

A New Historical Interpretation of A Rose for Emily

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Abstract

A Rose for Emily is one of the most celebrated short stories by southern writer William Faulkner. Many scholars studied this short story with various critical approaches. However, previous studies on A Rose for Emily mainly focused on the study of feminism and symbolism. The theoretical framework of previous studies of feminism and symbolism merely adopted a one-way street to see the literary text against the historical background. This paper mainly analyzed A Rose for Emily from two perspectives - textuality of history and the historicity of texts in order to fully interpret the intertextuality between the history and the text in this short story. Accordingly, from the analysis of the textuality of history and the historicity of texts, the influence of the Civil War on the nation fashioning of the Old South will be uncovered. Significantly, this thesis will provide a two-way street to see the interaction between historical texts and literary texts.

Keywords

Old South; New Historicism; The Historicity of Texts and the Textuality of History; A Rose for Emily; Nation Fashioning.

1. Introduction

This paper is mainly about a New Historical interpretation of *A Rose for Emily*. An in-depth understanding of the background information of a story or a novel is quite crucial to the analysis process during the paper writing. *A Rose for Emily* is one of the most famous short stories by William Faulkner. This short story is so popular among the readers that many people in modern times still prefer to read it and study it with various interpretive approaches. *A Rose for Emily* is a short story of southern literature. This short story mainly tells about a story of the descendant of a southern aristocrat Emily who firmly stuck to her identity as a southern aristocrat. As a southern aristocrat woman, who was controlled and dominated by her identity of being a southern aristocrat. Emily's character was shaped under the influence of the Old South. After the death of Emily's father, Emily began to master her own life, and it was when the trouble began to come to Emily. Emily, as the descendant of a southern aristocrat, though attempted to cut off all the connection with the external environment, was confronted with a series of conflicts. Emily was in the conflicts with the citizens in town on the matter of taxes and bad smelling. Later, Emily fell in love with the northern man Homer Barron, but Homer Barron was unwilling to marry her. Finally, Emily killed Homer Barron with arsenic. In a word, New Historicism, a new critical approach, breaks down the boundaries of a single subject, providing researchers a new historical interpretation of a text. While the interpretation can help us probe into the simultaneous understanding of texts and histories and give us a new perspective to view a text from various perspectives - politics, history, economics, culture and so on. Richly textural resources paired with appropriate tools-New Historicism, can lead to effective general solutions for subtle texts and histories' classification, identification, and detection. Thus, the analysis of *A Rose for Emily* by using New Historicism will be presented in the following section.

2. The Analysis of A Rose for Emily from the Perspective of New Historicism

Through analysis under the theoretical framework of New Historicism, the nature of New Historicism is to interpret the interaction between historical texts and literary texts. Just as Wang pointed out that:

it can be said that it is in the network of text and context, politics and rights that new historicism finds its own method of cultural criticism, that is, the method of interaction between history and text. (Wang Yuechuan,2011:391)[1]

In order to see the interaction between history and texts, the novel *A Rose for Emily* will be interpreted from two perspectives, which are “the historicity of texts and the textuality of history” (Montrose, 1986:8)[2]. Each of them will be presented in detail in the following parts.

2.1. The Historicity of Text

“On the one hand, by its acknowledgement of the historicity of texts: the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing- not only those texts that critics study but also the texts in which they study them.” [2](Montrose, 1986:8) We can see Faulkner described many specific histories and the social embedment in *A Rose for Emily*. This short story was set in the background of the Civil War. With the defeat of the South in this war, the South had passively accepted the impacts of the North on every aspect of life. The histories of the South in the text are the product by the southern writer Faulkner. In other words, histories are chosen by Faulkner to compose his text in this short story. Through analysis under the theoretical framework of New Historicism, this study found out when this novel was given a look of the historicity of text, three main points could be manifested, which are the South after the Civil War, impact of the Industrial Revolution, male-dominated society, and black slavery in the Old South.

2.1.1. The South after the Civil War

In this short story - *A Rose for Emily*, its writing background was based on the real historical event- the Civil War; thus, it vividly depicts the great changes of the Old South after the Civil War. Just as Faulkner wrote in this short story:

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. (Faulkner, 2007:1)[3]

From the descriptions, these show us the traditional building style of the Old South, which belongs to traditional gothic architecture of the Old South. The traditional building was now contradicting with the newly built buildings. The great changes happened in the South after the Civil War, we can see that the style of building has changed a lot. We can see that the old building gothic style belongs to the culture of the Old South. This really shows us the decay of the Old South in its culture.

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. (Faulkner, 2007:1) [3]

From this sentence, we can see a vivid picture of the contrast between the Old South and the new South after the Civil War in the style of building, which also displays the tremendous change of the South after the Civil War. Although the decline of the northern aristocrat for a long time, the Old South still had a lasting impact on the South. We can notice the decay of the southern aristocrat Emily still preferred the old tradition, especially the old traditional gothic style house. In addition, we can see the great changes took place in the Old South:

The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the riggers, and the riggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks. (Faulkner, 2007:5)[3]

From the description above, we can see that after the Civil War, the connection between the North and the South was more frequent, and the northern men began to seek jobs in the South. It means that the Old South was greatly affected by the technology in the Northern. In addition, we can also tell that the position of the northern men is not equal to the southern men. In the eyes of southern men, they thought they were more dignified than the northern men. And it really shows us the intense contradiction and conflict between the South and the North did exist after the Civil War.

