of we narration. They note it as a peculiar fact that the narrator is "our whole town" (119) or "we"; they sometimes stress the fact as important, but they do not really "grasp" it. What I mean by this is that though they point out that there is a "we" that narrates, they do not see a problem in treating it as if it were an "I" that narrates. Also, stemming probably from this assumption, they do not develop an appropriate framework or utilize the theoretical framework that exists for the treatment of collective narratives. But, *we* is more than *I* and it is so in "A Rose for Emily."

One might take Helen E. Nebeker's interpretation of the short story as a case in point. Her analysis of "A Rose for Emily" is too heavily influenced by her stress on the teleological aspect of narrative and her (one can almost call it) obsession with the spectacular aspect of the short story.[171] Nebeker is a victim of her own analysis. Classifying the narrator as individual, she is faced with insurmountable problems in identifying it: "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'?"[172] There isn't an individual who would satisfy all the requirements Nebeker has produced in the vicious circle of her own analysis.

By positing an individual as the narrator of the story, Nebeker has raised a wall in front of her that she now needs to scale in order to bring her analysis to a successful conclusion. She has entangled herself, of course, in the first-person narrative convention of subjective knowledge, of limited epistemology. To quote Ferguson,

---

[170] Reed 14. For Skinner, the narrator is "a highly partial obituarist, ageless, almost timeless […] yet always the naturalistic figure of a bemused but indulgent Jeffersonian." Skinner 49.
[171] In her hunt after the identity of the narrator, Nebeker, emulates her primary text. She postpones several conclusions throughout her article in order to have her "discovery" at the very end of her essay: "Hold these points in reserve temporarily." Nebeker 7.
[172] Nebeker 6.

> the use of the first person poses greater problems than do the other narrative modes. […] Perhaps the most basic problem with which writers must contend when employing this point of view is the extremely complex question of credibility. They must attempt, at least if they are using the conventions of realism, to justify the view point character's knowledge of the events he or she is narrating.[173]

Firstly, as the quoted passage shows, this convention suggests that "the other narrative mode," that is, the third-person narrative with its appendage of "omniscience" is somehow more realistic; that an all-knowing disembodied voice of a narrator is more realistic than a first-person thematized narrator who merely does not specify where it came to its information. Secondly, Ferguson continues the above observation by stating that "Faulkner sometimes got into trouble in his handling of this problem."[174] In case of "A Rose for Emily," this unnecessarily presumes Faulkner's intention and aspiration to achieve realism at the level demanded by the convention of the first-person narrative. In my opinion, the narrative agent in the short story cannot be reduced to a single spokesperson and is essentially collective. Faulkner's technique matches perfectly the "realism" of a collective narrator and the instance of we narration that his short story presents.

3.2 "We believed …": The Collective Narrator of "A Rose for Emily"

William Faulkner uses the pronoun "we" as a reference to the subject of the narrative agent in several of his short stories, to a larger or lesser extent. None of these uses however reaches the "logical type shift" that Margolin observes as inherent in the properly collective use of collective narrative. The consistent albeit ambiguous use of the pronoun and the consequent creation of the voice of the community are specific for "A Rose for Emily." The other uses are natural, or mimetic, that is, the "we" is reducible to I + you + him/her.

Thus, for example, in "That Will Be Fine" the initial "we" refers to the boy Georgie who is the protagonist of the story and to the servant Rosie who is present with him in the opening scene: "We could hear the water running into the tub. We looked at the presents scattered over the bed where mamma had wrapped them in the colored paper, with our names on them so Grandpa could tell who they

[173] Ferguson 103.
[174] Ferguson 103.

belonged to easy when he would take them off the tree."[175] The "we" does not occur anymore in the short story: from then on, the protagonist uses the conventional "I" of the singular "first-person" narrative, as he acts for the rest of the story on his own, largely in defiance to the rest of the family and without their knowledge. The *I* of the narrator suits his character much better: "[…] in spite of his ignorance of sex, the little boy is, in other respects, utterly corrupt, one of the most loathsome children in all of fiction. A monster of greed, he is obsessively concerned with the acquisition of money and hence totally selfish, involuted, solipsistic."[176]

Richardson expressly classifies these uses of "we" narration as his first type, "conventional," noting that the most common use to which Faulkner puts *we* to "is the case of a first person narrator recounting the experience of a small group or members of a family."[177] "A Rose for Emily" represents for Richardson a "more capacious"[178] we narration and he traces the shifts in the collective narrative throughout the story. Though his observations on the short story are perceptive, he maintains that we narration is switched for a "third person narration": "The story begins with a relatively unobtrusive collective pronoun […] which quickly dissolves into third person narration but then resumes with a number of interesting 'we' statements."[179] This, of course, is effected by the deictic field in which one can refer to another only in third person. According to Richardson's typology, the narrative of "A Rose for Emily" can be classified either as his second type, "standard" we narration that "stretches verisimilitude at key points" if one posits an individual behind the collective we; or as his third type, "nonrealistic" we narration with "flagrant violations of the parameters of realistic representation,"[180] if one sees the narrative as truly collective.

The view that the narrator in "A Rose for Emily" is a collective in the strict sense and the appropriate theoretical framework allows for correction of the misapprehensions of the critics about the narrator. The main problem, inextricably

[175] William Faulkner, "That Will Be Fine," *Collected Stories* (New York: Vintage, 1977) 265.
[176] Ferguson 59. See also page 77. Cf. Reed's formulation of the narrator's character: "[…] he is a money-grubbing monster, with scarcely a hint of dawning consciousness […] lost in dreams of nickels and dimes and quarters." Reed 34-35.
[177] Richardson, *Unnatural* 47.
[178] Richardson, *Unnatural* 47.
[179] Richardson, *Unnatural* 47.
[180] Richardson, *Unnatural* 59.

connected with the view that the "corporate narrator is clearly an individual,"[181] is the limitations of the first-person point of view. This brings us back to the flagrant inconsistency in the critics' accounts of the short story: their unproblematic use of first-person singular attributes for a first-person plural narrator. Thus, Hans Skei is able to say, in one breath, that "he [Faulkner] also lets him [the narrator] have access to information which does not come from having watched, eavesdropped and listened to secrets and which simply do not fit in with the implied restrictions of the first-person perspective" and yet claim that "'A Rose for Emily' is clearly told from a community point of view, so that the narrative voice in the story is the voice of 'our town' and 'we'."[182] Similarly, Nebeker, who in search of the single speaker arrives at the complicity of several individuals, fails to infer the necessary conclusion of the communal narrative agent. Skei, like Nebeker, posits a "single mind behind the 'we'."[183]

The most problematic part of the short story for the critics is the "scene" where Emily buys arsenic and the last sentence of part III: "Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn't come back. When she opened the package at home there was written on the box, under the skull and bones: 'For rats'" (126). Commenting on this scene, Nebeker starts to give a series of conditions which the single speaker behind the "we" must fulfill to be able to obtain the various information in the story (including what happened at the druggist) that are not "common" knowledge. Strangely, Nebeker dismisses the possibility of the information circulating "as public rumour, common gossip" as a violation of Faulkner's art and an "oversimplification" of the story.[184]

It is actually Nebeker's comment that violates the structure of the short story as the text makes it abundantly clear that the narrative features a gossiping community that "sat back to watch developments" (127): "When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad" (123); "And as soon as the old people said, 'Poor Emily,' the whispering began" (125); "Then some of the ladies began to say that it was a disgrace to the

[181] Skei, *Reading* 155.
[182] Skei, *Reading* 155. See also page 153.
[183] Skei, *William Faulkner* 110.
[184] Nebeker 6.

town and a bad example to the young people" (126). Skei, commenting on the last sentence of the section, proposes that "[t]his may of course only be dramatic presentation, but," he continues in Nebeker's way, "the question remains: how does the 'we' know this? The point of view is rather limited, and the narrator must have access to what appears to be relatively secret information."[185] The dramatic presentation seems to be the best solution if one sees the narrator as an individual.

Since gossip is an important way of circulating information, the druggist may have just told somebody and the information got about the town. Secondly, he didn't even have to have told anybody, as long as he is, and the knowledge of what happened in the drugstore confirms this, part of the "we," of "our whole town". In my view, the collectivity of the narrator has a necessary consequence: as "a singular higher order entity or agent" the collective "we," composed from all the individuals who belong to it, occupies the position of all of them. That is, the communal "we" knows everything that every single individual of this "we" knows; and it can be supposed that the druggist would belong to this "we" (more on the characteristic of the narrative agent below). This epistemology corresponds precisely to the mixture of first-person and third-person fiction properties that Richardson writes about and can be best described by the oxymoronic tag "limited omniscience."

The "unnatural" collectivity of the narrative agency can be seen in the description of actions. As Margolin observes, writers are "obliged to decide […] how much to describe in group-as-a-whole terms, and how much in individuals-as-members-of-a-group terms" which, as he continues, "is tantamount to switching to a different ontological level, thereby creating the impression that we are dealing with an entirely different kind of entity, with a life, willpower, and power of action of its own."[186] What an apt description of gossip, by the way, which, indeed, seems to have "a life, willpower, and power of action of its own." In "A Rose for Emily" the collectivity focus is not limited to physical actions but extends to mental states represented as shared: "our whole town went to her funeral" (119), "the one we believed would marry her" (122), "We had long thought of them as a tableau" (123), "all the ladies prepared to call at the house" (124), "We did not say […] We believed […] We remembered […] we knew […] we saw […] we were glad" (125) etc., etc.

[185] Skei, *William Faulkner* 110.
[186] Margolin 600.

Furthermore, some of the actions represented as conducted by a community are hardly to be executed by a plurality of individuals. Consider how the narrator describes the demand made by the new generation upon Emily's taxes: "When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year *they mailed her a tax notice*. February came, and there was no reply. *They wrote her a formal letter*, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience" (120; italics mine). To write a letter and mail it as a group effort is not only a waste of energy and time, but it is also very impractical and one can only hardly imagine the described procedure literally. Even though this might just represent reference to governmental authority, it is still conceived in collective terms with the vague reference "they".

The actions are presented as a collective effort. That the narrator presents actions which are individual intentionally as communal is revealed when the scene where Emily is met by the tax delegation is described: "[…] the visitors stated their errand. She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt" (121). Firstly, it is said that the delegation as a whole informs Emily; then, Emily's actions simultaneous with the delegation's act of "stating their errand" are reported. When the perspective returns back to the delegation, the act of "stating their errand" is explicitly described as proceeding from an individual, the spokesman. Thus, the narrator's purposeful construction of communality is revealed. Not to mention that the presented collectivity of mental states creates an illusion of coordination while in real life "[a] group mental action can at most consist of the coaction of many: different individuals thinking, feeling, or perceiving the same thing at the same time, usually as a reaction to a common situation or event but without mutual coordination."[187]

3.3 Telling Community in "A Rose for Emily"

I have already commented on the creation of communal narrative agency through the consistent use of "we" and other collective denominations in reference to the narrator and through the holistic representation of physical actions, perception and mental states (beliefs, emotions etc.) by using collective predicates. One of the stylistic features enhancing a collectivity focus is the introduction of

[187] Margolin 605.

beings and objects in the plural, listing the individual entities composing these collectives only later so that they are "represented as mere constituents or subordinate parts of the respective collective entities."[188] The problem with "A Rose for Emily" is that it never specifies the collective "we" by listing its components. This "problem" only confirms my thesis: referring vaguely to the narrative agency on a purely holistic level as "we" or "our whole town," the narrator presents the community as indivisible, as an organic whole.

However, the narrator is not the only entity that is envisioned as a group or a collective in "A Rose for Emily". The vague pronoun reference pervades the text and is not limited to the "we" that narrates: "When the town got free postal delivery, Miss Emily alone refused to let *them* fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it. She would not listen to *them*" (128; italics mine). Who is "them"? Is it "the newer generation who became the backbone and the spirit of the town" (128) mentioned few lines before? Is it the workers who came to attach the mailbox? Is it the representatives of the post? The pronominal anaphora is not provided with an antecedent, a referent that would allow us to identify "them". Using this kind of vague pronoun reference, the text creates several communities represented as supposedly familiar with no need of specifying the pronoun reference. As Karen van Hoek shows in her study, the exclusive use of "[p]ronouns signal[s] a subtle sense of closeness between the speaker and the person being referred to."[189]

The following passage, for example, introduces several groups before a collective agency "they" is referred to without specifying which of the groups is being meant:

> The day after his death all *the ladies* prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom. Miss Emily met *them* at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told *them* that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with *the ministers* calling on her, and *the doctors*, trying to persuade her to let *them* dispose of the body. Just as *they* were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and *they* buried her father quickly. (123-124; emphasis mine)

---

[188] Margolin 595.

[189] Karen van Hoek, "Pronouns and Point of View: Cognitive Principles of Coreference," *The New Psychology of Language: Cognitive and Functional Approaches to Language Structure Volume 2*, ed. Michael Tomasello (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003) 173. See also pages 172-175.

Following the syntax and the pronoun references in the passage, it seems that "they" of the last sentence refers to "the ladies" of the first sentence as "the ministers" and "the doctors" are subordinated in the third sentence which makes them unlikely to serve as a reference for "they". While "the ladies" can resort to law, though it would seem rather a male area (given the context of the short story), it is hard to imagine "the ladies" resort to force. Even though "they" in the last sentence might refer to "the ministers" and "the doctors" to whom does it refer to: to the first group, to the second, or both of them? And when "they buried her father quickly" is it meant physically digging the grave, is it a way of saying that "they" got the body to the ground where it belonged to, or does the burying refer to the performance of the necessary ceremonies? In each case, different groups could be imagined to perform these actions, respectively: grave-diggers; various groups involved in getting the body to the ground from getting it out of the house to putting it into the dug hole; all those who attended the funeral. A shift seems to occur to a group different from those specified in the text preceding the pronoun reference "they", but this shift occurs without providing the referent for the pronominal anaphora.

Thus, the (for the reader) vague pronoun reference strengthens the sense of community as it points to the inclusion of the narrative agent into the narrated world and to the exclusion of the reader from it. The use of pronouns creates a sense of alienation that goes against the critics' claims of the readers' identification with the "we". It is not true, as Reed observes, that "[w]e join the narrator […] because of the automatic alliance of the first person (all those appealing *wes*)."[190] The use of pronouns is not the only feature suggesting that the narratee[191] as well as the real reader is not part of the collective. At several points in the narrative, the narrator provides information that serve as explications; innocuous details without which the story would not be comprehensible the way it is. Disregarding all the information familiarizing the reader with Miss Emily and the incidents of her life that are necessary for the existence of the narrative that can be interpreted as explications made to an outsider, there are more concrete passages. The narrator informs its audience that it was "Colonel Sartoris, the

[190] Reed 15.
[191] The term *narratee* "designates the addressee to whom a narrator tells his/her tale. The narrate, like his/her counterpart the narrator, is integral to a communication model of narrative." Nilli Diengott, "Narratee," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2008) 338.

mayor – he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron – [who] remitted her taxes" (119-120). The specification of Sartoris's character by reference to the edict elucidates the setting of the story: it speaks of the times more specifically than the only concrete date in the whole story that is given immediately before the quoted passage – the year 1894 (119).

Though this inserted information may be seen only as a reminiscence of a great member of the community and his deeds, the following insertion unequivocally marks the audience as outside the community: "The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, *as is our custom*" (123; italics mine). If one was familiar with the community, it would not need to specify its customs. That the insertion concerns custom is significant since custom "give[s] any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history." [192] Thus custom remains the living part of community life, unlike traditions: "The object and characteristics of traditions, including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which they refer imposes fixed (normally formalized) practices, such as repetition."[193] Thus it makes sense that one has to be familiarized with the story of Miss Emily, "a tradition, a duty, and a care" (119) since traditions, being invariant and thus not adaptable like custom, can be obliterated by the change brought about by the passage of time.

Several critics observe shifts in the various uses of the "we" in the short story from section to section.[194] For example, Alice Robertson claims that the narrator cannot be the group of the citizens of Jefferson "because 'we' watch 'them' (both groups are citizens) lime the house."[195] Whatever the shifts, these are changes in the, so to speak, experiencing "we". The unnatural collectivity of the narrative agency which represents the community of Jefferson necessarily involves the history of the community: therefore the "we" of the older generation and the "we" of the rising generation are "natural" and are subsumed in the unnatural "we" that narrates and that represents the community across time.

This representation across time is an act of imagination: not only in it being a work of art, but also in Benedict Anderson's terms. Anderson observes

---

[192] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 2.
[193] Hobsbawm 2.
[194] Cf. Happel 68-69, Nebeker 4-5, or Skei, *William Faulkner* 110.
[195] Robertson 162.

that nation "is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[196] He continues: "[i]n fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[197] Anderson's famous definition is based on his view of "nation-ness, as well as nationalism, [as] cultural artefacts of a particular kind."[198] His approach is a testimony to Richard Handler's observation about a shift in the social sciences in recent times claiming that "cultures are not individuated entities existing as natural objects with neat temporal and spatial boundaries."[199] Rather, as Handler puts it, "cultures and social groups – taken at any level of analysis (local, regional, national, transnational) – are now conceptualized in terms of ongoing processes of 'construction' and 'negotiation.'"[200]

The incipient use of the first person plural pronoun in the preamble to the U.S. Constitution – "We, the People of the United States […]" – invoked in the second chapter is just such an act of imagining a nation. In the end, these acts of imagination are performative in a kind of vicious circle: the "we" imagines a community and thus constitutes its textual form, its ideological, political and/or legal existence, while the individuals purportedly referred to accept (or not) the designation as referring to them and give it its "content". From then on, the "form" and "content" of a community exist in a dynamic process of mutual (re)constitution. William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is an example of a fictional representation of community formation and maintenance in the above (and below) terms.

Thus, what I am mainly interested in is what Anthony P. Cohen calls "the symbolic construction of community": "Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of 'fact'. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of

---

[196] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 2006) 6.
[197] Anderson 6.
[198] Anderson 2.
[199] Richard Handler, "Is 'Identity' a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?," *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) 29.
[200] Handler 27.

their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in their structural forms."[201] Thus, "[a]s a symbol, it [community] is held in common by its members" who negotiate the community boundaries, that is, the identity of the community by means of symbols that "do not so much express meaning as give us the capacity to make meaning."[202] The main symbol by which the collective narrator of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" expresses the community's identity is Miss Emily and what she means to the narrator as a community.

One of the main things that creates the sense of the community is the shared interest in Miss Emily, the last Grierson who passes "from generation to generation – dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse" (128). Part of the (deceitful) structure of the narrative is the shifting of attention from the narrative agent to the character of Emily by the stress laid on the voyeuristic gaze and by the spectacular story that is in the focus of that gaze. I have already commented upon Emily's significance for the characterization of the narrative agent: Emily provides a mirror that reflects on the community. The reader is informed that "[a]live, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town" (119). This information aligns the narrative stance to Emily with Colonel Sartoris who remitted her taxes and imposed this obligation upon the town of Jefferson.

But the imposition works two ways. The seemingly innocuous act of charity attests to what Scott Romine observes about communities in general: "[…] the first law of community, which I take to be this: insofar as it is cohesive, a community will tend to be coercive."[203] By remitting her taxes, Colonel Sartoris recognizes Emily as a Southern lady, a subject worthy of care and protection, of special treatment. In the social fabric of the South, he recognizes her as a specific subject of the society: "In Faulkner's South, the term carries racial as well as class and gender connotations. A 'lady' was by definition white, and the protection of her honor by (white) gentlemen a trap for both races and sexes."[204]

---

[201] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1998) 98.
[202] Cohen 15.
[203] Scott Romine, "Introduction," *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999) 2.
[204] Theresa M. Towner and James B. Carothers, *Reading Faulkner:* Collected Stories (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006) 69.

The coercive nature can be explicitly seen in the two impositions into Emily's affair with Homer Barron: when "the ladies forced the Baptist minister […] to call upon her" and when "the minister's wife wrote to Miss Emily's relations in Alabama" (126). Both these acts are coercive: they are interferences (unlike the ladies who involve the minister, the men "did not want to interfere" [126]), but they are also significantly cohesive as they try to lead a stray lamb back into its flock – the community tries to preserve its integrity: "[…] some of the ladies began to say that it [Emily's affair with Homer] was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people" (126).

