
Rose for Emily Book Analysis: The Struggles Emily Underwent Inside the Patriarchal Community

Rose for Emily

The book, "Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner is an account of the life of the main character, Emily Grierson and has been cited as one of the texts that present issues surrounding women struggle and oppression in South America. As a member of the antebellum southern aristocracy, Emily is prevented from getting married. Emily's father dies at the time she is approaching the age of 30, but she continues living her single life. She becomes friendly to Homer Barron, whom the townspeople think is interested in marrying her before they part ways. After Emily is buried, Homer's body is discovered in her bedroom.

Emily lives a life of struggle like other women in her society. She is always monitored, and that makes her portray naughty behaviors. Faulkner uses the fictional Jefferson society to show the oppression of women across the world and the reluctance of the authorities to protect them. The oppression of women that Faulkner presents in the story is similar to the one that led to the rise of feminism in various parts of the world. Feminists that showed interests of living their lives uncontrolled by the society met oppression and ridicule as they were seen as social misfits. Based on Faulkner's "Rose for Emily" and other sources, it is apparent that over the years, women in South America have endured patriarchal stereotypes, oppression, and mistreatment that have given rise to the feminist ideology.

Patriarchal beliefs

The lives of women in the society that Faulkner presents have been characterized by a struggle to fight patriarchal beliefs imposed by men and society. The struggle is against the oppression that is based on the patriarchal beliefs that men and the society hold against women. The beliefs make the society treat women with contempt in that women are considered to be incomplete if they are not married. Emily is subjected to these beliefs by the Jefferson society on various occasions. For instance, young men, with authority from the mayor monitor Emily and even learn that her house is stinking (Faulkner 309). They go ahead and spray chemicals in the house to kill the odor. Continuous monitoring of unmarried women is an indication of patriarchal beliefs that see such women as incomplete. Also, the townspeople stalk Emily when they see her with Homer since they want the two to get married (Faulkner 201). In the "Patriarchal Beliefs," Rawat asserts that society that imposes power relations that see women as weaker gender promotes stereotypes that oppress women (47). For instance, Rawat finds that education levels of women after empowerment has little results when society fails to address patriarchal beliefs that it holds against women (43). Patriarchal beliefs prevent women from realizing their potential since they are seen as competing with men.

Oppression from Men

Emily, like other women in South America, endures oppression from the men she interacts with in her life such as his father and lover. The oppression makes Emily's life a misery in that she

cannot make decisions on her own without involving her father. Since Emily cannot take action without the approval of her decisions, then she lives a caged life of an oppressed woman. Interestingly, the society expects Emily to abide by the rules that men in her life set. For instance, the townspeople feel pity for Emily when she seems to grow old without getting a suitor (Faulkner 203). As a result, they feel relieved when they see her with Homer. Emily's father oppresses her by denying her the freedom to get married and thereby she lives in isolation in her thirties (Faulkner 201). Similarly, Homer oppresses Emily by playing around with her feelings. He presents himself as a lover but ends up declaring himself a bachelor who is not interested in marriage (Faulkner 311). In the article, "Weak Men in William Faulkner's *Rose for Emily*," Kirchdorfer indicates that Emily interacts with men that are striving to establish their authority over her. According to Kirchdorfer, Homer is gay and cannot be sexually attracted to Emily, but he feels that he has authority over her (145). The oppression that Emily suffers is not a preserve of few women but a majority of them.

Oppression by Society

The Jefferson society oppresses Emily to make her feel under control. The conduct of the Jefferson society shows that it is retrogressive in the way it treats women. For instance, Emily's extended family sends her cousins to live with as they monitor her movements and how she spends time with Homer (Faulkner 112). Also, people in Jefferson town refer to Emily as a "hereditary obligation" and feel that she has to be tolerated since she does not behave in a manner that they approve (Faulkner 211). Therefore, the community acts as if it wants to control Emily. In the article, "All Eyes on Emily," Muslija notes that the townspeople refer to Emily as "Miss Emily" and want to know much about how she lives (13). The society wants to have control over Emily, and that is seen when they express their mixed reactions after they learn that she is seeing Homer.

Feminism

Faulkner uses the text "*A Rose for Emily*" to present his view of the feminist concept. The presentation of the account of the life of Emily as seen in the story portrays the author's feminist ideology. For instance, by portraying Emily as being oppressed, Faulkner seems to suggest that feminism is about the call to the end of oppression on the women. Faulkner portrays Emily as a feminist given the way she rises to defend herself against the patriarchal beliefs. Emily keeps her life out of the public limelight since she knows that the society constantly monitors her movements (Faulkner 257). Also, Faulkner seems to suggest that feminists are naughty but willing to participate in social welfare for the benefit of the society. Emily is naughty in that she does not behave to please the society. However, she is also involved in teaching art lessons to children as an indication of her commitment towards social welfare. Rawat suggests that psychological empowerment of women is the idea behind feminism and seeks to help women and the society address the issues of gender stereotypes and patriarchal beliefs (49). As Tsakitopoulou-Summers points out, Feminists are both men and women that embrace the idea that both genders need each other as they work towards realizing their abilities and contribute to the welfare of the community (43). Therefore, the feminist ideology is based on the need to address societal beliefs that try to oppress both men and women.

Conclusion

The women oppression in South America is well-amplified in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." Also, other texts show that such oppression is based on the patriarchal beliefs that the society holds about women. Emily's society keeps monitoring her and appears to want to force her to get married and that shows its patriarchy. Also, the oppression that Emily undergoes in the hands of his father is an indication that her society is determined to see women subjugated. Faulkner's idea of feminism is that feminists are individuals that strive to see the society achieve equity between men and women by addressing patriarchal and masculine stereotypes against women.

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