2.1.2. Impact of the Industrial Revolution

It is no doubt that we can see the impact of the Industrial Revolution in *A Rose for Emily*, for Faulkner witnessed the great changes took place in the South. Faulkner bore these in mind, noting these in this short story. Jiang (2017:144) regarded that "After the Civil War, the pattern in the South began to change from agricultural economy to commercial economy"[4]. We can clear see the industrial revolution greatly affected the economic structure of the Old South and the society from the following quote from *A rose for Emily*.

But garages and cotton gins had encroached had 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 the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson. (Faulkner, 2007:1) [3]

From this sentence, we can see that the traditional economy of the Old South was influenced by the Industrial Revolution. The advent of garages and cotton gins had changed the traditional economic structure, which had substitute for the labor-oriented economic, and substituted it with the mass machinery production. Apart from the economic structure of the Old South was affected by the Industrial Revolution, as well as the infrastructure of the Old South, that is, the process of urbanization.

The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father's death they began the work. (Faulkner, 2007:5)[3]

We can see that the Old South began to step into the process of urbanization and improve its infrastructure, paving the sidewalks to speed up the facilitation of the Industrial Revolution. From the specific description of industrialization and urbanization in this short story, we can see the impact of the Industrial Revolution at that time.

2.1.3. Male-dominated Society

In *A Rose for Emily*, we can notice the male-dominated elements in a lot of plots in this short story, specifically the male-dominated elements in a family, male-dominated elements in a relationship, as well as the male-dominated in the Old South. The following quote from *A Rose for Emily* will show the male dominance in a family.

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. (Faulkner, 2007:4) [3]

From the very sentence, we can see that Emily's father had the dominant power over Emily's relationship with men, he protected his daughter by strictly controlling her personal relationship. Emily's father holds the 'horsewhip' which symbolizes control and management; and her father stands in front, which reveals her father's leading role. Thus, this description implies Emily's father's control over his daughter and the dominance of southern patriarchy in family relations.

In this picture, horsewhip is one of the clues that indicate that Emily's father had the dominant power in family. We can also know that if we pay attention to the position of Emily and her father in this picture. The following quote from *A Rose for Emily* will show her father's supremacy.

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. (Faulkner, 2007:4) [3]

As for this sentence, we can see the contrast in the picture-inferior position of Emily and the paramount position of her father. Emily was in the background, and her father was in the front. This really shows the paramount position of Emily's father. In addition, 'horsewhip' is a word, which always has a close connection with power. More often than not, if one holds the horsewhip, and it will symbolize that he owns the dominant power, or that he is in the paramount position. So, we can tell that Emily is under the control of her father. In addition, the following quote from *A Rose for Emily* will show that the dominance of her father has a tremendously impact on Emily.

Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die. (Faulkner, 2007:7) [3]

From the depiction of this sentence, we can see that the influence of her father's dominant greatly affected Emily's life. Apart from the male-dominated elements in the family, we can also see the male-dominated power in the relationship between man and woman.

Both of the examples in *A Rose for Emily* above revealed that the dominant relationship between father and daughter. From the first sentence, we can see that Emily's father had the dominant power over Emily's relationship with men, he protected his daughter by strictly controlling her personal relationship. Emily's father holds the 'horsewhip' which symbolizes control and management; and her father stands in front, which reveals her father's leading role. Thus, this description implies Emily's father's control over his daughter and the dominance of southern patriarchy in family relations.

Apart from the dominant relationship between father and daughter mentioned above, we can also see the dominant relationship between man and woman in *A Rose for Emily*:

So The Next day we all said, “She will kill herself”; and we said it would be the best thing. When she had first began to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, “She will marry him.” Then we said, “She will persuade him yet,” because Homer himself had remarked—he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks’ Club—that he was not a marrying man. (Faulkner, 2007:6) [3]

In this sentence, we can know that Homer Barron liked men and was unwilling to marry Emily; under such condition, Emily had nothing to do with her relationship. Because the decisive power in a relationship depends on men, in Emily’s relationship, the decisive power namely the choice of Homer Barron. As for her own relationship, Emily had nothing to do but waited for Homer Barron’s action and decision. We can also see that men’s dominant power in a relationship. Both the depictions of the male-dominated elements in a family, male-dominated elements in a relationship in this short story vividly show us the Old South- a man- dominated society.

2.1.4. Black Slavery in the Old South

It is universally acknowledged that the American south plantation economy has close relations with the black slavery. Chi (2006:9) believed that “as the development of the cotton, it rose to be the dominant economic form in the society of the Old South. Based on such situation, the black slavery is the guarantee of the plantation”[5]. We can know that the black slavery is a long-lasting tradition of the Old South, which had a great impact on the economy and politician of the Old South in the following quote from *A Rose for Emily*.