Therefore, the information that "when the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction" (120) signals a fissure in the community. Emily as a hereditary obligation is disowned by the "next generation" signaling a change in manners: Emily stands for a transgenerational obligation, one of the pillars of any community: "Members of a community often possess a historical or transgenerational sense and feel an obligation to preserve and continue the heritage of previous generations, since they regard the past as a significant or even decisive part of what constitutes their own shared social identity."[205]

Importantly, it is modernity that is explicitly connected with the breaking of traditions, the breakup with the past:

> 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 the 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 eyesores (119; italics mine).

The new generation with its "modern" ideas falls in line with the garages, cotton wagons and gasoline pumps, all signs of the encroaching industrialism obliterating tradition and, in effect, Emily herself: "And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson" (119). As Irving Howe

[205] Margolin 607

notes, in the 1920s, "[t]he traditional sense of Southern homogeneity was cracking. The agrarian economy was being pierced by salients of industrialism."[206]

The seemingly innocuous act of demanding obedience to the law manifested by the tax delegation marks a profound change by the devaluation of Emily, the devaluation of the Southern lady as a value. Since values are only "post facto justifications of norms" by means of which communities cohere,[207] the community that demands taxes from Emily has an entirely different conception of itself than the community for which Emily is "a tradition, a duty and a care." While both communities might envision Miss Emily differently, their approaches to her are basically the same. As Heller observes "[t]he generations are similar in that they both choose to deal with an idea of Emily, rather than with Emily herself; they are different in that they have different ideas of her and, therefore, approach her and her taxes differently": one generation approaches her as a "Lady Aristocrat," the second as a "Faceless Citizen."[208]

The "dehumanization," as Heller calls it, of Emily into these categories is in keeping with the narrator's dehumanization of Emily which again results into an idea of Emily. The description of Emily's house in the above quoted passage shows that the house is described as Emily, while Emily is conversely described in terms of the house. She is also dehumanized in ultimate terms – as a corpse: "Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue" (121).

The most important dehumanization of Emily is the one that invests her with religious significance: "[…] a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol" (123) – the words "torso" and "motionless" connect this description with the dehumanization of Emily as dead; "When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows – sort of tragic and serene" (124). As Perry observes, this construction of Emily's picture is purposeful as "[t]he story opens by building up a portrait of an impressive woman. Even when, later on, material of a different

---

[206] Irving Howe, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, 3rd Edition, Revised and Expanded (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975) 15.
[207] Romine 2.
[208] Heller 305.

nature enters, the text keeps reinforcing the trend of this impression again and again" while "there is in 'monument' something of the statue, rigid, static – isolated from the day to day ebb and flow of life, existing somehow 'beyond life.'"[209]

The necessity to coerce Emily to conform to the community points to her ambivalent status as both an insider and an outsider of the community. Emily does not become an outsider because she is "left" along with her house in "what had once been our most select street" (119), because she is left in the past. Emily becomes an outsider because of the tension between her and the community. As Romine observes, the community boundary "does not correspond precisely to a city limit: it resists mapping in a strict sense"[210] since community is defined rather by the interaction of its constituent members: "[…] to be inside is not equivalent to being more intrinsically worthy of regard, but to be located within a network of social relationships and obligations that does not extend indefinitely."[211] Emily is outside because she resists conforming to the standards of the community. The story thus, behind the veil of the gothic tale, presents "[t]he classical conflict between an individual group member and the group's collective stance."[212] As Emily brings her relationship with Homer "upon the sun of Sunday afternoon" (125), she not only flaunts her relationship with a Northerner and a man of a lower status, she primarily flaunts her individuality, her difference – the ultimate violation of community.

This brings us back to the limits of the narrator's knowledge. Emily's ambivalent stance in relation to the community is reflected in the fact that the narrator does not have knowledge of what Emily had been up to. Though Nebeker claims that the community tacitly connives with Emily's murder of Homer, she is obviously reading too much into the narrator's phrase "[a]lready we knew that there was one room in that region above the stairs which no one had seen in forty years, and which would have to be forced" (129): "The implications here are

[209] Perry 312-313.
[210] Romine 4. Romine's observations are in keeping with Cohen's view of community as a symbolic construct.
[211] Romine 5.
[212] Margolin 598. See also pages 608 and 610. Cf. the following quote by Perry that points out Emily's opposition to the norms of Southern past: "Quite ironically, Emily who is considered as being eternally old plays precisely the conventional role that recurs so often in drama and in fiction of the young girl whose father and the adult world will not permit marrying the one she loves because he appears to be socially beneath her. Emily's real personal conflict is essentially with the old world and its preconceived notions, and in actual fact she is presented as the rebellious young girl who is accused of being a bad example for the young." Perry 344.

overwhelming. We knew what was in that room; we had known it for forty years!"[213] Nebeker obviously overlooks a statement given by the narrator on the previous page: "Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows – she had evidently shut up the top floor of the house […]" (128). Nebeker infers so much because the text says "already we knew" – how can the narrator know?

Now, the information that the door needed to be forced can come from several sources, most probably from Emily's cousins who must have been in the house before the funeral and the visit of "our whole town" to prepare it. Or someone just tried the door. More pertinently to the present topic, the information imparted by the narrator attests to the working of communal epistemology. The following passage from the end of section II of the story shows the intricate working of epistemology, specifically, that if one believes something it becomes a fact: "*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*" (124; italics mine). As the passage shows, belief changes into knowledge and, finally, into a general truth.

This epistemological "evolution" points to a vital characteristic of a community membership: the individuals are "collected" by their adherence to an epistemological/ideological community, that is, they hold certain beliefs. More specifically, the community coheres by the shared belief in the too strong paternal role of Emily's father as a psychological motivation for her denial of her father's death: "We had long thought of them as a tableau […]" (123). Thus, also the "evident" supposition or belief that Emily closed the upper floor changes later into "knowledge." As in any community, in this one, knowledge is authorized by reference to other members of the community. Thus the authority and the consequent ability to submit statements to truth conditions are dispersed without a single centre. To use Pierre Bourdieu's words, the story features "a group whose members grant each other what each of them unknowingly takes for granted, the non-thetic theses which constitute the common vision of the world."[214]

---

[213] Nebeker 9. For another reading that sees the narrator as complicit in the act of murder, see Thomas Dilworth, "A Romance to Kill for: Homicidal Complicity in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Studies in Short Fiction* 36.3 1999: 251-262.

[214] Bourdieu 325-326. Bourdieu's oxymoronic "non-thetic theses," theses that lack setting forth statements nicely captures the infinite deferral of the authority of community epistemology, be it gossip or the aggregate knowledge that transcends the individual.

3.4 Exclusion and Absence

The knowledge of the narrative agency is limited to information circulating freely among the people (gossip) and the knowledge of the constituent members of the community. How can one then decide who is and who is not a constituent member of the community and thus define the "we" of "A Rose for Emily"? Roger Scruton, commenting on the political formation of communities, observes that "[s]ince there is no 'we' without a 'they,' the possibility of enmity and fragmentation is contained in the very foundation of political existence."[215] As Cohen maintains, the idea of community is unthinkable without its other: "'Community' thus seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference. The word thus expresses a *relational* idea: the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities."[216] In "A Rose for Emily" this "they," the "other," is not explicitly named, but it is marked out by epistemological allegiance, by positing "them" beyond the knowledge of the communal "we".

The exclusion of social others and their consequent absence in the representative voice of the "we" is constituted in several ways in "A Rose for Emily." One type of community boundary is geographical: the communal narrator does not have access to foreigners' knowledge. When Emily's cousins are in Jefferson to settle the "problem" with Homer Barron, the "we" does not know what is going on and needs to learn this from other sources.[217] The most obvious revelation of the geographical boundary of the community is Homer Barron. Homer not only is not from Jefferson, he is "a Yankee" (124). Obviously, had Homer belonged to the community, there would be no "revelation" at the end of the story and the community would not have lost track of him after he is last seen: "And, as we had expected all along, within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening" (127). As Romine notes, "[i]t has been said that in the South a man from the next county is a stranger, and one from the next state is a foreigner."[218]

---

[215] Roger Scruton, "The First Person Plural," *Theorizing Nationalism*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 279.
[216] Cohen 12.
[217] "So she had blood-kin under her roof again and we sat back to watch developments. At first nothing happened. Then we were sure that they were to be married. We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jewelers and ordered a man's toilet set in silver, with the letters H.B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men's clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, 'They are married'" (127).
[218] Romine 4.

Part of the geographical exclusion is the narrator's inability to penetrate Emily's house and its secrets. The house, as the place of the "other" connected with the past, decay and ultimately death, precludes the penetrating vision of the community gaze. From the very beginning, the house is constructed as a mystery: "[…] 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" (119). Romine observes that although the community boundary "often has a geographical analog, it does not correspond precisely to a city limit: it resists mapping in a strict sense."[219] Since community allegiance is the decisive source of knowledge, one can see the details of the interior of the house and of Emily's face when the tax-delegation visits: the members of this delegation "are the city authorities" (121) and thus the members of the narrating "we". The short story, by suggesting that a woman from the next house can be (or indeed is[220]) a murderess without anyone knowing it, shows a universal feature of communities: any community can unwittingly harbor an outsider, an "enemy within" (see below).

The house whose inside no one "had seen in at least ten years" (119) as a place of the other resisting the community's gaze has also another significance. It is a result of the gothic genre employed in the narrative "with the house serving as 'container' or second skin […] the house becomes metonymic for the character's body" since in gothic narratives "the 'house' can signify another meaning of the word, ancestral lineage as well as a physical structure."[221] This metonymical function is stressed by the fact that the house in "A Rose for Emily," is personified "lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay" (119) and takes on Emily's attributes. Thus the withholding of Emily's "point of view," not giving her voice is consistent with the house as a place outside of the narrator's reach.

It is interesting to note what the community's entrance of the house for Emily's funeral ultimately means in terms of the observed metonymy between Emily and her house. In this sense, the penetration of the house enacted by the community in order "to see the inside of her house" (119) signifies metonymically a *penetration* of Emily. Since Emily is dead, there is a hint of necrophilia at the very beginning of the story; a foreshadowing of the hint of necrophilia, "a long

[219] Romine 4.
[220] See chapter 5.
[221] Louis Palmer, "Bourgeois Blues: Class, Whiteness, and Southern Gothic in Early Faulkner and Caldwell," *The Faulkner Journal* Fall 2006/Spring 2007: 123.

strand of iron-gray hair" (130) at the end of the short story. On the story level (as opposed to discourse level), this act of penetration foreshadows a revelation that chronologically immediately follows the "penetration" of the house.[222]

Another construction of the boundary leads along denominational lines: "The men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister – Miss Emily's people were Episcopal – to call upon her. He would not divulge what happened during that interview, but he refused to go back again" (126). Obviously, the community's denomination is not Episcopal[223] as this is marked as foreign by the alienating designation "Miss Emily's people." Thus, the community cannot know what happened during that interview: the priest neither is a member of the community nor does he divulge what happened for gossip. Scruton, noting an interesting detail about religion as one of the conceptions of community membership, provides an explanation of such denominational divides as that found in the short story:

> Note that fine differences are always more important in determining membership than large differences, precisely because they permit comparisons. The man whose religion differs from mine by a tiny article, or a barely perceivable gesture, is not a believer in other gods, but a blasphemer against my gods. Unlike the man with other deities, he is automatically an object of hostility; he is the enemy within.[224]

Indeed, Emily's status as both an insider and an outsider can be formulated as "the enemy within": Emily is the enemy of the community by violating its norms.[225] Emily "permits comparison": as I said, as a deviation from the image of a Southern lady, she is particularly useful as a measure of the community. Emily is marked out in several ways: geographically, by a different denomination and social status – though she is a "dilapidated" aristocrat, "a fallen monument" (119), the narrator consistently imagines her in terms of grandeur, she is one of "the

---

[222] Cf. Allen 692.

[223] As Professor John T. Matthews has pointed out to me, "more subtly, this event exposes another fissure in the community: Baptists were usually lower class, Episcopalians upper. So there's no one denomination of 'the' community, but several, here brought into conflict." I am grateful for this insight.

[224] Scruton 285.

[225] Actually, the only time Emily is fully part of the community is when there is someone else who irritates the community even more than Emily does by "Griersonism": "[…] the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been. […] By that time it was a cabal, and we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins" (127). The community joins the "enemy within" to face even a worse "enemy" whom the community called upon itself. There is a moral contained in this reversal of the community's attitude.

representatives of those august names" (119). It was already observed that one qualifies as a member of the community mainly by upholding its norms and beliefs. Thus while having all the preceding marks of the other, Emily stands outside of the communal "we" mainly for the reason that she resists the role of Southern lady: "But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget *noblesse oblige* – without calling it *noblesse oblige*" (124-125).

Another, equally useful cornerstone of the community to provide it with the possibility of self-reflection is "the Negro." Interestingly, the only "Negro" of any importance in the story is associated with Emily: the importance is ascribed to him through the individuating act of giving him a name – Tobe. There are other African-Americans mentioned in the story: the "Negro delivery boy" (126) who works for the druggist and the "niggers" (124) who come with the construction company to pave the sidewalks. As Theresa Towner and James Carothers note, this "is the first time that the narrator has used the word 'nigger' to identify the black population in Jefferson; previously, the narrator has used 'Negroes' […] He thus makes a class distinction between town-dwelling blacks, including house servants, and the gang of black laborers."[226] Therefore, the standards of the narrator cannot be reduced to those of Judge Stevens, and via him to the older generation, who calls Tobe "that nigger of hers [Emily's]" (122). The narrative agency has developed a sense of class distinction of African-Americans which suggests less distance, or a less xenophobic reaction to "blacks."

Emily's "combined gardener and cook" (119) is given a name; yet, except for Emily, no one uses it to refer to him, no one calls him Tobe.[227] Tobe is the exemplary outsider of the community in "A Rose for Emily." Firstly, he is a "Negro" – his skin color is different. Secondly, he is individuated by a name – apart from Emily who deserves even the full reference "Miss Emily Grierson" as the protagonist of the short story and Homer Barron, only distinguished members of the community deserve a name: "the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old" (122) and "Colonel Sartoris, the mayor – he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron" (119-120). Thirdly, as a

[226] Towner and Carothers 70.

[227] T. J. Stafford provides an interesting reading of Tobe's name: for him, the chosen spelling instead of the usual "Toby" is "clearly implying that he is 'to be.'" T. J. Stafford, "Tobe's Significance in 'A Rose for Emily'," *William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily,"* ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 88.

"Negro," he does not uphold the norms and beliefs of the community, both because his social status does not allow him to and because, to a large extent, those norms and beliefs are aimed against him: consider Sartoris's edict. Tobe is necessarily marked epistemologically as an outsider, and most patently so.

For some time, Tobe is the only link between Emily and the rest of the world: he is "the only sign of life about the place going in and out with the market basket" (122) after her father's death and he also "went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed" (127) after Homer's disappearance.[228] However, Tobe does not communicate any knowledge whatsoever that he might possess; neither does the communal narrative agency occupy his subject's place. To use the words of Herman Melville's seminal text about the relations between "blacks" and "whites" in America, "Benito Cereno," one can say that in "A Rose for Emily" "the black met his voiceless end"[229]: not only Tobe, but all the African-Americans that are not given voice, that are excluded from "our whole town." The following passage concerning Tobe reads like an elaboration upon the quoted sentence from Melville:

> We did not even know she was sick; we had long since given up trying to get any information from the Negro. He talked to no one, probably not even to her, for his voice had grown harsh and rusty, as if from disuse. […] The Negro met the first ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, sibilant voices and their quick, curious glances, and then he disappeared. He walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again. (128-129)

Thus, the presence of Tobe in the text might recall the overwhelming silent presence of Atufal; though Tobe's silence is made grotesque by the narrator's theory about the harshness of Tobe's voice. Tobe becomes as enigmatic, if not even more, as Miss Emily herself. The disinterestedness evinced towards him by the community and the use of we narration are as apt a presentation of the "unbridgeable social and hermeneutic divide"[230] between "whites" and "blacks" in the U.S. South as one can get. To make this divide even more profound, one can recall the apocryphal scene from the original version of the story which shows

---

[228] Stafford contrasts Tobe's "meaningful action" to Emilys immobility and connects him to Faulkner's Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*. Stafford 87-88.
[229] Herman Melville, "Benito Cereno," Billy Budd *and* The Piazza Tales (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006) 235.
[230] Richardson, *Unnatural* 47.

that Tobe knew about the secret of the bridal room.[231] Tobe's marginal presence in the short story is analogous to his position in the society: "Because deprivileged groups are required to participate consensually in the social order, they acquire a certain power to disrupt community, which can never overtly announce itself as a form of coercion."[232]

The disruptive potential of Tobe is shared by Emily: while his is tacitly ignored (with the exception of the mention of Sartoris's edict that alludes to the oppression exerted towards "Negores"), hers is presented in full by the narrative of her violations of community norms. The pairing of Miss Emily and Tobe is significant and suggestive. The relation of the "we" to Tobe and to Miss Emily, the relation of the representative community of the South to African-American population and to women (Southern ladies), results into an interesting possibility. There is a possibility that what is actually going on behind the walls of the "big, squarish frame house that *had once been white*" (119; italics mine) is a relationship between Emily and Tobe. Going back to the metonymic relation of Emily and her house, it is, after all, Tobe, the "old man-servant – a combined gardener and cook" (119) of the short story's first paragraph who is the only one who had seen "the *inside* of her *house*" (119; italics mine).

The paradoxical and unimaginable "pairing" of Miss Emily and Tobe is the fact that her position of "high and mighty" is, to a large extent, based on the opposition to the inferior status of the "Negro" in the society. As Cash observes, in the South, there was "the influence of the presence of the Negro in increasing the value attaching to Southern woman. For, as a perpetuator of white superiority in legitimate line, and as a creature absolutely inaccessible to the males of the inferior group, she inevitably became the focal centre of the fundamental pattern of proto-Dorian pride." [233] Since the relationship represents the society's "combined passion, fear, and promise of racial conflict – the problem of miscegenation,"[234] it is so unimaginable that it is excluded from the narrative to the extent that it occurs barely to anyone reading the short story.[235]

---

[231] Skei, *Reading* 152-153.
[232] Romine 7.
[233] Cash 103.
[234] Eric J. Sundquist, *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983) ix.
[235] To my knowledge, Thomas Dilworth is the only critic who has suggested the possibility of a sexual relationship between Emily and Tobe. Dilworth bases his suggestion on the assumption that Faulkner used Queen Victoria I as a model for Emily: in this scenario, Homer is Victoria's

The community is delimited by epistemological allegiance, by geographical limits, denominational differences, different social status given by class and race. There is also a difference established along the gender line and it is not exclusive to Emily. Throughout the story, women act differently (at least, are presented to act differently) from men. For example, at the beginning, the women go to see Emily's house "out of curiosity" whereas men go "through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument" (119).[236] Perry observes that "[i]n the context of the initial paragraph an ironic view of the women is first activated: they do not react to what is really important. For the moment at least, the attitude of the men seems more appropriate than that of the women, whose only interest is to satisfy their curiosity."[237] There is also a difference between the "we" and women in general which is evident from the sneer that "only a woman could have believed" (120) Colonel Sartoris's pretext for the remission of Emily's taxes. The "we" of the short story thus represents "the paternalistic or hegemonic community […] perhaps the dominant form of community in southern history and southern literature."[238]

Consequently, the initial, seemingly inclusive "our whole town" (119) turns to be rather exclusive as the community consists of a select group of individuals. The "our" in "our whole town" is literally possessive: it was *our* town that went to see Emily's house, "we" own it. It is very unlikely that it would be the whole town, every last individual that went to Emily's funeral; especially considering how many African-Americans inhabited the South and realizing that they would be excluded from such an event. Recalling Margolin's observation about collective predicates, the exclusion of certain individuals is inherent in the very act of saying "we did X". For example, there is a distortion present in every representation of speech of the community: "[…] the opinions and attitudes

---

husband Albert and Tobe is her Highland lover Brown. See Dilworth 256-257. Nonetheless, the possibility of the relationship is embedded within the text, though it is hard to realize: for the community as well as for the reader. Terry Heller observes that "It is possible that Homer and Emily lived together in the house, secretly of course, for several years." Heller 316. What he says in defense of his suggestion may equally well apply to my suggestion about a relationship between Emily and Tobe: "[s]uch a suggestion seems absurd, but the very fact that it can be defended illustrates how little we really learn" from the narrative. Heller 316

[236] After the death of Emily's father, "few of the ladies had the *temerity* to call" (122; italics mine), but this is later reported "our custom" (123); regarding the affair with Homer, "the ladies all said, 'Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer'" (124); "[t]he men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister […] to call upon her" (126).

[237] Perry 313.

[238] Romine 21.

voiced […] are best interpreted as typifications, schematization, or contraction of recognizable shared stances, perspectives, views, or common opinions held by numerous members of the group."[239]

Therefore assertions such as "[w]e did not say she was crazy then" (124), "[s]o the next day we all said, 'She will kill herself'; and we said it would be the best thing. […] we had said, 'She will marry him.' Then we said, 'She will persuade him yet' […] Later we said, 'Poor Emily' (126) are summarizing distortions of the multiple discourse of the individual members of the community. Such summarizing distortions have the importance of community cohesion/coercion – they presents the community as homogenous, of one mind. This symbolic construction of unity "continuously transforms the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity with such efficacy that people can still invest the 'community' with ideological integrity. It unites them in their opposition, both to each other, and to those 'outside'."[240] Only the dominant and the desirable escape the filter of the "we".

3.5 The Invisible Watch Ticking

The collectivity of the narrator, its specifications and the procedures by which it operates have been already established. Turning to the "temporal" ordering of the narrative one can identify the precise nature of the narrative agency of the short story. Critics usually mark the temporal structure of the narrative as the most remarkable aspect of the short story and speak about a convoluted chronology. Apart from chronologies devised in various books and articles dealing with Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," several articles focusing specifically on the problem of chronology in the short story have been published. It is interesting as well as instructive to look at some of them as their brief discussion will help to stress my point.

The discourse, or suzhet (the order in which events are presented in the narrative) of the short story is mainly seen as obscuring the story, the fabula (the chronological order of events). More specifically, the discourse is seen as obscuring Emily's crime that, had the story been told chronologically, would be clearly visible and there would be no surprise at the end of the story. As Clay Morton puts it, "[a]rranged in chronological sequence, virtually all of the details

[239] Margolin 605.
[240] Cohen 21.

that Faulkner chooses to include can be clearly seen as 'clues' to the horrible truth that the town ultimately uncovers."[241] Some critics connect this deliberately "obscuring" structure, the deliberate withholding of information with the genre of the detective story. Bourdieu states that the story uses procedures similar to the detective novel,[242] Morton notes that due to the relation between the fabula and the suzhet of the story, "we see a detective story worthy of Poe"[243] and Rodgers analyzing the short story as a detective story claims that "[i]n light of all the praise given over to the originality, ambiguity, technical merit, and skillful manipulation of discontinuous, fragmentary narrative time in 'A Rose for Emily,' it is, within these considerations, an interestingly conventional detective tale."[244]

Frank Kermode makes an explicit connection between discourse and secrets: according to him, discourse tends "toward secrecy, toward distortions which cover secrets […] [s]ecrets, in short, are at odds with sequence, which is considered as an aspect of propriety."[245] While all the claims about the detective structure of "A Rose for Emily" may attest to Kermode's connection, their claim that withholding information classifies the story as detective is weak. "Withholding" of information is the basis of any narrative, a requisite for its functioning: without withheld information, there would be no narrative progression from the beginning to end motivated by imparting information.[246] Nevertheless, since it is true that "no small part of its [the story's] appeal comes from the artful way in which Faulkner 'leaks' the final appalling secret,"[247] the discourse of "A Rose for Emily" might be said to be "motivated": the structure is marked, it is remarkable.

And it has been remarked upon: as Paul A. Harris observes, "Faulkner's maddeningly enigmatic cues and clues as to the actual dates of events in the story have given rise to a longstanding, almost humorous critical search for

[241] Clay Morton, "'A Rose for Emily': Oral Plot, Typographic Story," *Storytelling* Fall 2005: 9. Cf. Dilworth 251-252, Heller 312, or Perry 328-329.
[242] Bourdieu 324.
[243] Morton 8.
[244] Rodgers 119-120.
[245] Frank Kermode, "Secrets and Narrative Sequence," *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 82-84.
[246] After all, reading a narrative is, in one sense "a process of becoming informed that …". Göran Rossholm, "Fictionality and Information," *Fictionality – Possibility – Reality*, eds. Petr Koťátko, Martin Pokorný and Marcelo Sabatés (Bratislava: aleph, 2010) 24.
[247] Holland 2.

chronological clarity."[248] Temporal specifications are given in the text in various ways: by absolute specifications – "dating from that day in 1894" (119); by relational/relative specifications – "[t]hat was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart […] had deserted her" (121); and by "indicators of historical change"[249] – "[w]hen the town got free postal delivers […]" (128) or the incipit itself, "[w]hen Miss Emily Grierson died […]" (119). The problem of the short story is that it provides only one absolute time specification, the year 1894. Still, one would think that since everyone has to proceed from the same date in the calculation of chronology, there is no space for variation.

The opposite is true. To show the various chronologies devised for the short story, I have provided the following table. The chronologies and events have been chosen for the sake of variety.

SOURCE	EMILY BORN	EMILY'S FATHER DIES	TAXES ARE REMITTED	COLONEL SARTORIS DIES	EMILY DIES
Nebeker (a)[250]	1863 (ca.)	1893	1894	1910	1937 (ca.)
Nebeker (b)[251]	1854 (ca.)	1884	1894	1906	1928 (ca.)
Moore[252]	1856	1888	1894	1910-1911*	1930
Burg et al.[253]	1850	1879	1894	1901	1924
Woodward[254]	1860*	1892 (ca.)	1894	1914	1934 (ca.)
Going[255]	1850	1882	1894	1904	1924
McGlynn[256]	1864 (ca.)	1894	1894	1916-1918	1938 (ca.)
Morton[257]	1852 (ca.)*	1884	1894	1906-1907*	1926 (ca.)

[248] Paul A. Harris, "In Search of Dead Time: Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *KronoScope* 7 2007: 178.
[249] Harris 172.
[250] Nebeker 11-12.
[251] Helen E. Nebeker, "Emily's Rose of Love: A Postscript," *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* Dec. 1970: 190-191. The chronology is the same as in Helen E. Nebeker, "Chronology Revised," *Studies in Short Fiction* Summer 1971: 471-473.
[252] Gene M. Moore, "Of Time and its Mathematical Progression: Problems of Chronology in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Studies in Short Fiction* Mar 1992: 202-203. Moore does not provide a concrete date for the death of Colonel Sartoris, but he dates the tax deputation that has occurred "almost ten years" (121) after his death in 1920. Moore's chronology is unique in using the original manuscript in which Emily's taxes "were remitted not in 1894 but in 1904, 16 years after the death of her father in 1888." Moore 198.
[253] Jennifer Burg, Anne Boyle and Sheau-Dong Lang, "Using Constraint Logic Programming to Analyze the Chronology in 'A Rose for Emily'," *Computers and Humanities* 34 2000: 387.
[254] Robert H. Woodward, "The Chronology of 'A Rose for Emily'," *A Rose for Emily*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 84-86. Woodward does not give the date of Emily's birth, but states that she is 30 years old in 1890.
[255] Willam T. Going, "Chronology in Teaching 'A Rose for Emily'," *A Rose for Emily*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 50-53.
[256] Paul D. McGlynn, "The Chronology of 'A Rose for Emily'," *A Rose for Emily*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970) 90-92.
[257] Morton 8-9. Morton does not specifically indicate Emily's date of birth, but he states her age at ca. 1882 to be 30. Morton also does not give the date for Colonel Sartoris's death, but sets that tax delegation that visits Emily "almost ten years" after his death in the year 1916.

As one can see, not only are the chronologies working from the same date diverse, they are not even consistent in the time lapses between the specific events. Thus, for example, while Nebeker (a) shows the lapse of 27 years between the death of Colonel Sartoris and Emily's death, Nebeker (b) shows 22 years between the two events; while Moore has 6 years between Emily's father's death and the remission of taxes, Burg et al. have 15 years. Comparing several chronologies devised for the short story, Moore provides an interesting insight into the reasons for their variability: "In effect, the chronology to be established by tracing the course of Miss Emily's life forward from the time of her father's death fails to square with the chronology to be derived retrospectively from the time of her own death."[258] This, interestingly, adds another "unnatural" feature to the short story since one type of unnatural narratives, according to Richardson, is that which provides multiple possible chronologies.[259]

Before I go further, I want to comment on one feature of the chronologies. Two of the chronologies, Nebeker (a) and Woodward, set the death of Emily after the year 1930, the year of the publication of "A Rose for Emily." One of the reasons that Nebeker devises a new chronology is to avoid "the only real discrepancy in the time sequence," the fact "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."[260] This is also a problem for Going who states that "[t]his date, unfortunately, would place Emily's funeral, the opening and closing scene of the story, after the story's date of publication."[261] In order to mend this "unfortunate" circumstance, Going abandons textual evidence and chooses the date of Emily's death as 1924 stating that "[i]n place of exact internal evidence this date, with Faulkner's benediction, may serve as a peg on which to swing the chronology of Emily's life."[262]

Both these "rectifications" of the chronology are based on the flawed assumption that either the real world includes Emily or the fictional world

[258] Moore 200.
[259] Brian Richardson, "The Boundaries of Narrative and the Limits of Narratology," a paper presented at *The 3rd European Narratology Network Conference*, March 2013, Paris France. What I mean by "multiple possible chronologies" is not that there are various chronologies by various critics, but the multiplicity expressed in Moore's observation.
[260] Nebeker, "A Postscript" 190.
[261] Going 50-51.
[262] Going 51.

includes Faulkner. Both Nebeker and Going conflate fiction and reality without as much as a wink of an eye. Of course, invoking the author's license, there is no inherent problem in setting the end of the story in the year 1937 or 1934. Indeed, Woodward has no problem in "letting" Emily die in 1934 and Nebeker observes that her previous chronology (a) was based on granting Faulkner the author's license. However, Nebeker turns from author's license to a total collapse of fiction and reality when she includes the publication of "A Rose for Emily" in the chronology of the *fabula* of the short story: "1930 Story written and published in 1930. Section I clearly indicates that Emily had died sometime previous to the time of narration."[263] By equating "the time of narration" with the publication date of the short story, Emily dies just in time for Faulkner to write her story in Nebeker's view.

Indeed, to use Harris's words, the things some of the critics would do to accomodate the story to their needs are "almost humorous" or, maybe rather, almost sad. The critics try so hard to reconstruct the *fabula* because they see the untangling of the jumbled chronology as beneficial. Though I agree that for an understanding of Faulkner's technique, for pedagogical reasons and for a contextual view of the short story,[264] establishing the chronology may be useful, I see the appeal rather as "a kind of armchair detective's game."[265] While "the game is pleasant to play, and it is surely more stimulating than most armchair games,"[266] to play this game is to miss the point of the short story (see below). In terms of interpreting the story, the chronology is unimportant. The various incompatible and inconsistent chronologies seem to underscore this since they show that the chronology cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed.

The critics speak of the "temporal" structure of the narrative in terms of chronology, though jumbled, but this is not a precise description. From the very beginning, what occurs is evidently an act of memory, of looking back; what else, when the main character of the short story is already dead. What is present in "A Rose for Emily" is a specific collective memory of the South. This memory is purposefully adjusted as the "we" of the narrative fashions itself, the community of Jefferson, in a certain light. The primacy effect, an effect of ordering

[263] Nebeker, "A Postscript" 190.
[264] See McGlynn 90, Burg et al. 388.
[265] Rodgers 121.
[266] Woodward 84.

information in which "what comes first affects the nature of the whole,"[267] executed, for example, in the series of attributes "dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse" (128) ascribed to Emily, represents the way in which the community readjusts the image of Emily and, thus of itself.

The term "memory" equals here "rewriting of history." This is a common way in which "the 'we' perspective affirms what it wishes to believe even when it knows it is mistaken."[268] Emily is the presence of the past not only and not so much because the narrator constantly represents her as dehumanized, depersonified and connected with death: Emily "looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue" (121) and "her upright torso motionless as that of an idol" (123). Emily is the symbol of the past, she is a ghostly presence also because she is dead and the story conjures up her ghost by the narrative act. Emily is also the presence of the past as she stands for a "culture" she inhabited not only in a certain moment but through the passage of time as the use of the past perfect tense in "[a]live, Miss Emily, had been a tradition, a duty, and a care" (119) suggests. That is why she is selected by the narrator as the pivotal point of the community's reflection of itself, of the community's looking back.

The conception of the narrative agency as an instance of collective memory is reflected in the use of we narration and in the "temporal" ordering of the text. The chronology is convoluted, but this is because parts of the text are organized achronically. Gérard Genette defines an "achronic structure,"[269] as he calls it, as a structure in which the "succession [of events] has no connection to the temporal order of the events composing it," it is a structure "in defiance of all chronology."[270] The "historical" moments of the story are encountered in a synchronic mode of existence where they are activated largely by association. Thus the beginning of section II is an example of a thematic association and not a chronological order: "So she vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell" (121).[271] In the words

[267] Perry 55.
[268] Richardson, *Unnatural* 40.
[269] Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 84.
[270] Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 85.
[271] Perry observes another type of achronic structure in the short story: "The sequence of the text moves from generalizations as to 'what Emily was for us, her fellow-townspeople' to exemplifying these generalizations by means of various specific events. The facade of the story is, therefore, not constituted by a narrative frame, and thus a very dramatic occurrence can be

of the short story, what the narrative presents in temporal terms is the past not as "a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow" (129).

If the chronology is to be revived, one has to annotate an event by a time specification. The time references "are given off-hand, quite incidentally, at 'irrelevant' places"[272] and are not indexical: they do not allow fixing the narrative agency in time. In keeping with my view of the collective narrator as providing a reflection of itself through Emily, Perry sees the narrative discourse as a characterization rather than a temporally ordered story: "The general loose framework of the narrator's discourse consists in generalizations about the relationship between Emily and the town and their illustration by examples. The order of transmission is a plausible one for the discourse of someone seeking to characterize a person, rather than being the natural order of events in a human life."[273] The achronic structure dovetails with the technique of collective narrative (we narration) to convey the collective memory presented in the story.

Emily has been seen as standing for the South, but as Perry puts it "it turns out that Emily is a highly suspect synecdoche for the 'Southern past',"[274] mainly, because she resists the norms of "Southern past" that are imposed upon her. It should be rather the community, the narrative voice that stands for the South. As Emily clings to the dead bodies of her father and her lover, the narrator clings to the memory of the dead Emily and provides thus a parallel to her own clinging to the past. The story represents a community obsessed with its past, looking backward at its history and, thus, inward – at itself. Though the U.S. South consisted of various communities, the community in "A Rose for Emily" stands for the male middle and high class, and it is this one that gave the official account of the past. The achronic structure is the (re)writing of history which is the collective memory, the ghostly existence of the past in the present *par excellence*.

By employing collective narrative representing physical actions and mental states almost exclusively on a holistic level with all its strategies and by the achronic order of events, the seemingly purely gothic and spectacular story

---

successfully concealed and fragmented. […] This mode of concatenation allows the text to bring into significant proximity events which are distant in time by decades, to remove bits of information from their temporal place so as to plant them in more convenient places, and to return to the same matter several times, each time from a different angle." Perry 327. Therefore, as Perry observes, "[o]n the face of it, the poison affair is there only to exemplify a generalization." Perry 328.

[272] Perry 342.

[273] Perry 312.

[274] Perry 64.

represents the mind of the South.[275] Thus, the "we" in "[w]e had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door" (123) does not represent, as Nebeker would have it "a smaller group whose members have personally seen the tableau of daughter and father with upraised whip."[276] This emblematic image, standing for the paternal oppression Emily is subject to, attests to the conscious operation of the norms of the community, to the communally held belief and its intentional perpetuation: the image (and by extension the narrative) exists in the community's mind, not as a perceptual phenomenon.

[275] As Richardson observes, the "we"-narrative is "an excellent vehicle for expressing a collective consciousness." Richardson, "Plural" 151.
[276] Nebeker 5.

> Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders.[277]

4. (Re)collecting Identity in "A Rose for Emily"

I have ended the analysis of "A Rose for Emily" in the last chapter by observing that we narration and the achronic (atemporal) organization of the narrative combine to produce collective memory. I now move to introduce the interdisciplinary concept of collective memory to supplement my "intuitive" use of the phrase. The division of the narratological analysis of "A Rose for Emily" from the consideration of the short story in terms of collective memory for analytical purposes leads necessarily to some repetitions in this chapter. Several passages and problems from the last chapter will be treated again, this time through the prism of collective memory and with the focus on its functioning and (re)presentation in the narrative.

4.1 Collective Memory

It is Maurice Halbwachs and his 1925 work *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* that is credited with the introduction of the concept of "collective memory." Halbwachs transposes memory from the individual to the social sphere observing that "there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection."[278] Since Halbwachs's statement, the study of collective memory has burgeoned across interdisciplinary boundaries so much that "the study of collective memory has virtually erased interdisciplinary boundaries."[279] The interdisciplinarity of the concept carries along one major problem. As James V. Wertsch and Henry L. Roediger III observe, "one of the reasons for the problems in defining collective memory is that it is not a topic that fits neatly within the confines of a single academic discipline" and, thus, "[p]erhaps the only generally agreed-upon feature

[277] William Faulkner, *Light in August* (London: Vintage, 2005) 91.
[278] Maurice Halbwachs, "The Social Frameworks of Memory," *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 38.
[279] Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* Jun 1995: 216. Zelizer's article provides a good introduction into the field of collective memory studies and a complex introduction into the themes connected with this concept.

is that collective memory is a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by a group."[280]

Therefore, the first conceptual opposition that has to be made is between individual and collective memory. The question of whether it is useful and even possible to conceive collective memory in terms of individual memory is still a debated topic.[281] As early as in 1932, F. C. Bartlett has criticized the analogy made between individual and collective memory: "A more or less elaborate likeness has been drawn between the social group and the human individual, and on the basis of this, whatever is attributed to the latter has been ascribed to the former. This is certainly unsatisfactory. What is required is a direct study of social facts, and conclusions should be founded upon these facts alone." [282] Most importantly, collective memory is implicated in more various practices of remembering than individual, personal memory: "Unlike personal memory, which refers to an individual's ability to conserve information, the collective memory comprises recollections of the past that are determined and shaped by the group. By definition, collective memory thereby presumes activities of sharing, discussion, negotiation, and, often, contestation."[283]

Distortion is one aspect in which individual and collective memories differ. In his classical study, Bartlett emphatically asserts that "[t]he first notion to get rid of is that memory is primarily or literally reduplicative, or reproductive. In a world of constantly changing environment, literal recall is extraordinarily unimportant. […] remembering appears to be far more decisively an affair of construction rather than one of mere reproduction." [284] There is, thus, one fundamental problem with discussions about memory distortion: "The notion that memory can be 'distorted' assumes that there is a standard by which we can judge or measure what a veridical memory must be."[285] As Schudson continues,

---

[280] James V. Wertsch and Henry L. Roediger III, "Collective Memory: Conceptual Foundations and Theoretical Approaches," *Memory* Apr 2008: 318.
[281] See Jeffrey K. Olick, "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures," *Sociological Theory* Nov. 1999: 336; James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 35-38; and Wertsch and Roediger 321-322.
[282] F. C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 293.
[283] Zelizer 214.
[284] Bartlett 204-205.
[285] Michael Schudson, "Dynamics of Distoriton in Collective Memory," *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997) 346.

> [d]istortion is inevitable. Memory is distortion since memory is invariably and inevitably selective. A way of seeing is a way of not seeing, a way of remembering is a way of forgetting, too. If memory were only a kind of registration, a "true" memory might be possible. But memory is a process of encoding information, storing information, and strategically retrieving information, and there are social, psychological, and historical influences at each point.[286]

Schudson also differentiates individual and collective memory according to the assumption of a standard of veridical memory observing that, if to set this standard "is difficult with individual memory, it is even more complex with collective memory, where the past event or experience remembered was truly a different event or experience for its different participants."[287] Observing that "society can live only if there is a sufficient unity of outlooks among the individuals and groups comprising it" Halbwachs confirms that it is indeed the plurality of collective memory that distinguishes its distortion from that of individual memory: "This is why society tends to erase from its memory all that might separate individuals, or that might distance groups from each other. It is also why society, in each period, rearranges its recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of its equilibrium."[288]

Bartlett has famously called memory, as well as other cognitive reactions, "an *effort after meaning*":

> Certain of the tendencies which the subject brings with him into the situation with which he is called upon to deal are utilized so as to make his reaction the "easiest", or the least disagreeable, or the quickest and least obstructed that is at the time possible. When we try to discover how this is done we find that always it is by an effort to connect what is given with something else. Thus, the immediately present "stands for" something not immediately present, and "meaning", in a psychological sense, has its origin.[289]

Put succinctly, "[m]emory work [is] the work of giving order and meaning to the past."[290] As Halbwachs puts it, "what happens is that we distort that past,

---

[286] Schudson 348.
[287] Schudson 346.
[288] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 182-183.
[289] Bartlett 44-45.
[290] Irwin-Zarecka 145.

because we wish to introduce greater coherence."[291] The "motivated" structure of "A Rose for Emily" is motivated by giving palpable order to the past and so, not find in it, but produce in it meaning that will serve the present needs. The order imposed upon the past is the "achronic" structure of the discourse and the primacy effect operating primarily in the characterization of Emily. From evolutionary perspective, it is the very nature of memory to be adaptable to present needs and thus secure survival by utilizing past experience for solving present problems: "Memory, and all the life of images and words which goes with it, is one with the age-old acquisition of the distance senses, and with that development of constructive imagination and constructive thought wherein at length we find the most complete release from the narrowness of presented time and place."[292]

This adaptability of memory is also characteristic of collective memory. According to Halbwachs "the past does not recur as such […] the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present."[293] Thus, through the medium of memory, the past is subordinated to the present; or, more precisely, it is imaginatively reconstructed according to the present since "even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu."[294] In this imaginative reconstruction, memory uses the various sources that are available to it, "it does not preserve the past but reconstructs it with the aid of the material traces, rites, texts, and traditions left behind by that past, and with the aid moreover of recent psychological and social data, that is to say, with the present."[295]

The adaptability of collective memory is specifically "usable": "Memory in this sense extends the act of remembering for recall's sake into a consideration of the use of memory to shape belonging, exclusivity, social order, and community."[296] James V. Wertsch points out that "[t]he most common reasons for developing a usable past have to do with individual or collective identity claims."[297] Barbie Zelizer expands on this notion to register the various uses the past is put to by collective memory: "Remembering becomes implicated in a

[291] Halbwachs 183.
[292] Bartlett 314. For more on the relation between individual and collective memory see the next section, 4.2.
[293] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 39-40.
[294] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 49.
[295] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 119.
[296] Zelizer 227.
[297] Wertsch, *Voices* 31

range of other activities having as much to do with identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interaction as with the simple act of recall. Its full understanding thus requires an appropriation of memory as social, cultural, and political action at its broadest level."[298] In service of these various practices, the groups performing the remembering "most frequently distort that past in the act of reconstructing it."[299] The distortion of the past motivated by present needs leads to another helpful conceptual opposition, that between collective memory and history.

Like history, collective memory is a representation of the past. While history is judged on the basis of accuracy – we ask how truly historical accounts represent "what really happened" –, regarding memory (in general), there is a tension. As Wertsch observes, "[o]n the one hand, we judge memory by its accuracy, and we raise objections when inaccurate representations of the past are put forth as truthful. On the other hand, memory functions to provide a usable past for the creation of coherent individual and group identities."[300] Identity claims are one reason why the past is (re)constructed in the name of the present: collective memory "inevitably involves some identity project – remembering in the service of constructing what kind of people we are – and hence […] the past is tied interpretatively to the present, and if necessary part of an account of the past may be deleted or distorted in the service of present needs."[301]

For clearness' sake it is useful to give the characterizations of collective memory and history given by Wertsch and Roediger:

Collective remembering:

- involves an identity project (usually based on a narrative of heroism, a golden age, victimhood, etc.);
- is impatient with ambiguity;
- ignores counter-evidence in order to preserve established narratives;
- relies on implicit theories, schemas, and scripts that simplify the past and ignore substantiated findings that do not fit the narrative;
- is conservative and resistant to change.

[298] Zelizer 214.
[299] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 182.
[300] Wertsch, *Voices* 31.
[301] Wertsch and Roediger 320.

In contrast, formal history:

- aspires to arrive at an objective account of the past, regardless of consequences for identity;
- recognises complexity and ambiguity;
- may revise existing narratives in light of new evidence (from archives, etc.);
- is constrained by archival materials;
- can change in response to new information.[302]

In his *La mémoire collective*, Halbwachs opposes collective memory and formal history in two aspects. Collective memory

> is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive. By definition it does not exceed the boundaries of this group. When a given period ceases to interest the subsequent period, the same group has not forgotten a part of its past, because, in reality, there are two successive groups, one following the other. History divides the sequence of centuries into periods, just as the content of a tragedy is divided into several acts.[303]

Halbwachs sees collective memory as more natural, innate to humans as well as to the passage of time. Stemming immediately from his first observation, Halbwachs formulates the second difference between history and memory: "In effect, there are several collective memories. This is the second characteristic distinguishing the collective memory from history. History is unitary, and it can be said that there is only one history."[304] One can relate Halbwachs's observation on forgetting as the change of groups to the analysis of "A Rose for Emily" in chapter III.

As I have observed, the group which demands taxes from Emily is a different group from the one that remits her taxes. The groups in question are generations. Critics observe that there are three generations in "A Rose for Emily." Consider the following passage from Nebeker's article: "Thus, in the first two sections, we have ambiguously but definably presented before us three

---

[302] Wertsch and Roediger 321.
[303] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. F. J. Ditter and V. Y. Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980) 80.
[304] Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* 83.

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."[305] On the last generation, Nebeker comments that it "would have been a chronologically overlapping group composed of Emily's post-war contemporaries as well as the older pre-Civil War generation-men."[306]

This observation points to the fact, manifested in the short story, that generations are not defined by age, i.e. the distinction between generations is not based upon the span of time separating them. Nebeker's last comment is an expression of Karl Mannheim's observation of "the non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous" which, in terms of generations, means that "[d]ifferent generations live at the same time. But since experienced time is the only real time, they must all in fact be living in qualitatively quite different eras."[307] In his treatise on generations, Mannheim has established that "each generation builds up an 'entelechy' of its own by which means alone it can really become a qualitative unity. […] the entelechy of a generation is the expression of the unity of its 'inner aim' – of its inborn way of experiencing life and the world."[308]

While not defined by age of the members of a generation, generations are defined in time, though in relative terms. What constitutes the entelechy of a generation is the "*participation in the common destiny* of this historical and social unit": "We shall therefore speak of a *generation as an actuality* only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization."[309] This cultural conditioning of generation formation is in keeping with my analysis of the ideological make-up of the different we-groups in "A Rose for Emily" representing different generations. Therefore, "the next generation, with its more modern ideas" (120) that disregards Emily's status as Southern Lady does not represent necessarily a temporal shift, but it certainly

[305] Nebeker 4.
[306] Nebeker 4.
[307] Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972) 283.
[308] Mannheim 283.
[309] Mannheim 303.

represents "the formation of a new generation style, or of a new *generation entelechy*."[310]

For Halbwachs, the social frameworks of memory do not condition only remembering, but forgetting as well since "forgetting, or the deformation of certain recollections, is also explained by the fact that these frameworks change from one period to another."[311] The first group forgets the status of a Southern lady and with it perishes Emily's freedom from taxes. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka provides the pertinent observation that "most of the time, when we speak of forgetting, we are speaking of displacement (or replacement) of one version of the past by another."[312]

It is Halbwachs's follower, Pierre Nora who places history and memory in the starkest opposition: Nora claims that "[a]t the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it."[313] For Nora, the two representations of the past are antagonistic, unable to exist together, because they are characteristic of two incompatible developments of society: "The 'acceleration of history,' then, confronts us with the brutal realization of the difference between real memory – social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies – and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past."[314] For Nora, memory is obliterated by history that supplants it at the moment when memory ceases to be the living part of a community. Commenting on the rise of memory studies in the years preceding the publication of his, by now, classical study, Nora observes that "[w]e speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left."[315]

One last clarification regarding collective memory is needed at this point. Collective memory is processual, "contemporary memory studies view memory as a process continually evolving across many points in time and space. Remembering is processual action by which people constantly transform the

[310] Mannheim 309.
[311] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 172.
[312] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008) 118.
[313] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* Spring 1989: 9.
[314] Nora 8.
[315] Nora 7.

recollections that they produce."[316] For Wertsch, there is "a strong emphasis on process, or action, and hence my preference for the term 'remembering' rather than 'memory.' Instead of talking about memories that we 'have,' the emphasis is on remembering as something we do."[317] In his view, the emphasis on process "contrasts collective memory as a static base of knowledge with collective remembering, which involves the repeated reconstruction of representations of the past, a process that is often quite contentious."[318] Though I use only the term "collective memory," the processual nature of remembering is not lost on me. Indeed, the narrative of "A Rose for Emily" presents one reconstruction of the past as a process embedded in a specific time and place and, thus, potentially subject to a re-reconstruction.

4.2 Memory *in* and *of* a Group: The Two Versions of Collective Memory and "A Rose for Emily"

In chapter II, I have drawn a line between collective narratives produced by a single speaker and "proper" collective narratives produced by a group or a collective. The latter are distinguished as holistic presentations of a collective narrative agent and I have observed that such narratives occur unproblematically only in the domain of fiction. I will now correlate these two modes of collective narrative with two versions of collective memory. The problem of collective memory that is relevant for me in this section is the problem of the distribution of memory among the members of the group that does the remembering.

There are two versions, as Wertsch puts it, or two "cultures," as Jeffrey K. Olick puts it, of collective memory: Wertsch's "strong version" and "distributed version" that correspond respectively to Olick's "collective memory" and "collected memory."[319] The problem designated by these labels is the same as the problem of individual and holistic levels of collective or we narrative. Margolin has observed that the accentuation of the holistic level in collective narratives is "tantamount to switching to a different ontological level."[320] Olick states that collective memory subsumes phenomena of two types – those of "collected

[316] Zelizer 218.
[317] Wertsch, *Voices* 17.
[318] Wertsch and Roediger 319.
[319] For clarity's sake, I use Wertsch's terms to avoid the confusion of Olick's use of the term "collective memory" as only one view of the phenomenon at hand and "collective memory" in the general sense designating that phenomenon.
[320] Margolin 600.

memory" and those of "collective memory" – and observes that "[t]he problem is that these two sorts of phenomena to which the term collective memory can refer […] seem to be of radically distinct ontological orders and to require different epistemological and methodological strategies."[321]

Wertsch provides the following account of the two versions of collective memory: "The strong version of collective memory assumes that some sort of collective mind or consciousness exists above and beyond the minds of the individuals in a collective. […] The distributed version of collective memory assumes that a representation of the past is distributed among members of a collective, but not because of the existence of a collective mind in any strong sense."[322] There is no problem with the distributed version of collective memory. Though different accounts of it may vary as to "how" memory is distributed, this is the generally favored view of collective memory.

The strong version is another story since "[s]trong versions of collective memory are typically based on assumptions about parallels between individual and collective processes. These usually rely on metaphorical extensions of assertions about individuals."[323] Wertsch comments on the strong version that "[i]n general, it has been difficult to defend this position."[324] He admits that "[s]uch parallels and metaphorical extensions are widely, and sometimes productively, employed when discussing how remembering occurs in groups. However, to the degree that they are taken to suggest that collectives have some kind of mind of their own, they can be highly problematic."[325] For Halbwachs, however, there is no problem involved: for him, "it is only natural that we consider the group in itself as having the capacity to remember, and that we can attribute memory to the family, for example, as much as to any other collective group."[326]

Olick provides an account similar to Wertsch's with an unequivocal dismissal of the strong version of collective memory. In a phrase reminiscent of Margolin's observation on the holistic level of collective narrative, Olick asserts that "[i]t does not make sense from an individualist's point of view to treat

[321] Olick 336.
[322] Wertsch 21.
[323] Wertsch 21.
[324] Wertsch 21.
[325] Wertsch 21.
[326] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 54.

commemorative objects, symbols, or structures as having a 'life of their own': only people have lives."[327] It becomes clear from Olick's observations on his "collected memory" that the distributed version of collective memory is essentially individualistic: as he puts it, "the fundamental presumption here is that individuals are central: only individuals remember, though they may do so alone or together, and any publicly available commemorative symbols are interpretable only to the degree to which they elicit a reaction in some group of individuals."[328] Olick strictly dismisses the strong version (his "collective memory") as "metaphysics of group mind" since "ultimately it is only individuals who do the remembering."[329] Thus, the distributed version of collective memory "locates shared memories in individual minds and sees collective outcomes as aggregated individual processes."[330]

Both Wertsch and Olick[331] share the notion of the metaphoric nature of the strong version of collective memory. Wertsch notes that "[t]he general point is whether it is legitimate to draw parallels between individual and collective memory, and if so, whether these parallels commit one to attributing questionable mental properties to groups per se."[332] Taking into account Richard Handler's observation, the strong version of collective memory becomes theoretically more untenable, because it is not universal. Handler observes that "Western notions of collectivity are grounded in individualist metaphors. That is, collectivities in Western social theory are imagined as though they are human individuals writ large. The attributes of boundedness, continuity, uniqueness, and homogeneity that are ascribed to human persons are ascribed as well to social groups."[333]

One might conclude the debate by quoting Bartlett, one of those who actually stood at the beginning of that debate: "Whether the social group has a mental life over and above that of its individual members is a matter for speculation and belief. That the organized group functions in a unique and unitary manner in determining and directing the mental lives of its individual members is a matter of certainty and of fact."[334] My point is that the problem of positing a

[327] Olick 338.
[328] Olick 338.
[329] Olick 338.
[330] Olick 339.
[331] See Olick 341-342.
[332] Wertsch 22-23.
[333] Handler 33.
[334] Bartlett 300.

collective consciousness, a group mind, above the individual group members disappears when this distinction is applied to fictional texts. When thus transposed, both versions of collective memory become equally valid since in literature, the domain of fiction, such an otherwise ontologically problematic concept becomes possible.

If fiction can feature we narrations of Richardson's "non-realistic" and "anti-mimetic" types and Margolin's collective narrative agents presenting "the collective structure as such, abstracted from any individuals who may embody it," then, fiction can also contain collective memory in the strong sense. Of course, each text has to be taken on its own terms: specifically, the make-up of the fictional world of the text plays a role in the interpretation. Textual as well as contextual features need to be considered. However, as follows from my argument below, even such mimetically based fictional worlds as the US South can be interpreted as presenting the "ontologically problematic" concept of the strong version of collective memory. After all, this concept is seen to be useful only metaphorically in sociology and it is literature where metaphors thrive.

Turning to William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" as a case study for the two pairs of concepts, one can correlate them for the purposes of analysis. The strong and distributed versions of memory can be termed respectively as "memory of a group" and "memory in a group," as Wertsch puts it commenting on Halbwachs's work.[335] Memory of a group (the "strong version") is possible only when there is a proper group, or collective presented in the text: if the collective *we* cannot be broken down to the constituent members I + you + him/her. Thus Richardson's "conventional" type of we narration and Margolin's first two types of collective narrative agents are excluded from presenting "memory of a group." Because these *we*'s can be broken down to the constituent members I + you + him/her – they are only aggregates of individuals without proper holistic attributes –, they can constitute only memory in a group (the "distributed version") since this version of collective memory is seen precisely as "aggregated individual processes."

I argue that proper we narration, a proper collective narrative agent and the strong version of collective memory, all occur in William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily." There are four points supporting my claim that I want to

[335] Wertsch 22. Cf. Bartlett 298.

mention. Firstly, it is Faulkner's use of collective designations and pronouns analyzed in chapter III. As I have observed, these collective indexical designations are used consistently (and) with ambiguous reference. Secondly, as I have observed in chapter III, positing a group mind (or collective consciousness) behind the we narration of the short story resolves all the epistemological infractions that critics have problems with. Positing such a group mind means that this mind has access to all the information possessed by every member of the community. This applies only to the "true" members of the community, to those who adhere to it epistemologically and ideologically. Thus, the identity of the collective narrator is established both by what it knows and what it doesn't and can't know. Of course, the gaps in the knowledge of the narrator allow for the story to exist: without the epistemological boundaries, there would be no mystery and the following revelation.

Thirdly, my argument has a contextual support in claims made about the specific "mind of the South." In his classical study, *The Mind of the South*, W. J. Cash writes that "it is easy to trace throughout the region […] a fairly definite mental pattern, associated with a fairly definite social pattern – a complex of established relationships and habits of thought, sentiments, prejudices, standards and values, and associations of ideas."[336] In his critical study of William Faulkner, Irving Howe speaks of "regional consciousness" or "regional memory" as a distinctive feature of the South in opposition to the rest of the United States:

> Until very recently, regional consciousness has remained stronger in the South than in any other part of the United States. This "historical lag" is the source of whatever is most distinctive in Southern thought and feeling. […] the South, because it was a pariah region or because its recalcitrance in defeat forced the rest of the nation to treat it as such, felt its sectional identity most acutely during the very decades when the United States was becoming a self-conscious nation. While the other regions submitted to dissolution, the South struggled desperately to keep itself intact. Through an exercise of the will, it insisted that the regional memory be the main shaper of its life.[337]

Though these passages might not posit a collective mind in the strong sense, they have the value of voicing the idea of the Southern distinctive mindset

[336] Cash 20.
[337] Howe 22-23. Cf. Howe 31.

that has been made many times. Of course, I cannot impute the intention of presenting a collective mind of the South in "A Rose for Emily" even to Faulkner. After all, my argument is an interpretive move. The possibility is there, nonetheless, and I find strong evidence in the text and its context. The observations about the mind of the South point to collective memory as a medium transmitting social beliefs, norms, values and judgments:

> Historians increasingly resist drawing general conclusions and lessons from the events of the past. But society, which pronounces judgments on people while they are alive and on the day of their death, as well as on their deeds when these are produced, actually encompasses in all of its important recollections not only a fragment of its experience, but also a kind of reflection of its thoughts. Since a past fact is instructive and a person who has disappeared is an encouragement or an advertisement, what we call the framework of memory is also a concatenation of ideas and judgments.[338]

The passage quoted from Halbwachs points to the vital ideological function of collective memory: collective memory is an instrument of community's cohesion/coercion. It has a pedagogical function in relation to the individuals of the group. In this sense, Cash describes the collective memory of the South positing a collective mind of the region. Thus, and this is the fourth point supporting my claim, the use of collective narrative and the consistent yet ambiguous collective denominations present in the narrative are an excellent (re)presentation of the dispersed ideological force at work in every community and in the short story. I devote the following section to the analysis of the ideology of the community.

4.3 "a slender figure in white in the background": The Ideological Construction of Gender, Sex and Race in "A Rose for Emily"

Recognizing the ideological basis of the community at work and given that the access to Emily is only mediated and constructed, one can draw a parallel between this functioning of the narrative and what Judith Butler observes about the relation between sex and gender:

> If gender consists of the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex does not *accrue* social meanings as additive properties but, rather, *is replaced by* the

[338] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 175-176.

> social meanings it takes on; sex is relinquished in the course of that assumption, and gender emerges, not as a term in a continued relationship of opposition to sex, but as the term which absorbs and displaces "sex," the mark of its full substantiation into gender or what, from a materialist point of view, might constitute a full *de*substantiation.
>
> When the sex/gender distinction is joined with a notion of radical linguistic constructivism, the problem becomes even worse, for the "sex" which is referred to as prior to gender will itself be a postulation, a construction, offered within language, as that which is prior to language, prior to construction. But this sex posited as prior to construction will, by virtue of being posited, become the effect of that very positing, the construction of construction. If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this "sex" except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that "sex" becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access.[339]

The resemblances between the described social construction of gender and the relationship between "sex" and gender, and "A Rose for Emily" are several. Emily is merely a construct of the narrator who is the community. This is the result of the axiom of characterization descriptions that I have invoked in the first chapter. Moreover, whoever Emily is as a private person, she is "replaced by the social meanings," that is, by the concept of Southern lady that exists in the social sphere the collective narrator ascribes to her (more below). Talking about a short story, the difference between Emily and her construction by the narrator is, indeed, "joined with a notion of radical linguistic constructivism."

As a text, "A Rose for Emily" is a discursive construct whose materiality, as an abstract entity that can be reiterated (cited), is language: the bodies in texts are literally constructed linguistically – they are characters consisting of words. The utility of Butler's theoretical framework, however, exceeds the similarity of linguistic construction, since her concept of the discursive construction of bodies (gender, sex and race) provides an apt description of what is happening in the short story: "the regulatory norms of 'sex' [that] work […] in the service of the

[339] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 1993) 5.

consolidation of the heterosexual imperative"[340] are ostentatiously visible in Faulkner's representation of the U.S. South.

The narrator as a collective, by presenting a Southern community almost purely on a holistic level, presenting it as an organic whole, provides an apt correlate to Butler's claim that "the 'activity' of this gendering cannot, strictly speaking, be a human act or expression, a willful appropriation" because "[s]ubjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the 'I' neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves."[341] The view of the narrator as a single speaker thus comes short of embodying the repressive workings of a community ideology. The communal narrator, on the other hand, creates the cultural sphere and the social fabric in which this process occurs: as the community tries to preserve its integrity "in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative," as Butler puts it, it becomes coercive, (re)pressing the subject into an imposed place within the social matrix. The collectivity of the narrator thus expresses Butler's use of "Foucault's conceptualization of power as myriad, multiple and dispersed."[342]

Perry notes that "the relationship between Emily and the townspeople, and how they saw her, are in fact the 'official' subject matter of the story."[343] The construction of "gender" was not only an inherent part of the coercive Southern community dominated by white males, but the short story itself is seen as "centrally concerned with the origins, consequences, and dangers of gender construction *and* gendered readings."[344] Miss Emily is the prime "victim" of these "origins, consequences, and dangers." From her birth, she is dominated by her father who is an example par excellence of the paternalistic authority of the community. His oppressive role can be best seen in the community's conceptualization of the relationship between Emily and her father which provides the following symptomatic image: "We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled

[340] Butler 2.
[341] Butler 7.
[342] Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (London: Routledge, 2002) 82.
[343] Perry 336.
[344] Thomas Fick and Eva Gold, "'He liked Men': Homer, Homosexuality, and the Culture of Manhood in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'," *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Oct. 2007: 99.

silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door" (123).

Commenting on the tableau in his psychoanalytical reading of the short story, Norman N. Holland claims that "[w]ith such a father, there must be an oedipal component to the story."[345] Scherting sees Emily's Oedipal complex as the motivation for Emily's actions, for the murder of Homer Barron: "Emily Grierson was possessed by an unresolved Oedipal complex. Her libidinal desires for her father were transferred, after his death, to a male surrogate – Homer Barron."[346] Emily murders Homer and conceals his corpse in order to preserve him so that he would not be taken away from her like her father was: "She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly" (123-124).

Emily's unresolved oedipal complex as a motivation for her conduct is, however, only a particular realization of a larger force at work. The fixation on the father who "had prevented her from maturing sexually in the normal and natural way"[347] is subsumed by the temporality of the "sex" construction: "Construction not only takes place *in* time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration."[348] The overemphasis on the norms that Emily is subject to creates in her case a destabilization of "sex."

In the sphere of the larger society, of the town, Emily is most patently constructed as a subject by the remission of her taxes by Colonel Sartoris: "Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor […] remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity" (119-120). But the "obligation" does not concern only the town, it is double-edged. Sara Salih explains that Butler's concept of interpellation which Butler uses "in a specifically theoretical sense to describe how subject positions are conferred and assumed through the action of 'hailing'"[349] is borrowed from

[345] Holland 9.
[346] Scherting 399.
[347] Scherting 400.
[348] Butler 10.
[349] Salih 78.

Louis Althusser. Althusser explains his idea of "interpellation" or "hailing" in the following way:

> I shall then suggest that ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday 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).[350]

The seemingly innocuous act of charity makes Emily a subject. By remitting her taxes, Colonel Sartoris recognizes Emily as a Southern lady, a subject worthy of care and protection, of special treatment. Emily "turns around" to take up her subject position in the text with a delay. Sartoris's generation does not demand Emily's taxes, but when the tax delegation of the later generation comes to demand her taxes, Emily responds to the "hailing" of the Colonel: "See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson" (121). Thus, while Emily undermines the norms of the community and is, thus, an outsider, she can does so by utilizing the norms of the community, that is, from within: resting, partly, on the community's norms makes her, partly, an insider of the community.

The repressive norms of the society do not manifest only in Emily's oedipal fixation. The revelation of the bridal chamber at the end of the short story, suggesting that Emily had lain with Homer after his death, shows that another transgression against the heterosexual norms registered in the short story is necrophilia:

> The man himself lay in the bed. […] The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. […] Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us

[350] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 174.

lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair. (130)

The symbolic act of necrophilia perpetrated by the community upon Emily is correlative to Butler's theory. Butler observes the blurring of the boundary of bodies: "[…] I could not *fix* bodies as simple objects of thought. Not only did bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies 'are.'"[351] The establishment of the boundary of Emily's body as her house in the conventions of the gothic genre and due to the imagery in which Emily and her house become interchangeable (being described in terms of each other) is an exemplification of the difficulty with the boundary of bodies registered by Butler.

Another potential transgression against the heterosexual imperative enters the narrative with the arrival of Homer Barron into Jefferson. In the description of his character, the narrator remarks parenthetically that "he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elk's Club" (126) inserting this description in the information that "Homer himself had remarked […] that he was not a marrying man" (126). This sentence with its incidental characteristic has prompted the view that Homer is homosexual[352] and that Emily kills him to keep him from leaving her. Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet state that "the possibility of Homer's being gay […] potentially adds another dimension to the story."[353] Their evidence, apart from the abovementioned sentence, is the connection between Homer's name pointing to the Old Greek poet and "a supposed trait of gay men" since Classical times – pederasty – evidenced by the mention that "little boys would follow [Homer] in groups" (124).[354]

Thomas Fick and Eva Gold provide a convincing argument to the contrary. For them, the sentence about Homer associating with men testifies to an assertion of manhood: "In fact, the passage that has been read as suggesting homosexuality points instead to a male culture intensely hostile to a woman's world, a hostility that flourished in the lodge. It is homosocial but not homosexual."[355] Taking

[351] Butler ix.
[352] Cf. Towner and Carothers 63.
[353] Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet, "A Rosey Response to Fick and Gold," *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Oct. 2007: 109.
[354] Blythe and Sweet 113.
[355] Fick and Gold 102.

context into consideration, Fick and Gold observe that in Homer's time "masculinity was—and, we believe, largely still is—achieved through separation from women. Liking men, drinking with them at the Elks Lodge, and bragging about sexual conquests were signs of true manhood no less than giving lessons in painting china were, for Emily, the mark of true womanhood."[356]

Reading the expression "he liked men" as an expression of homosexuality is a misreading since "to read Homer as homosexual is to ignore that heterosexuality and homosexuality, like masculinity and femininity, are designated by shifting constellations of historically and culturally determined signs."[357] Put simply, the phrase "he liked men" has different meanings today and then. Going back to Butler, this only shows the linguistic construction of subjects evidenced even in the critical readings of "A Rose for Emily." As Fick and Gold observe, to read Homer as homosexual, "is to become trapped by a version of the gender stereotyping that both precipitates Emily's violence and then protects her from its consequences. This trap is set most conspicuously by language."[358]

This quote points out that there is danger not only in the various infractions of the heterosexual imperative, but also in its successful products. It is precisely the view of Emily as a woman, specifically as a Southern lady that blinds the narrator and the narrratee as well to the possibility of her crime: "The ending shocks us not simply by its hint of necrophilia; more shocking is the fact that it is a woman who provides the hint. […] Further, we do not expect to discover that a woman has murdered a man. […] To reverse this 'natural' pattern inevitably produces the grotesque." [359] Since Southern lady is also a class distinction, class, like gender, is complicit in preempting the suspicion of Emily's crime and in laying ground for the final shock: "Society respects wealth because it respects persons who are rich, in terms of the moral qualities that it assumes in them."[360] Thus Bourdieu comments specifically on "A Rose for Emily":

> The idea of nobility, a favourable prejudice which is socially instituted (and hence endowed with all the force of the social), functions as a principle of the construction of social reality, a principle tacitly accepted as much by the narrator and his characters as by the reader […] The meaning of the words

[356] Fick and Gold 101.
[357] Fick and Gold 100.
[358] Fick and Gold 100.
[359] Fetterley 270.
[360] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 153.

> and actions is predetermined by the social image of the person who produces them and, in the case of a person 'above all suspicion', the very idea of murder is excluded.[361]

Going back to the question of Homer's homosexuality, the pertinent and logical question raised by Jennings Mace undermines the idea of Homer being homosexual: "If he is indeed homosexual […] why has Homer returned to town at all? […] What about the heterosexual charade would cause him to return?"[362] Mace also remarks on the various possible meanings of Homer's name (his comment being an exemplification of Skinner's observation that the story can be made to represent almost anything): it can allude to Classical Greek society and thus to pederasty; it can refer to the blind poet "just as Homer is blind to the danger he is in by trifling with Emily Grierson"; or, in support of his homosexuality, "perhaps 'Homer' is really a shortened version of 'Hom(o)er(otic).' The possibilities are wonderful."[363] Though I find a lack of evidence in the text for Homer's homosexuality and I am convinced by Fick and Gold's and Mace's arguments, the possibility of Homer's homosexuality exists and it adds another infraction of, another threat to the heterosexual imperative of the community's ideology.

Butler remarks that

> it seems that the social regulation of race emerges not simply as another, fully separable, domain of power from sexual difference or sexuality, but that its "addition" subverts the monolithic workings of the heterosexual imperative as I have described it so far. The symbolic—that register of regulatory ideality—is also and always a racial industry, indeed, the reiterated practice of *racializing* interpellations.[364]

One can recall the abovementioned definition of the Southern lady given by Towner and Carothers and Cash's observation on the status of the Southern lady defined in opposition to the "Negro" to see that race and "sex" norms worked in connection in the South. In the short story, Emily's servant Tobe is constantly referred to as a "Negro" by the narrator (eleven times altogether): he thus

[361] Bourdieu 323.
[362] Mace 126.
[363] Mace 125.
[364] Butler 18.

represents literally the "reiterated practice of *racializing* interpellations," reiteration of the discursive practices that label him into his assigned social role.

The "Negro," as a designation of the African-American population, is placed outside the community: Romine observes that in the South "the Negro was rhetorically integrated into the community even as the African American was physically and symbolically separated from it."[365] I have already remarked on the exclusion of the African-Americans from the community of Jefferson (see Chapter III). Importantly, the "sex" and race constructions are aligned in the short story by marking the authority of the construction, of the oppression as paternalistic: it is Emily's father who drives all her suitors away and it is Colonel Sartoris, who "hails" Emily as a subject, who "fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron" (120), an edict marking the Negro women symbolically as "outsiders" of the community. As Judith Fetterley aptly observes, "[t]he narrator is the last of the patriarch who take upon themselves the burden of defining Emily's life, and his violence toward her is the most subtle of all. His tone of incantatory reminiscence and nostalgic veneration seems free of the taint of horsewhip and edict."[366]

I have already remarked on the possible relationship between Emily and Tobe and I have observed that one has to make a special effort to glean what is hidden in plain sight: the most abject of excluded transgressions of the white heterosexual imperative of the Southern community, miscegenation. Thus, the possible relationship of the Southern lady and her black servant further connects "sex" and race as discursively constructed ideological categories. The "Negro," in all its forms, designated as an outsider of the community, as the "other," presents the epitome of the sphere of abjection that is the result of the regulatory practices of the normative construction:

> The forming of a subject requires an identification with the normative phantasm of "sex," and this identification takes place through a repudiation which produces a domain of abjection, a repudiation without which the subject cannot emerge. This is a repudiation which creates the valence of 'abjection' and its status for the subject as a threatening spectre.[367]

---

[365] Romine 21.
[366] Fetterley 273. Norman Holland observes that "[i]n effect, the town, by sharply differentiating the sexes, recapitulates the kind of outside control Miss Emily had when her father was alive." Holland 11.
[367] Butler 3.

The occurrences of so many sexual "deviations" within one short story represent the sphere of abjection that is the result of the identificatory practices of the "sex" construction. The "deviations" from the standard norm of "sex" point to the limit of the community's cohesive/coercive nature in imposing "gender" and "sex" roles. These deviations are the irruption of the sphere of abjection into the sphere of the "normal" and they threaten to shake the establishment of the society. Thus, what is presented in the short story is what Romine calls "the reflexive moment":

> […] what this moment threatens to reveal is the arbitrary, symbolic nature of the tacit norms by which social roles are assigned and the objective world of the text is produced. […] In fact, the collective, concrete nature of these social positions or roles is precisely what is called into question at this moment, when hegemony fails, the familiar becomes strange, and cohesion begins to look suspiciously like the product of coercion.[368]

4.4 Narration and Commemoration in "A Rose for Emily"

4.4.1 (Re)collecting Identity

Romine's definition of the reflexive moment leads me to the ultimate question: What is the narrative motivation of "A Rose for Emily"? Why is the story told and why it is told the way it is? Given all the previous observations on the short story as presenting collective memory and as thematizing community, I argue that the narrative reflects a break-up of the community. At a moment when the community loses its cohesion and its traditional boundaries start to be blurred by the invasion of modernity, the community collectively remembers and produces a narrative which encodes its ideological make-up. In this way, the narrator-community tries to re-establish its identity which becomes undermined due to the changing times:

> The collective memory is a record of resemblances and, naturally, is convinced that the group remains the same because it focuses attention on the group, whereas what has changed are the group's relations or contacts with other groups. […] The group is undoubtedly under the influence of an illusion when it believes the similarities more important than the differences,

[368] Romine 19.

but it cannot clearly account for the differences, because the images it has previously made of itself are only slowly transformed.[369]

The narrative situation reflects a moment when the differences become too strong and when the relations with other groups can no longer be ignored. The narrative is not so straightforward: as the previous section shows, under the official account, there seep through the opposing forces of the maintained hegemonic position. The community of Jefferson produces a certain image of itself at a moment of crisis. The origins of the coercive norms are pushed aside by the narrative agency which channels the narrative information in a way that produces a spectacle out of the sphere of abjection: it shows the symptoms, not the disease. The regulatory, repressive norms are made entertainment as the gaze focused at Emily provides a gothic story of a mad woman in the attic, a murderess: the sphere of abjection is held at bay by yet another gendered construction. In the rest of the chapter, I show the functioning of the production of identity, the self-fashioning of the community by narrating a story about Miss Emily Grierson and relate these matters to my analysis of the short story.

I have already observed what the critics say regarding the structure of the short story in terms of *fabula* and *suzhet*. Their sentiment might be encompassed in Skei's somewhat paradoxical observation that "[t]he ending is of the surprise type, yet it does not at all come as a surprise" since "[t]he text has prepared its reader for the discovery by numerous repetitive suggestions and hints and by creating a character and conditions for it to develop its worst sides."[370] The majority of critics see the structure in teleological terms: the whole *raison d'être* of the jumbled chronology is the ending. As to the question of whether the ending indeed surprises the reader or not, the critics are divided. The most reasonable position is the one Perry maintains: aware of the variety of readers, he notes that "there are some readers who link certain items and already guess in chapter IV of

[369] Halbwachs, *Collective Memory* 86-87.

[370] Skei, *Reading* 158. Skei continues with a bold assertion that "[t]he text has prepared its reader for the discovery by numerous repetitive suggestions and hints and by creating a character and conditions for it to develop its worst sides. And so we have no more questions on the story level of the narrative; we know what has happened, and the narrator, despite his propensity for gossip and his curiosity and voyeuristic tendencies, seems to have given us sufficient material to analyze and perhaps even understand why Emily acted the way she did." Skei, *Reading* 158-159. On the contrary, we have all the questions, even on the story level: the narrator provides only its conjectures. Skei seems to be satisfied with (very) little in the way of "what (and how and why) happened" and seems to believe the narrator and its judgment.

'A Rose for Emily' that Emily murdered Homer Barron and some readers who are surprised to find it out at the end of the story."[371]

For some, the structure is not only purposefully deceptive, but also takes on sinister tones. Nebeker sees the "chronology" of the story as a strategy of concealing the town's complicity in Homer's murder that she "uncovers": "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."[372] Dilworth analyzes the sequencing of events in the same way, adding that the "final, shocking revelation, especially, distracts readers from accumulated evidence of the town's prior knowledge of the killing."[373]

In my view, the discourse of the story is conditioned by the fact that it conveys an act of memory, specifically collective memory. One can utilize the distinction made by Jan Assmann between "communicative" and "cultural" memory. In his analysis, communicative memory "includes those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications. These varieties […] constitute the field of oral history. Everyday communication is characterized by a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization."[374] Cultural memory is, unlike communicative memory, distanced from everyday life and "comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity."[375]

"A Rose for Emily" is a mix of both. In terms of communicative memory, the structure of the short story results from orality. Several critics have related the discourse of the narrative to oral storytelling.[376] Clay Morton opposes the oral structure or "oral plot" as he calls it, to fiction claiming that "[c]learly, the

[371] Perry 61.
[372] Nebeker 8.
[373] Dilworth 252.
[374] Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," trans. John Czaplicka, *New German Critique* Spring-Summer 1995: 126.
[375] Assmann 132.
[376]See Skinner 43 or Morton's article. Reed observes that "[t]he use of gossip as the backbone of these stories is acknowledgement of Faulkner's roots in the oral tradition." Reed 26-27.

plot of 'A Rose for Emily' does not follow the kind of linear, chronological progression characteristic of fiction." [377] Though this is clearly a false generalization – fiction is not characteristically linear –, the orality of the story is evident in the "achronic," associative ordering of events in the short story.[378]

Another factor designating the story as a communicative memory is its "time span." Robertson notes that the narrator "spans three generations of Yoknapatawpha's historical time"[379] and this corresponds to Emily's age of 74, roughly the time span of three generations. Assmann observes that the most important feature of communicative memory is "its limited temporal horizon. As all oral history studies suggest, this horizon does not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past, which equals three or four generations."[380]

Thus some of the features of the narrative form correspond to Assmann's communicative memory. Turning to the narratives functions, one can relate them to the concept of cultural memory. Assmann posits cultural memory as distanced from the everyday and relating rather "fixed points [that] are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)."[381] The first characteristic of cultural memory that Assmann gives is "'*The concretion of identity*' or the relation to the group" by which "[c]ultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity." [382] This is also the function I have attributed to the narrative of "A Rose for Emily."

Another characteristic of cultural memory is "*Obligation*. The relation to a normative self-image of the group engenders a clear system of values and differentiations in importance which structure the cultural supply of knowledge and the symbols,"[383] being the ideological component of collective memory that I have already analyzed. The last of Assmann's characteristics I want to mention is

---

[377] Morton 12.
[378] Cf. Morton 14.
[379] Robertson 158. Cf. Nebeker, "Emily's Rose" 4.
[380] Assmann 127.
[381] Assmann 129.
[382] Assmann 130. As has been already observed and as Assmann puts it, "[t]he objective manifestations of cultural memory are defined through a kind of identificatory determination in a positive ('We are this') or in a negative ('That's our opposite') sense." Assmann 130.
[383] Assmann 131.

"*Reflexivity*."[384] Assmann observes that one of the ways in which cultural memory is reflexive is by reflecting "its own image insofar as it reflects the self-image of the group through a preoccupation with its own social system."[385] How is this social system portrayed in "A Rose for Emily"?

The story does not feature any elaboration on the social system, that is, not overtly. As Cohen maintains, "the reality of community in the lives of its members […] is symbolic" while "[t]he symbols of community are mental constructs: they provide people with the means to make meaning."[386] The main symbol of the society in the short story is "Miss Emily Grierson". This is given by the central status she, seen as a Southern lady, has in the social matrix of the community and the reflection of the larger social relations her symbolic position encapsulates:

> We strike back to the fact that this Southern woman's place in the Southern mind proceeded primarily from the natural tendency of the great basic pattern of pride in superiority of race to centre upon her as the perpetuator of that superiority in legitimate line, and attached itself precisely, and before everything else, to her enormous remoteness from the males of the inferior group, to the absolute taboo on any sexual approach to her by the Negro.[387]

Added to this Halbwachs observes the way in which social thought is embodied, materialized, that is, the way in which the abstract ideology of collective memory is made concrete:

> […] the ideas of society are always embodied in persons or groups. Behind a title, a virtue, or a quality, society immediately perceives those who possess them. Those groups and persons exist in the passage of time and leave their traces in the memory of people. In this sense, there is no social idea that would not at the same time be a recollection of the society. But, on the other hand, society would labor in vain if it attempted to recapture in a purely concrete form a particular figure or event that has left a strong imprint in its memory. As soon as each person and each historical fact has permeated this

[384] The other characteristics Assmann gives are the "*capacity to reconstruct*," the "[*f*]*ormation* […] of communicated meaning" and "[*o*]*rganization*" of the commemorative practices. Assmann 130-132.
[385] Assmann 132.
[386] Cohen 19.
[387] Cash 133.

memory, it is transposed into a teaching, a notion, or a symbol and takes on a meaning. It becomes an element of the society's system of ideas.[388]

In Emily's character, a tension between the particular, the everyday life observed by the gossiping community and the general, her towering significance for the community's self-reflection is encapsulated; a tension that can be conceived in terms of communicative ("the particular") and cultural ("the general") memory. This tension is related to the structure of the narrative and to the narrative organization of collective memory. The duality of "the particular" and "the general" inherent in Emily's character corresponds to "two levels of these narrative tools […] instrumental in the very formation, or social construction of groups"[389]: specific narratives and schematic narrative templates.

James V. Wertsch who introduces this distinction defines the two levels of narrative tools in the following way: "Specific narratives are organized around particular dates, settings, and actions, whereas schematic narrative templates are more generalized structures used to generate multiple specific narratives with the same basic plot."[390] In a Chomskyan manner, Wertsch posits a "deep" and a "surface" level of the narrative organization of collective memory in which one schematic narrative template (the deep level of collective memory) can realize several specific narratives (the surface level of collective memory)[391]: Wertsch notes that schematic narrative templates "are schematic in the sense that they exist at an abstract level and involve little in the way of concrete detail, and they are templates in the sense that their abstract form provides a pattern that is applied to multiple events, thereby creating several specific narratives."[392]

In "A Rose for Emily," several schematic narrative templates combine, or are possible to infer from the specific narrative: "the young daughter rebels

---

[388] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 188.
[389] James V. Wertsch, "Collective Memory and Narrative Templates," *Social Research* Spring 2008: 139.
[390] Wertsch, "Collective Memory" 140. The concept of schematic narrative templates draws on Bartletts definition of schemata. For Bartlett, schema "refers to an active organization of past reactions, or of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response. That is, whenever there is any order or regularity of behaviour, a particular response is possible only because it is related to other similar responses which have been serially organized, yet which operate, not simply as individual members coming one after another, but as a unitary mass. […] All incoming impulses of a certain kind, or mode, go together to build up an active, organized setting. […] They have to be regarded as constituents of living, momentary settings belonging to the organism, or to whatever parts of the organism are concerned in making a response of a given kind, and not as a number of individual events somehow strung together and stored within the organism." Bartlett 201.
[391] Wertsch, "Collective Memory" 139.
[392] Wertsch, "Collective Memory" 141-142.

against her father,"[393] "the enemy within subverts community," "the individual asserts his uniqueness in opposition to the undifferentiated society," "woman goes mad due to her loneliness" [394] or the Freudian interpretation of the Oedipus story.[395] Indeed, the last one is suggested even by the narrator itself: reporting on Emily's clinging to her father's dead body, to her denial of her father's death, the narrator states that "we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will" (124).[396] The abstract level is *embodied* in Emily's view as the Lady Aristocrat, as a representative "of those august names" (119), as "a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town" (119).

In keeping with the circumscribed nature of collective memory by a specific group, schematic narrative templates "are provided by a sociocultural context."[397] Hence the gothic quality of the narrative that generates the specific narrative "organized around particular dates, settings, and actions" of an old spinster with a grotesque body, living in a decrepit, grotesque house "decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies" (119) made even more grotesque by its "industrial" surroundings, who kills her lover and keeps his body in a death/bridal chamber to lay with his corpse in a bed: "A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal" (129). All the concrete details of the short story serve to flesh out the skeleton of the narrative, the schematic narrative template into a specific narrative. Since the narrative also fleshes out

---

[393] See Perry 344.

[394] The implied obverse of this sexually biased template reads something like "a man would never go mad, he would bear his loneliness with dignity." The narrator suggests the possibility of Emily's madness two times: when it reports "[w]e did not say she was crazy then" (124) and when it reports on Emily's relation, "old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman" (125). Madness is connected with women twice.

[395] Other templates can certainly be constructed. Holland claims that "A Rose for Emily" "is a story – at one level – about the difficulty prized things have in going into and out of a certain house (or body)." Holland 8. In his psychoanalytical reading of the short story, this template acquires meanings of anal erotism and coprophilia. See Holland.

[396] For argument's sake, I present the version of "what happened" suggested by the narrative and disregard for the moment all the lacunae opening possibilities of alternative versions in this "summary" of the story of "A Rose for Emily." In fact, if I asked to say "what the story is about," I would rather stress the relationship of Emily and the narrator. Thus, the following "summary" given by Sullivan seems to me to be much more satisfactory than the one given by me for the sake of argument in the text: "In fact we can talk about 'A Rose for Emily' as a story about a woman watched for a long time by a narrator-group curious to know every detail of her appearance, conduct, family life, and environment." Sullivan 161.

[397] Wertsch, "Collective Memory" 139.

Emily, there is a parallel between the grotesqueness of Emily's body and the grotesqueness of the (body of the) narrative.

Thus, the community in "A Rose for Emily" (re)collecting its identity from a collectively remembered account of the past constitutes Wertsch's "textual community." Wertsch observes that "the simple existence of a text guarantees nothing about the existence of a textual community. Interpretive and social processes surrounding the text are also required. […] Thus a textual community is a collective whose thought and action are grounded in written texts."[398] Though in this conception what guarantees the perpetuation of the text is its fixed written existence, this is guaranteed in "A Rose for Emily" by the telling and possible repetition of the oral narrative. Moreover, the orality makes no difference because, as Wertsch continues to observe "[s]ome members of a textual community may not have even read the text, but by participating in the activities of a textual community, they can have the access to the textual material around which the group is organized."[399]

However, I argue that the community of "A Rose for Emily" is not generally textual, but specifically narrative. "Text" is too general a term encompassing various types of texts with various functions. Even though Wertsch focuses specifically on historical texts,[400] even there is an important distinction to be made since narrative as opposed to other types of historical texts (annals, chronicles) brings with it an added value. As Hayden White observes "every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to *moralize* the events of which it treats"[401] and generalizes this observation: "Where, in any account of reality, narrativity is present, we can be sure that morality or a moralizing impulse is present too."[402] This is precisely what the "official" narrative of "A Rose for Emily" does in the name of its pedagogical function of instilling the community's ideology in the story's hearers/readers. The moral: any deviation (in both senses) from "our" standards is a perversion; if one is not like "us," one "is, or is worth as much as a murderer".

---

[398] Wertsh, *Voices* 27-28.
[399] Wertsh, *Voices* 28.
[400] Wertsh, *Voices* 62-63.
[401] Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 14.
[402] White 22.

4.4.2 Identity Form(ul)ation: Disrupted Boundaries and Erected Symbols

Romine's reflexive moment is a sign of a crisis. It comes at a juncture when a community is threatened, besieged by enemies without and engulfed by enemies within: "The reflexive moment represents as well a formal crisis – that is to say, the relationship between narrative form and ideology is frequently made problematic at this crucial juncture."[403] In "A Rose for Emily," the external threat is represented by modernity whose symptoms, in the form of "garages," "cotton wagons" and "gasoline pumps," obliterate and encroach Miss Emily, her house and "the august names of that neighborhood" (119). Cash observes that in the South the "identification of Yankee and modern ideology" lead to "the notion of the two as one and inseparable" which generated "the South's fear and anger and pride to the repudiation of Yankee thought."[404] As a Yankee thought, modernity is coming from the outside of the community boundary.

Modernity threatens also from within with "the next generation, with its more modern ideas" (120); the tone of this description being one of scorn. These ideas are the tax demand on Emily, postal service and paving the sidewalks. Another threat disrupting the community from within is the already registered violations of the heterosexual imperative. These disruptions come truly from within since they are embodied in the system, so to speak: they are the collateral damage produced by the perpetuation of the communal ideology. They represent the repressed, the sphere of abjection that returns with a revenge.

The community battles these threats by strengthening its sense of identity and, thus, strengthening its cohesion through the narrative about Miss Emily Grierson. Narrative is especially convenient as a means of social cohesion: "The pleasure derived from such reminiscing has a great deal to do with our social nature; bonds between people, formed in shared experience, demand renewing through the telling."[405] Not only does the act of telling serve the purpose of bonding, but also the narrative itself is imbued with a story aiming at generating "the 'we' of affirmation":

> No society can survive, I contend, or ought to survive, if it cannot generate the "we" of affirmation: the assertion of itself as entitled to its land and

[403] Romine 19.
[404] Cash 156.
[405] Irwin-Zarecka 88.

> institutions, inheriting them from its ancestors and passing them on. This affirmative "we" does not express a contract among living members, but precisely the refusal to be limited by contract. It involves an invocation of ancestors and progeny, as implicated in our present acts. It is the principal way in which the community represents (or "imagines") itself as enduring through time: by deriving its rights and duties from circumstances that were never chosen, and from bonds that are irrevocable since absent generations, who cannot consent to their renegotiation, are nevertheless as much bound by them as we.[406]

As Cohen observes, "[c]hange in structural forms is matched by a symbolic recreation of the distinctive community through myth, ritual and a 'constructed' tradition."[407] The community under "attack" of modernity turns to an establishment of its boundaries by narrative means, by constructing a myth in which its norms, beliefs and actions can be valued in opposition to the "other." As Cohen further elucidates, "the greater the pressure on communities to modify their structural forms to comply more with those elsewhere, the more are they inclined to reassert their boundaries *symbolically* […] In other words, as the *structural* bases of boundary become blurred, so the symbolic bases are strengthened through 'flourishes and decorations', 'aesthetic frills' and so forth."[408] This is why Emily, as a symbol, becomes the focus of the community, the focus of the narrative.

Scott Romine, who sees community also as a symbolic construct,[409] maintains, expressing the oppositional nature of community identity, that "community is enabled by practices of avoidance, deferral, and evasion […] community relies not on what is there so much as what is, by tacit agreement, not there."[410] Romine then observes "three conditions or techniques of deferral –

---

[406] Scruton 290-291.
[407] Cohen 37.
[408] Cohen 44. Cf. Cohen 50-51 and also Halbwachs, *Collective Memory* 82. A crucial feature of asserting symbolic boundaries, congruent with the collective narrative, is the assertion of, (self)delusional, similarity: "Indeed, such assertiveness is likely to intensify as the *apparent* similarity between forms on each side of the boundary increases, or is imagined to increase. For the *appearance* of similarity may dissuade people from questioning its *reality*." Cohen 40.
[409] Romine gives a "definition of community: a social group that, lacking a commonly held view of reality, coheres by means of norms, codes, and manners that produce a simulated, or at least symbolically constituted, social reality." Romine 3.
[410] Romine 3.

drawing boundaries, imagining structures, and creating images."[411] The last one is the most pertinent one as it aptly formulates Emily's status in the community:

> In many ways the least tangible element of community, an image permits a mimetic orientation in which the positive attributes of community (cohesiveness, order, stability, interdependence, and so on) are lent a kind of iconic integrity or, to put the matter another way, are displaced into things. The community's icon permits a way of thinking about community that effaces its status as thinking, since the community appears in this configuration as an object there to be perceived rather than as the product of collective or quasi-collective projection.[412]

The narrative does not evince an overt elaboration upon the social structure of the community, because it displaces this structure as implied into its constructed image, the icon of Emily. As Halbwachs puts it, "if a truth is to be settled in the memory of a group it needs to be presented in the concrete form of an event, of a personality, or of a locality."[413] But Emily is not a straightforward icon. She embodies a tension since she is invested with the positive attributes of the community by being portrayed as divine – as an idol she is the means by which the community coheres –, and, at the same time, she is invested with negative attributes by being portrayed as a murderess – she is the one violating the cohesion of the community (see below). Another important aspect is that the fashioning of the community as "an object there to be perceived" is a crafted illusion: the narrator displaces the community's ideology into Emily and "pretends" to tell a simply story of horror. Thus the "collective projection" is offered under the guise of entertainment.

Therefore, in terms of collective memory, Emily instantiates Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory. Having a myriad of forms – museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, monuments etc. – "[*l*]*ieux de mémoire* originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no

---

[411] Romine 4. Commenting on the first one, Romine elucidates the necessity for the perpetuation of communal ideology, since "the communal boundary marks not merely an already ordered social space, but a space inside of which order can and must be actively maintained. The communal boundary, then, tends to define the limits of social responsibility and social agency." Romine 6.
[412] Romine 7-8.
[413] Halbwachs, "Social Frameworks" 200.

longer occur naturally." [414] In sites of memory, memory is being externalized, deposited materially outside the self so that it can be engaged at will without the "burden" of "carrying it around."[415]

Halbwachs observes that "[g]eneral history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up. So long as a remembrance continues to exist, it is useless to set it down in writing or otherwise fix it in memory."[416] Drawing on Halbwachs, Nora posits sites of memory at a juncture, at a moment when collective memory passes and changes into history: "The moment of *lieux de mémoire* occurs at the same time that an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history."[417] The very existence of the narrative of "A Rose for Emily" reflects this shift: the need to produce the narrative stems from the fading of the cultural conditions in which Emily's status and the identity of the community have been taken for granted.

The crisis, the invasion of modernity into the community changes these conditions and disables the natural, everyday remembering serving the (self)assertion of identity and, thus, necessitates the construction of a monument, a memorial to commemorate the past: the narrative of "A Rose for Emily" and Emily herself. Interestingly, Schudson observes the moralizing effect of memorialization in terms similar to White's: "Turning something into a monument or memorial changes the past in that very process. Memorialization moralizes the past, creates out of a chronicle a tradition."[418] The transient moment of memory changing into history corresponds to a cultural shift and, thus, to the community gradually passing into modernity in the short story: Nora laments "the disappearance of peasant culture, that quintessential repository of collective memory whose recent vogue as an object of historical study coincided with the apogee of industrial growth."[419] Interestingly for my interpretation, Nora connects the transition from a mythical time of memory, from a rural community to the

[414] Nora 12.
[415] Nora 13.
[416] Halbwachs, *Collective Memory* 78.
[417] Nora 11-12. In terms of the South, Irving Howe connects the emergence of "serious" writing about the South with the fading of the "regional consciousness": "It was not until the First World War that serious Southern writing began to appear – that is, not until Southern regional consciousness had begun to decay." Howe 24-25.
[418] Schudson 359.
[419] Nora 7. Cf. Nora 8.

progressive time of history, to the modern industrial society with the emergence of self-consciousness.[420]

The sites of memory have a double existence, concrete and abstract: "*Lieux de mémoire* are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux* in three senses of the word: material, symbolic, and functional. […] the three aspects always coexist."[421] Emily as a human being is material. In fact, the materiality of her body is palpable to the point of grotesque: "[…] what would have been plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough […]" (121).

Emily's symbolic dimension is her status as a Southern lady. This status is expressed concretely in Emily's position as "the high and mighty" Grierson above "the gross and teeming world" (122). Interestingly, this description comes before the scene where four men set out to sprinkle lime on Emily's grounds in order to extinguish the smell her neighbors have complained about. Thus, the statement of Emily's elevated position is subsequently translated into a concrete event and conveyed as a concrete, though symbolically charged image:

> Four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings […] As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. (122-123)

Emily's function is a signpost of community identity, a mirror in which the social structure reflects with its entire ideological appendage. The religious imagery by means of which Emily is described points to her function as a mirror to the community, a pillar in relation to which the community can formulate its identity: "Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows […]

[420] Nora 7.
[421] Nora 18-19.

like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which" (128).[422]

4.4.3 Emily and the Narrator: Totem and Taboo

Though I have observed that the discourse is a result of presenting an act of memory, I have not really accounted for the ending: why is the "shocking" revelation with "the extra turn of the screw of horror"[423] preserved for the very end? One of the motivations is very prosaic. As Iwona Irwin-Zarecka observes, a "'good story,' in the parlance of television producers, has a much better chance of entering collective memory."[424] It seems to me that with its "flashback" structure and climactic ending, "A Rose for Emily" constitutes a very good story, even "in the parlance of television producers." After all, narrativization of the past, of memory aims at producing "good stories": "Narrativization is an effort not only to report the past but to make it interesting. Narratives simplify."[425] The other motivation strikes at the very core of the short story and the theme of community and collective memory.

In her function providing the community with a possibility for identity form(ul)ation, Emily functions, to an extent, as a totem. In his *Totem and Taboo*, Sigmund Freud gives the following definition of a totem:

> It is as a rule an animal (whether edible and harmless or dangerous and feared) and more rarely a plant or a natural phenomenon (such as rain or water), which stands in a peculiar relation to the whole clan. In the first place, the totem is the common ancestor of the clan; at the same time it is their guardian spirit and helper, which sends them oracles and, if dangerous to others, recognizes and spares its own children. Conversely, the clansmen are under a sacred obligation (subject to automatic sanctions) not to kill or destroy their totem and to avoid eating its flesh (or deriving benefit from it

[422] Cf the following quote by Dilworth: "Symbolically, to be framed by a window, as Emily often is (123, 127), is to be beyond change. […] By analogy with painting, such framing by blocked doorways and windows is – like placing upon a pedestal or in a 'niche' (128) – a spatial expression of the idealizing imagination." Dilworth

[423] Skei, "Reading" 158.

[424] Irwin-Zarecka 154.

[425] Schudson 355. Narrativization of the past is also in keeping with the presentist orientation of memory: "Narrativization, as I have discussed it so far, refers to telling a story about the past. But there is a second line of narrativization: telling a story about the past's relation to the present. In this larger narrative, understanding the past is often subjugated to an overarching story about how our own time fits into the passage of human history." Schudson 357.

in other ways). The totemic character is inherent, not in some individual animal or entity, but in all the individuals of a given class.[426]

Disregarding that totems are "as a rule" animals, one can say that Emily is the common ancestor of the community, the "clan" in the sense that the narrator and thus the community define their identity based on their "originary" narrative. "A Rose for Emily" begins with death and thus constitutes an inversion of the "originary" narrative. Emily is also the common ancestor of the clan as she symbolizes the aristocratic past from which the community has sprung not being itself exclusively aristocratic anymore. That the totemic character is inherent in all the individuals "of a given class" is important: it puts, in different words, the dynamics of the community's identity construction through Emily.

The narrative is generated by the crisis of the community which narrates its inverted "originary" narrative featuring the death of a god, the last god of the old gods: Emily joins the august names on the graveyard. Heller, connecting the denial of sexuality and death, both embodied by Emily in her lack of suitors and her denial of her father's death, with the idea of the essential difference inherent in the ideology of class distinctions, observes the "aristocratic fantasy, one that explains the aristocratic immunity from death: one does not feel sexual desire because one's own origin is asexual, the miraculous birth of a god, which establishes one's difference in kind from those who are biologically created and which allows the evasion of the end of biological organisms."[427]

The sacred obligation against various interactions with the totem is reflected in Emily's isolation in her house. Nobody comes near her since her father will not allow it: "We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door" (123). After his death, contacts of the community with Emily are also restricted: the tax deputation visits her, but she "vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell" (121); interestingly, the "smell deputation" doesn't even come into contact with Emily, the men just "slunk about the house like burglars" (122); only when her father dies, the community accesses the house, but only when Emily

[426] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, transl. James Strachey (New York: Routledge, 2004) 3.
[427] Allen 691.

"broke down" (124). For the rest of the narrative, until Emily dies, only Tobe connects Emily with the outside world.

This isolation, especially in the form of Emily's father, sheds an interesting light on her as a totem. Freud observes that totemism is related to "exogamy," which is "a law against persons of the same totem having sexual relations with one another and consequently against their marrying." [428] Commenting on the tableau of Miss Emily and her father, Allen points out that the father's inhibition works two ways and inverts the exogamy connected with totemism: "Mr. Grierson's prohibition is a curious inversion of the law of the father; it forbids not incest but exogamy. Straddling the doorway, Emily's father not only blocks access to her; he prevents her from leaving. Behind the closed doors of the house, Emily's romantic involvements are limited to an incestuous fixation on her father."[429] Once again, Emily functions as an inverted totem.

Emily serves as a totem also in another sense. Freud relates totemism to child neuroses; in his view, both share "complete identification with [the] totem animal and [an] ambivalent emotional attitude to it."[430] In her perceptive analysis of the short story, Ruth Sullivan analyzes the narrator as a child:

> As for what Miss Emily means to the narrator, why he should take her rather than someone else as his object of curiosity, that must be answered in two ways: on the manifest story level she is a high-born and eccentric citizen to curious neighbors. On this level the term "voyeur" to describe the narrator is inappropriate. On the latent level, she is a mother to a child. […] But I am not saying the narrator is her child, only that he is a child - and not chronologically but psychically: his psychic development is infantile. Nor am I saying that Miss Emily is anyone's mother. She is a mother figure. For reasons not given in the story the narrator makes Miss Emily assume this role.[431]

Freud observes that in child neuroses, in case of males, the totem animal is substituted by the father.[432] Though Emily is a woman and assumes the role of the mother in the narrator's eyes, the focus on her, rather than on some man is given by her central position in the social matrix of the community. Freud himself

[428] Freud 4-5.
[429] Allen 689.
[430] Freud 152.
[431] Sullivan 166.
[432] Freud 152.

provides another reason for the focus on Emily: "Psycho-analysis has taught us that a boy's earliest choice of objects for his love is incestuous and that those objects are forbidden ones—his mother and his sister."[433] The narrator might be seen as choosing Emily, in a sense, as an object of love. Firstly, I have observed that some critics see the narrator as Emily's former suitor. Secondly, the forbidden relationship is symbolically consummated at the end of the narrative by the act of the community's, that is, the narrator's penetration of Emily's house.

Also, Emily's aristocratic pedigree seen as god-like and the religious imagery play their role. Accordingly, Sullivan observes Emily's godlike status for the narrator:

> He sees her as godlike, defying all merely human laws, institutions, and relationships, for she will not pay taxes or allow numbers and a mailbox to be affixed to her house, she resists allowing her father to be buried, she does not even marry as normal people do. And she commits murder almost under the eyes of a town that (we feel) should have known eventually why she bought that arsenic. She takes human life and no human law stops or punishes her for it. Godlike, she lives in a "timeless meadow" for she also defies superhuman forces of time and death. […] she never does become fully humanized and the town never loses its fear of her. She is always unapproachable. […] She is rather like a goddess in her temple, cool and unapproachable and vaguely frightening, and like so many terrible mythical goddesses, she chooses a man of lower station, has an affair with him, and then kills him to gratify her own needs. To see someone as godlike is to see that person the way a child sees a parent; in the case of Miss Emily, a particularly distant, unapproachable, and frightening parent.[434]

Seeing Emily as having some similar aspects to a totem might imply that I am designating the community of Jefferson as a totemic tribe. I am not; however, if I was, I would not lack support. Once again, Cash provides an interesting observation on the Southern society:

> The final great result of Reconstruction we have to consider in this chapter […] is that it established what I have called the savage ideal […] Here, under pressure of what was felt to be a matter of life and death, was that old line between what was Southern and what was not, etched, as it were, in fire

[433] Freud 19.
[434] Sullivan 168-169.

> and carried through every department of life. Here the ideas and loyalties of the apotheosized past fused into the tightest coherence and endowed with all the binding emotional and intellectual power of any tribal complex of the Belgian Congo.[435]

The duality of Emily's portrayal both as divine, the "high and mighty" Grierson and perverse is characteristic of the concept of taboo which remarkably fits Emily on several levels:

> The meaning of 'taboo', as we see it, diverges in two contrary directions. To us it means, on the one hand, 'sacred', 'consecrated', and on the other 'uncanny', 'dangerous', 'forbidden', 'unclean'. The converse of 'taboo' in Polynesian is '*noa*', which means 'common' or 'generally accessible'. Thus 'taboo' has about it a sense of something unapproachable, and it is principally expressed in prohibitions and restrictions. Our collocation 'holy dread' would often coincide in meaning with 'taboo'.[436]

Like totem, taboo is distinguished by isolation. Freud observes that behind the various taboo prohibitions in various societies, "there seems to be something in the nature of a theory that they are necessary because certain persons and things are charged with a dangerous power, which can be transferred through contact with them, almost like an infection."[437] Importantly, the power of taboo is gradable, "[t]he *quantity* of this dangerous attribute also plays a part. Some people or things have more of it than others and the danger is actually proportional to the difference of potential of the charges."[438] Thus, while Emily is inaccessible to the members of the community, both in physical contact and in terms of the observed epistemological boundaries of the narrator, one person plays an intermediary, possessing more taboo than the others: "After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man – a young man then – going in and out with a market basket" (122).

---

[435] Cash 151.
[436] Freud 21-22.
[437] Freud 25.
[438] Freud 25.

Freud notes that "[t]he source of taboo is attributed to a peculiar magical power which is inherent in persons and spirits"[439]: the "magical power" in the short story is the social position in the community. Emily and Tobe are both taboos as they are at the polar opposites in terms of social hierarchy. Sharing a radical nature of their respective social statuses, both provide the community with means of drawing its boundaries – Emily by standing at the centre, Tobe by standing beyond the community and forming its "other." Tobe thus provides the community with the possibility of identity form(ul)ation in negative terms, in Romine's words "by what is not there". Cash sees the defining role of the "Negro" as exclusive to the South and wonders "[w]as there ever another instance of a country in which the relation of master and man arose, negligible exceptions aside, only with reference to a special alien group."[440]

Like totem, taboo is related by Freud to obsessional neurosis, and he notes that "[a]s in the case of taboo, the principal prohibition, the nucleus of the neurosis, is against touching." [441] Freud registers "the subject's *ambivalent* attitude" to the tabooed object:

> He is constantly wishing to perform this act (the touching) […] and detests it as well. The conflict between these two currents cannot be promptly settled because […] they are localized in the subject's mind in such a manner that they cannot come up against each other. The prohibition is noisily conscious, while the persistent desire to touch is unconscious and the subject knows nothing of it.[442]

This tension regarding the touching, in other words, coming into contact[443] with Emily explains the narrator's obsessive gaze registering Emily's every movement during the majority of her life.

As Freud continues his analysis, the obsessional acts serve as a release of the tension between the prohibition and the urge to do what has been prohibited and notes the "law of neurotic illness that these obsessive acts fall more and more under the sway of the instinct and approach nearer and nearer to the activity which

[439] Freud 24. Regarding my following statement, Freud notes that one class of persons "possessed of great power" (Freud 24) are persons prominent in a community: kings, chiefs, priests etc.
[440] Cash 57.
[441] Freud 31.
[442] Freud 34-35.
[443] Cf. Freud 31-32.

was originally prohibited." [444] By obsessively watching Emily, the narrator straddles the line: it does not touch her, but does the next best thing by which it expresses the desire to touch, to come into contact with. The short story shows the gradual approach nearer the prohibited activity: the touching in the form of a symbolic incestuous sexual violation of a corpse. The amount of perversion of this act is commensurable to the amount of repression preceding the act.

Emily, constituting a taboo, violates herself several taboos. Firstly, she has an affair with "a foreman named Homer Barron, a Yankee" (124) which is obviously a problem to some: "But there were still others, 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'" (124-125). Explaining this passage, Towner and Carothers say that to the older people Emily is "apparently sexually involved with him [Homer]" and "stands in need of her kinfolks' protection."[445] Emily consorts with the enemy.

Her second violation of taboo, this time not only "moral," but also legal, is the murder of Homer Barron:

> "Arsenic," Miss Emily said. "Is that a good one?" […] "Why, of course," the druggist said. "If that's what you want. But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for."
>
> Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. (125-126)

The last taboo (in terms of the discourse of the narrative, literally last) that Emily violates, at least it is suggested, is necrophilia:

> The man himself lay in the bed. […] The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. […] Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair. (130)[446]

---

[444] Freud 36.
[445] Towner and Carothers 71.
[446] Going back to the idea of Emily as a totem and the narrator as a child, this scene supports the view of the narrator as a child, at least in psychoanalytic terms: "The uncanniness of the scene derives from the fact that Faulkner has given us intercourse as it is understood by the child, as an assault of one partner upon the other with pain or death the necessary result. The twist here,

Indeed, as I have observed, necrophilia, symbolically, is what the community achieves. The act of penetrating Emily's house at her funeral constitutes metonymically penetration of Emily herself: at the end, the community, the "obsessional neurotic" commits what has been prohibited.

The community's intervention into Emily's relationship with Homer can be also explained in these terms. As Freud observes, "[a]nyone who has violated a taboo becomes taboo himself because he possesses the dangerous quality of tempting others to follow his example: why should *he* be allowed to do what is forbidden to others? Thus he is truly contagious in that every example encourages imitation, and for that reason he himself must be shunned."[447] Using the Baptist minister and Emily's blood-kin to dissuade her from her relationship with Homer are acts attempting to deny Emily her forbidden fruit as it constitutes a danger to the community – not only by disrupting the community by an assertion of individuality, but also by providing a temptation:

> If one person succeeds in gratifying the repressed desire, the same desire is bound to be kindled in all the other members of the community. In order to keep the temptation down, the envied transgressor must be deprived of the fruit of his enterprise; and the punishment will not infrequently give those who carry it out an opportunity of committing the same outrage under colour of an act of expiation.[448]

The text presents the community's interventions into Emily's affairs overtly as trying to prevent her from what the community deems as threatening. Thus, the only motivation for the intervention is the protection of the communal integrity. This corresponds to Freud's observation that "[t]he obsessional act is *ostensibly* a protection against the prohibited act; but *actually*, in our view, it is a repetition of it. The 'ostensibly' applies to the *conscious* part of the mind, and the 'actually' to the *unconscious* part."[449] It is thus fitting that the "actual" motivation, the repetition of the transgression, is unvoiced and is only implied in the community's final penetration of Emily's house, it is left for interpretation.

---

though, is that usually if a child imagines the primal scene sadistically, he believes that it is the woman and not the man who is harmed. Not so for this watcher. He sees woman as man-destroyer." Sullivan 164. Another taboo that Emily possibly violates is the most horrible one: a sexual intercourse with a "Negro," miscegenation. But this is only possible and I have already commented on it.

[447] Freud 38-39.

[448] Freud 83-84.

[449] Freud 59.

The emotional ambivalence from which the obsessional acts constitute a release is reflected in the linguistic ambivalence attached to taboo: "'Taboo' is itself an ambivalent word; and one feels on looking back that the well-attested meaning of the word should alone have made it possible to infer—what has actually been arrived at as a result of extensive researches—that the prohibitions of taboo are to be understood as consequences of an emotional ambivalence."[450] Emily's ambivalence as a character corresponds to the ambivalence of taboo. Allen observes the profoundness of Emily's ambivalence: "Both grotesquely fat and excessively thin, living and dead, female and male, Miss Emily is, finally, 'undecidable,' the copresence of opposites. Evading basic distinctions, she is that most gothic of figures: the compound being."[451]

As a compound being, Emily is exemplifies "the conception of man in Faulkner's works [that] is marked by the figure of the oxymoron."[452] Indeed, the two views of Emily constructed in the story, corresponding to the meanings of taboo – Emily as "high and mighty" and as perverse – are part of Emily's oxymoronic nature. Perry observes that

> "A Rose for Emily" is not a pure inverted story, of the type which starts by constructing a certain central frame only to substitute for it, in the light of new information, an inverse frame. Its sophisticated rhetoric is designed to prevent the inversion of the story from being complete. The ambivalent attitude towards Emily, which includes an image of her as an impressive person, is not simply cancelled at the end of the story, even when the murder is revealed.[453]

---

[450] Freud 78.

[451] Allen 686. Another copresence of opposites in Emily is her androgyny, she is viewed both as a woman and a man, and her appearance as alive and dead at the same time: "Emily's Oedipal desires explain her physical androgyny by arguing for a psychological androgyny: the clash of the daughter's feminine desire *to have* the father with a masculine desire *to be* the father. This duality is reiterated in Emily's combination of corpulence and spareness. Her incorporation of her father is rendered almost literal in her bloated obesity, grafted onto the skeleton of the slender girl in white. Similarly, if Emily appears both alive and dead, this reflects her choice of a moribund existence in a closed world from which time has been excluded." Allen 688. Cf. Holland 10. Holland points out that Emily's androgyny creates a parallel between her and the narrator: "Yet one cannot tell whether the narrator of the story is male or female, old or young. […] Thus the narrator, at the most peripheral point of the story, parallels Miss Emily at its center, for she, too, has this curiously androgynous quality." Holland 6. Emily's compoundens establishes another parallel between Emily and the narrator. The narrator is compound, because it is a collective narrator. Emily thus mirrors the narrator in two senses: she provides the narrator with a reflection and she is like the narrator.

[452] Perry 354.

[453] Perry 312.

Thus, at the end of the story, "the murder will not be seen only as the insane act of a jilted woman, but also as the act of a woman of extraordinary mental strength who moulds her own life"[454] and "[t]he primacy effect is therefore not completely obliterated."[455] Though the two opposing meanings of taboo are simultaneous, in the short story, the two constructs of Emily are submitted to the operation of primacy effect. This is, of course, due to the linear nature of narrative, of linguistic signs, because of which one view of Emily necessarily must come first. Interestingly, the two views of Emily correspond to the working of the narrative itself. Skinner, commenting on the structure of the narrative, aptly observes that

> in terms of *suzhet*, she may be represented as a grand old Southern lady; in the context of *fabula* she is little more than an unusual clinical case, a psychopath and necrophiliac who has committed a gruesome crime […] the ugly banality of Emily's existence is the *fabula* presented in all the allure of colorful *suzhet*.[456]

The division of various views of Emily on the planes of *suzhet* and *fabula* is, in other words, what Perry has observed in his analysis of the primacy effect: "We are witness here to a technique recurring in the story: information that depreciates the value of Emily is introduced into a context that specifically subordinates it to her aristocratic pride."[457] The two views correspond to the linguistic ambivalence of taboo: the concept serves as an apt characterization of Emily's function and significance in the short story. The reason why the shocking revelation is withheld to the very end is motivated not only by the intended impact of the narrative on the narratee, on the reader/listener of the story. The revelation of Homer's murder is part of the construction of Emily as "perverse." The narrative presentation of this framework submits to the primacy effect operating in "A Rose for Emily" and is thus presented as second(ary). Thus, "revealing" Emily's crime at the very end is leading the primacy effect to its logical conclusion. The final scene is postponed, like the framework of Emily as perverse, both on the story (*fabula*) and the discourse (*suzhet*) levels of the narrative: it

[454] Perry 312.
[455] Perry 351.
[456] Skinner 49.
[457] Perry 317. Thus, Perry notes that "[h]ad the story reported the buying of the poison at its chronological place, following, a few lines down, with 'that was the last we saw of Homer Barron,' this would have been as though the story told us explicitly, already at this stage, that H.B. was murdered." Perry 328.

comes chronologically after Emily's death, as the last event of the *fabula* and it comes at the end of the narrative, as the last event of the *suzhet*.

> It is a question of the form of attention we choose to bestow; of our willingness to see that in reading according to restricted codes we disregard as noise what, if read differently, patiently, would make another and rarer kind of sense. And the text, almost with "cynicism," tells us what is there, confident that we shall ignore it.[458]

5. Conclusion

Skinner's observation on the multiplicity of meanings the characters of "A Rose for Emily" lend themselves to suggests an important aspect of the short story. Despite almost eighty years of criticism, Faulkner's most famous short story remains elusive. This elusiveness is inherent in the text: in its vague pronoun references, in the ambiguity of Emily's character, in the various lacunae in the *fabula* resulting from the narrator's limited knowledge, and, as a consequence of this limitation, from the suggestions and suppositions the narrator presents as facts. Regarding the information given about Emily and her supposed crime, Heller observes that "[t]hese apparently conflicting cues are arranged so that as our suspicion of the truth about Emily grows, one set confirms and the other allays those suspicions. […] Our suspended judgment is never allowed to settle itself."[459]

I have already suggested that the lacunae in the "factual" basis of the narrative open possibilities of alternative versions of the story; such as the relationship between Emily and Tobe. Commenting on the ambiguity of the final scene, Heller provides one such alternative:

> The final scene stubbornly refuses to resolve the conflicting responses that have been cultivated in the reader throughout the story. […] In fact, the narrator teasingly encourages the reader to doubt the relation. The monogram on the silver is obscured. The body is not identified, nor is it in an attitude to indicate a violent death from arsenic. It is possible that Homer and Emily lived together in the house, secretly of course, for several years. Such a suggestion seems absurd, but the very fact that it can be defended illustrates how little we really learn in the climactic scene.[460]

[458] Kermode 96.
[459] Heller 314.
[460] Heller 315-316.

Emily lacks explanation.[461] As a narrative and ideological construct of the narrator, Emily doesn't need explanation, because she exists to serve a purpose: she is an important symbol serving the identity claims of the community and, thus, she is the pedagogical tool perpetuating the community's ideology. The narrative of the past produced in the interest of the present and future registers a tension in which the "official" narrative recollecting identity by implying in Emily the values, norms and beliefs of the community is pervaded by irruptions of the "other," of the sphere outside of the community boundary. The narrative is a direct product of the threat of impending modernity because it is a means of, an attempt at containing that threat. As Romine observes, "the communal boundary marks not merely an already ordered social space, but a space inside of which order can and must be actively maintained. The communal boundary, then, tends to define the limits of social responsibility and social agency."[462]

The collective narrator imposes a meaning upon the past which it erects as a mirror to reflect its identity. It is the community that is the source of the narrative of "A Rose for Emily". Firstly, the community is the source of the narrative in a broad sense by infusing the narrative with certain norms, beliefs, and values and, thus, specific actions that follow from the ideological basis of the community. Secondly, the community is the source of the narrative more specifically, as a communal narrator in the strong sense: a multiple, collective, non-distributive voice of "a different ontological order." Drawing on Émile Durkheim, Romine provides a support for this claim observing that "[o]ne of several ironies of southern history is that something approaching mechanical solidarity, in which, as Durkheim says, 'the individual consciousness is almost indistinct from the collective consciousness … [and] the individual has no sphere of action that is peculiarly his own,' could exist in such a stratified and deeply divided culture."[463]

The view of the short story as an act of collective remembering explains both the use of we narration and of the achronic ordering of the narrative. Though positing an "unnatural" collective narrator might seem going too far to somebody, to use Skinner's words regarding "A Rose for Emily," "[s]tranger things are said

[461] Heller claims that "[i]nstead of trying to explain Emily, the narrator does his best to present all the difficulties in the way of such an explanation. […] Emily remains very much a mystery."316.
[462] Romine 6.
[463] Romine 3. The ellipsis is Romine's.

of this story in utter seriousness."[464] One such "strange" thing is, for me, the designation and treatment of the narrator as an individual. I do not claim that my interpretation is somehow better than other interpretations. I merely think that my reading makes a better interpretation than others according to the chosen "form of attention". Other interpretations are obviously better regarding matters I have disregarded or only touched upon: Emily's psychology, her motivation, the idea of time, questions of gender and sexuality, or the final scene and the telltale hair.[465] Thus, my interpretation is complementary to those others.

It seems significant that both the quite different aspects of the short story, the gothic dimension and the thematization of community and its (re)constitution are achieved by the same means: the vague use of collective pronouns creating a sense of an unseen, shadowy and almost omnipresent social/narrative agency. This collective agency both creates an intense atmosphere of prying which supports the gothic aspect and it is an apt portrayal of the community and its ideological dimension. The designation of Emily and her house as the "other" results from both aspects of the short story: it has its communal significance as well as its gothic necessity.

I hope I have also shown the profitability of using narratology in approaching "A Rose for Emily" since it provides the appropriate framework for analyzing the short story. The unusual narration and the unusual structure of the short story can be both accounted for by applying narratological categories. The critics who observe the plural pronoun in reference to the narrator and claim the narrator's individuality identifying him as an inhabitant of Jefferson miss the point of the short story. Such statements amount to dismissing Faulkner's ingenuity and the aesthetic effects of his narrative.

Faulkner is seen mainly as a novelist; his short stories are of secondary interest as well as importance, usually as complementary material to his novels. Hans Skei maintains that "Faulkner never learnt to write the well-rounded, slick,

---

[464] Skinner 50.

[465] Cf. the following passage by Hagopian, Cunliffe, and Dolch: "Though to some readers "a strand of hair' conveys the idea of "a single hair,' the context makes it necessary that we read "a lock of hair.' A single hair could never be discerned under a 30 years layer of dust.

The act of cutting off one's hair (or locks of it) was a familiar gesture of grief and farewell or remembrance at the corpse or grave of a beloved person among the ancient Greeks […] Emily Grierson, as a member of a Southern aristocratic family, can be expected to have read Homer and other classics, so her gesture can be seen as a conscious demonstration of grief and farewell. Is it merely coincidence that her lover is called Homer? Her name, too, is of classic origin (Latin Aemilius)." Hagopian, Cunliffe, and Dolch 79.

and perfect story with its almost mechanical progression through crises towards a point which was intended to come as a surprise and give a twist to the story told."[466] For Skei, many of Faulkner's short stories are unwritten novels: they "are a novelist's short stories in the sense that many of them may be regarded as condensed and concentrated material for novels."[467]

Secondary to his novels, Faulkner's short stories are also seen as secondary to other writers' short stories. Ferguson sees Faulkner's importance in short fiction as lesser to his peers, for example, Hemingway. Nevertheless, Ferguson appreciates Faulkner's achievement: "One of the most impressive things about Faulkner's short fiction is its extraordinary range. […] we are struck by how much richer Faulkner's achievement seems because of its diversity and variety, even though it is more uneven in quality."[468]

Probably every critic of Faulkner's short fiction has his or her canon of Faulkner's best short stories. Howe seems to have set the number of these canons: according to him, Faulkner's oeuvre "contains a half-dozen brilliant pieces of writing and another dozen reasonably good ones; but it does not persuade one that Faulkner, the story writer, is nearly as important or original as Faulkner, the novelist."[469] Since the various canons are more or less the same, Ferguson's can provide an example: "His very best stories – 'Red Leaves,' 'That Evening Sun,' 'A Justice,' 'Dry September,' 'Mule in the Yard,' 'Barn Burning' – are technically virtually flawless."[470]

Though "A Rose for Emily" is considered one of Faulkner's better short stories – it occurs as either one of the "half-dozen brilliant" or one of the "dozen reasonably good ones" –, its reputation has so far depended largely on its gothic quality, on the failure or success to surprise: "Simply as a story, 'A Rose for Emily' may seem too dependent on its climax of shock, particularly in its hair-raising final sentence."[471] Indeed, the horror of the short story has been evaluated as more than successful: "A little shocker, an exercise in Southern gothic which simultaneously defines the mode of Southern gothic, replaces its predecessors and

[466] Skei, *William Faulkner* 15. Howe comments that Faulkner "shows his ability to handle a genre for which he is not naturally suited." Howe 261.
[467] Skei, *William Faulkner* 25.
[468] Ferguson 84.
[469] Howe 262.
[470] Ferguson 147.
[471] Howe 265.

tops all subsequent attempts at its horror."[472] The short story has been variously interpreted in terms of gender, sex, history (reading the story as portraying the South and the hostility between South and North), psychoanalysis or the gothic genre, but one only has to consider the comments on the ending of the short story made by every critic to see that the "formal" aspects of the narrative are, to a large extent, valued in teleological terms.[473]

By reading "A Rose for Emily" in different terms than other critics have done previously, I hope to have induced revaluation of the short story. Seeing "A Rose for Emily" as an instance of we narration with achronic structure, as an example of collective memory at work makes the story become rarer in terms not only of Faulkner's oeuvre, but also in the context of its time. Ferguson, commenting on the achievement of Faulkner as a short story writer observes that "surely the most important single aspect of that achievement [is] his management of point of view."[474] In "A Rose for Emily," Faulkner achieves a sustained use of a collective point of view of a collective narrator. Richardson traces the history of we narration to Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus* as "the first sustained example of 'we' narration."[475] William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," as a successful fusion of collective narrative, the theme of community and presentation of collective memory, deserves a prominent status in this history as an early important contribution to the narrative technique and in Faulkner's short fiction as a remarkable achievement.

---

[472] Reed 18. Hagopian, Cunliffe and Dolch say that the ending of the story is shocking, though foreshadowed, and morbid "outdoing the likes of Poe and Jacobean dramatists." Hagopian, Cunliffe and Dolch 80. Howe, for example, sees the shock as justified by the theme, he still sees the story as deficient. Howe 265.

[473] Indeed, Skei's dismissal of Faulkner as a short story writer unable to write "the well-rounded, slick, and perfect story" is dependent on the teleological aspect of the genre: "One of the chief characteristics of the short story, whether told orally to an audience or written, seems thus to be its end-orientation. In a sense the structure of the short story implies that it will be completed at its conclusion; tensions are resolved, crises have passed and led to happiness or grief, characters have gone through decisive experiences and lost or won; and all this has been implied from the very beginning of the story […]." Skei 21.

[474] Ferguson 84.

[475] Richardson, *Unnatural* 41.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Coetzee, J. M. *In the Heart of the Country*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982.

Faulkner, William. "A Rose for Emily." *Collected Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1977. 119-130.

————. "Death Drag." *Collected Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1977. 185-205.

————. "That Will Be Fine." *Collected Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1977. 265-288.

————. *Light in August*. London: Vintage, 2005.

Melville, Herman. "Benito Cereno." Billy Budd *and* The Piazza Tales. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006. 151-235.

Robinson, Edwin Arlington. "Eros Turannos." *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*. Ed. David Lehman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Secondary Sources:

Aczel, Richard. "Hearing Voices in Narrative Texts." *New Literary History* Summer 1998: 467-500.

Adalaide, Morris. "First Persons Plural in Contemporary Feminist Fiction." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* Spring 1992: 11-29.

Alber, Jan, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Brian Richardson. "Unnatural Voices, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models." *Narrative* May 2010: 113-136.

Alber, Jan and Rüdiger Heinze, eds. *Unnatural Narratives – Unnatural Narratology*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011.

Allen, Dennis W. "Horror and Perverse Delight: Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'." *Modern Fiction Studies* Winter 1984: 685-696.

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. 127-186.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. London: Verso, 2006.

Assmann, Jan. “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity.” Translated by John Czaplicka. *New German Critique* Spring-Summer 1995: 125-133.

Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Translated by Christine van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

Bartlett, F. C. *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Benveniste, Émile. “Relationships of Person in the Verb.” *Problems in General Linguistics*. Translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971. 195-204.

————. “The Nature of Pronouns.” *Problems in General Linguistics*. Translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971. 217-222.

Blythe, Hal and Charlie Sweet. “A Rosey Response to Fick and Gold.” *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Oct. 2007: 108-114.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Bourdieu, Pierre. “A Theory of Reading in Practice.” *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. 322-329.

Brooks, Cleanth and Robert Penn Warren. “An Interpretation of ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *William Faulkner: “A Rose for Emily.”* Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 25-29.

Burg, Jennifer, Anne Boyle and Sheau-Dong Lang. “Using Constraint Logic Programming to Analyze the Chronology in ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *Computers and Humanities* 34 2000: 377-392.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Campbell, William Sanger. *The “We” Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.

Cash, W. J. *The Mind of the South*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Cohen, Anthony P. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Culler, Jonathan. "Omniscience." *Narrative* January 2004: 22-34.

Diengott, Nilli. "Narratee." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. London: Routledge, 2008. 338.

Dilworth, Thomas. "A Romance to Kill for: Homicidal Complicity in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"." *Studies in Short Fiction* 36.3 1999: 251-262.

Ferguson, James. *Faulkner's Short Fiction*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

Fetterley, Judith. "A Rose for 'A Rose for Emily'." *Literary Theory in Praxis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987. 270-277.

Fick, Thomas and Eva Gold. "'He liked Men': Homer, Homosexuality, and the Culture of Manhood in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'." *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Oct. 2007: 99-107-

Fludernik, Monika. "How Natural Is 'Unnatural Narratology'; or, What is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology?" *Narrative* Oct. 2012: 357-370.

Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Fulton, Dawn. "'Roman de Nous': The First Person Plural and Collective Identity in Martinique." *The French Review* May 2003: 1104-1114.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.

————. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Głowiński, Michał. "On the First-Person Novel." Translated by Rochelle Stone. *New Literary History* Autumn 1977: 103-114.

Going, Willam T. "Chronology in Teaching 'A Rose for Emily'." *A Rose for Emily*. Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 50-53.

Hagopian, John V., W. Gordon Cunliffe and Martin Dolch. "'A Rose for Emily'." *William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily."* Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 76-83.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. Translated by F. J. Ditter and V. Y. Ditter. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.

————. "The Social Frameworks of Memory." *On Collective Memory*. Ed. and translated by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. 35-189.

Handler, Richard. "Is 'Identity' a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?" *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*. Ed. John R. Gillis. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994. 27-40.

Hanks, William F. "Deixis." *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. London: Routledge, 2008. 99.

Happel, Nikolaus. "William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'." *William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily."* Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 68-72.

Harris, Paul A. "In Search of Dead Time: Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'." *KronoScope* 7 2007: 169-183.

Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Heller, Terry. "The Telltale Hair: A Critical Study of William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'." *Arizona Quarterly* Winter 1972: 301-318.

Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. Eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 1-14.

Holland, Norman N. "Fantasy and Defense in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'." *Hartford Studies in Literature* 1972: 1-35.

Howe, Irving. *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, 3rd Edition, Revised and Expanded. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Irwin-Zarecka, Iwona. *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008.

Jakobson, Roman. "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb." *Selected Writings II: Word and Language*. The Hague: Mouton, 1971. 130-147.

Kermode, Frank. "Secrets and Narrative Sequence." *On Narrative*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. 79-97.

Mace, Jennings. “Waterboarding Homer Barron.” *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Spring 2008: 123-128.

Mannheim, Karl. “The Problem of Generations.” *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Ed. Paul Kecskemeti. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972. 276-322.

Marcus, Amit. “A Contextual View of Narrative Fiction in the First Person Plural.” *Narrative* January 2008: 46-64.

Margolin, Uri. “The Doer and the Deed: Action as a Basis for Characterization in Narrative,” *Poetics Today* 1986: 205-225.

————. “Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology.” *Poetics Today* Fall 2000: 591-618.

McGlynn, Paul D. “The Chronology of “A Rose for Emily”.” *A Rose for Emily*. Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 90-92.

Moore, Gene M. “Of Time and its Mathematical Progression: Problems of Chronology in Faulkner’s ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *Studies in Short Fiction* Mar 1992: 195-204.

Morton, Clay. “‘A Rose for Emily’: Oral Plot, Typographic Story.” *Storytelling* Fall 2005: 7-18.

Nebeker, Helen E. “Emily's Rose of Love: Thematic Implications of Point of View in Faulkner’s ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* Mar. 1970: 3-13.

————. “Emily’s Rose of Love: A Postscript.” *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* Dec. 1970: 190-191.

————. “Chronology Revised.” *Studies in Short Fiction* Summer 1971: 471-473.

Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*.” Translated by Marc Roudebush. *Representations* Spring 1989: 7-24.

Olick, Jeffrey K. “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures.” *Sociological Theory* Nov. 1999: 333-348.

Palmer, Louis. “Bourgeois Blues: Class, Whiteness, and Southern Gothic in Early Faulkner and Caldwell.” *The Faulkner Journal* Fall 2006/Spring 2007: 120-139.

Perry, Menakhem. “Literary Dynamics: How the Order of the Text Creates its Meanings [With an Analysis of Faulkner’s ‘A Rose for Emily’].” *Poetics Today* Autumn 1979: 35-64, 311-361.

Prince, Gerald. *A Dictionary of Narratology*. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991.

Rakove, Jack N., Ed. *The Annotated U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

Reed, Joseph W., Jr. *Faulkner’s Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.

Richardson, Brian. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006.

————. “Plural Focalization, Singular Voices: Wandering Perspectives in ‘We’-Narration.” *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization: Modeling Mediation in Narrative*. Eds. Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid and Jörg Schönert. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 143-159.

————. “The Boundaries of Narrative and the Limits of Narratology,” a paper presented at *The 3rd European Narratology Network Conference*, March 2013, Paris, France.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd Edition. Routledge: New York, 2002.

Robertson, Alice. “The Ultimate Voyeur: The Communal Narrator of ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* Apr. 2006: 154-165.

Rodgers, Lawrence R. “‘We all said, “she will kill herself”’: The Narrator/Detective in William Faulkner’s ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *Ariel* 16.1 (1995): 117–129.

Romine, Scott. “Introduction.” *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999. 1-23.

Rossholm, Göran. “Fictionality and Information.” *Fictionality – Possibility – Reality*. Eds. Petr Koťátko, Martin Pokorný and Marcelo Sabatés. Bratislava: aleph, 2010. 19-31.

Salih, Sara. *Judith Butler*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Scherting, Jack. “Emily Grierson’s Oedipus Complex: Motif, Motive and Meaning in Faulkner’s ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *Studies in Short Fiction*, Sep. 1980: 397-405.

Schudson, Michael. “Dynamics of Distoriton in Collective Memory.” *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*. Ed. Daniel L. Schacter. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. 346-364.

Scruton, Roger. “The First Person Plural.” *Theorizing Nationalism*. Ed. Ronald Beiner. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999. 279-293.

Skei, Hans H. *William Faulkner: The Novelist as Short Story Writer*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985.

————. *Reading Faulkner’s Best Short Stories*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

Skinner, John L. “‘A Rose for Emily’: Against Interpretation.” *The Journal of Narrative Technique* Winter 1985: 42-51.

Stafford, T. J. “Tobe’s Significance in ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *William Faulkner: “A Rose for Emily.”* Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 87-89.

Sullivan, Ruth. “The Narrator in ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *The Journal of Narrative Technique* Sep. 1971: 159-178.

Sundquist, Eric J. *Faulkner: The House Divided*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

Thompson, Kenneth Payson. “From *The Short Story*.” *William Faulkner: “A Rose for Emily.”* Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 30-31.

Towner, Theresa M. and James B. Carothers. *Reading Faulkner:* Collected Stories. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006.

van Hoek, Karen. “Pronouns and Point of View: Cognitive Principles of Coreference.” *The New Psychology of Language: Cognitive and Functional Approaches to Language Structure Volume 2*. Ed. Michael Tomasello. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003. 169-194.

Walsh, Richard. “Who Is the Narrator?” *Poetics Today* Winter 1997: 495-513.

Wertsch, James V. *Voices of Collective Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

————. “Collective Memory and Narrative Templates.” *Social Research* Spring 2008: 133-156.

Wertsch, James V. and Henry L. Roediger III. “Collective Memory: Conceptual Foundations and Theoretical Approaches.” *Memory* Apr 2008: 318-326.

White, Hayden. “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality.” *On Narrative*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. 1-23.

Woodward, Robert H. “The Chronology of ‘A Rose for Emily’.” *A Rose for Emily*. Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. 84-86.

Zelizer, Barbie. “Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* Jun 1995: 214-239.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce poskytuje detailní analýzu nejslavnější povídky Williama Faulknera „Růže pro Emily.“ Zaměření práce je motivováno tím, co vidím jako ústřední téma povídky: komunita a její fungování. Tím, že posunuji důraz z hlavní postavy na vypravěče, chci „opravit“ způsob jakým je vnímána tato povídky, jejíž renomé je založeno především na „šokujícím“ či „gotickém“ aspektu.

Užitá metodologie je vybrána se zřetelem na navrhovanou interpretaci. K textu přistupuji skrze naratologii. K rozboru neobvyklého vypravěče „Růže pro Emily“ mi slouží naratologický koncept „kolektivního vyprávění.“ Dalším důležitým teoretickým rámcem použitým k interpretaci povídky je interdisciplinární koncept „kolektivní paměti“. Některé sociologické koncepty komunity jsou též rozebírány.

V úvodní kapitole se zabývám především konceptem „osoby“ ve vyprávění a argumentuji proti tradičnímu rozdělení na vyprávění v první a třetí osobě. V druhé kapitole poskytuji úvod do narativní techniky kolektivního vyprávění. Třetí kapitola je detailním čtením „Růže pro Emily“ v kontextu kolektivního vyprávění. Nejprve identifikuji vypravěče jako ve své podstatě kolektivního a vymezuji komunitu, ze které sestává tím, že se zabývám jeho epistemologickým ohraničením. Za druhé, strukturu vyprávění analyzuji jako „achronickou“ a spojuji ji s fungováním paměti. Za třetí, na základě předchozího docházím k závěru, že vyprávění „Růže pro Emily“ představuje akt kolektivního vzpomínání.

Ve čtvrté kapitole představuji koncept „kolektivní paměti“ a rozebírám „Růži pro Emily“ v jeho rámci. Tvrdím, že vyprávění představuje „silnou verzi“ kolektivní paměti. Také navrhuji motivaci pro vyprávění tohoto příběhu: komunita prochází krizí identity a vyprávění, které slouží ke zdůraznění jejích ideologických principů, funguje jako potvrzení hranic komunity a jejího obrazu o sobě. Závěrem se zabývám statusem Emily ve vztahu ke komunitě jako totemem a tabu.

Klíčová slova: William Faulkner, „Růže pro Emily“, naratologie, kolektivní vyprávění, kolektivní paměť, komunita, Jih USA

Abstract

This MA thesis provides a close analysis of William Faulkner's most famous short story, "A Rose for Emily." The focus the thesis is motivated by what I take to be the central theme of the short story: community and its functioning. Shifting the focus from the main character to the narrator, I want to "rectify" the perception of the short story which owns its renown largely to its "shocking" or "gothic" aspect.

The utilized methodology is chosen with respect to the proposed interpretation. The prism through which the text is approached is narratology. To account for the peculiar narrator of "A Rose for Emily," I use the narratological framework of "collective narrative" ("we narration"). Another important theoretical framework introduced in order to interpret the short story is the interdisciplinary concept of "collective memory." Some sociological conceptions of community are discussed.

In the introductory chapter, I mainly discuss the concept of person in narrative and argue against the traditional distinction between first and third person narratives. In the second chapter, I provide an introduction to the technique of collective narrative. The third chapter provides a close reading of "A Rose for Emily" in the context of collective narrative. Firstly, I identify the narrator as essentially collective and delimit the community from which it consists by considering its epistemological limits. Secondly, I analyze the structure of the narrative as "achronic" and relate it to the working of memory. Thirdly, based on the previous, I draw the conclusion that the narrative is a (re)presentation of an act of collective remembering.

In the fourth chapter, I introduce the concept of "collective memory" and consider "A Rose for Emily" in its context. I argue that the narrative presents the "strong version" of collective memory. I also suggest the motivation for telling the story: the community undergoes an identity crisis and the narrative which serves to foreground its ideological basis serves as a confirmation of the community's boundaries and its image of itself. Finally, I consider Emily's status in relation to the community as a totem and as a taboo.

Key words: William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily,” narratology, collective narrative, collective memory, community, US South