Daily, monthly, yearly we watched the Negro grow grayer and more stooped, going in and out with the market basket. (Faulkner, 2007:8) [3]

In this short story, we can also see that Miss Emily kept a black slave Tobe as a steward for her, which revealed that the Old South had the tradition of keeping black slaves. The black slavery is greatly rooted in the stage of the Old South. As Lin (2014:142) said that “slavery was widely accepted in the South, the Black were not treated the same, but domestic servants were. Slaves could be rented, and worse still, may be in a whole factory the workers were the Black” [6]. So, the black slave Tobe in this short story uncovered that the black slavery was a unique symbol of the Old South.

2.2. The Textuality of History

From the historicity of texts introduced above, we can grasp a certain culture-specific under the perspective of the historicity of text. And as mentioned before that historicity of texts and the textuality of history is a two-way street of New Historicism. So, the section will introduce the textuality of history. Just as Montrose has said,

On the other hand, by its acknowledgement of the textuality of history: the unavailability of a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, that has not already been mediated by the surviving texts of the society in question-those ‘document’ that historians construe in their own texts, called ‘histories’, histories that necessarily but always incompletely construct the ‘History’ to which they offer access. (Montrose, 1986:9)

The textuality of history refers to literary fictionality and reconstruction of the history by a text. And it means that we cannot understand the history clearly and entirely by the trace that preserved in the written forms.

However, texts tend to involve in the literary fictionality and reconstruction of the history, and the preservation of histories in the text reflect the incomplete histories. Therefore, we can see *A Rose for Emily* is not about a full and authentic past, but a fictional story that offers reader access to the histories of the Old South. As the failure of the Old South in the Civil War, the Old South seemed to come to an end. However, it struggled to live more than ever before. The bygones were the social elements and economic elements of the Old South, and the culture and history of the Old South were preserved. On the one hand, after the Civil War, the economy of the North began to permeate through and appropriate the economy in the South. The economic foundation of the Old South and the social structure of the squire aristocratic was swayed, as well as the collapse of the traditional morality and values. On the other hand, these concepts deeply root into the heart of the southern people. In addition, Yu (2006:113) viewed that "fictionality of their pursuit of the Old South became the substitute of their spirit and the perfect getaway"[7]. In other words, *A Rose for Emily* is not a documentary writing about detail histories, but a story about expressing the transition of the Old South. Finally, Faulkner made it with the fictionality in this story. This study also found out when this novel was given a look of the textuality of history, four main points could be manifested, which are negotiation between powers, consolidation of the Old South, submission to the powers, and disappearance after the Civil War. From these aspects, we can see that these "small histories" seem to be erased or wiped from the history book. On the contrary, by the textuality of history, we can see the texts were gravely affected by the specific historical events of the Old South. Also, we can see some "small history" in a novel and other non-historical texts.

2.2.1. Negotiation between Powers

In *A Rose for Emily*, we can see many contradictions and conflicts, such as the conflicts between Emily and her father, between Emily and Homer Barron, and between Emily and the residents in Jefferson. Meanwhile, we can see such conflicts between the powers, and contradictions embodied the negotiation between powers. In this short story, there exists the negotiation between the Old South and the North, and between the Old South and the "New" South:

The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the riggers, and the riggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks. Pretty soon he knew everybody in town. Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be in the center of the group. (Faulkner, 2007:5) [3]

The newly come northern men were scolded by the southern boys, but later they were in a harmonious environment. This change indicated that the South and the North were in the process of negotiation, trying to keep the peacefulness. On the other hand, we can see the negotiation between the male-dominated power and women. When Emily's father was alive, Emily had nothing to do with her relationship, but to obey her father's will. It was when her father was dead, Emily began to change the situation and found her lover Homer Barron. We can know that Emily was in the negotiation with her father and she knew her words were powerless, so she tried to negotiate with her father in silence; when her father died, she successfully made the negotiation. Besides, we can notice the negotiation between the Old South and the 'New' South in *A Rose for Emily*:

When the next generation, which its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little

dissatisfaction. (Faulkner, 2007:1) [3]

New mayors and aldermen were not satisfied with the edict of remitting Emily's taxes. So, they sent a deputation to pay a visit to Emily and tried to tax Emily. "See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson". (Faulkner, 2007:2) [3] We can see the conflict between Emily and the new generation mayors and aldermen. "Dammit, sir," Judge Stevens said, "...will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?" (Faulkner, 2007:3) [3] Also, we can see the bad smelling caused trouble to citizens and caused conflict between Emily and the citizens in the town. Despite the conflicts did existed, Emily, citizens, and the new generation mayors and aldermen tried to achieve a harmonious environment by negotiation. From the conflict of taxes, we can see new generation mayors and aldermen finally made the negotiation-Emily gave lessons in china-painting for daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries, and her taxes was remitted. "So SHE vanquished them, horse and foot" .(Faulkner, 2007:3) [3]As for the bad smelling, it went away a week or two after four men crept quietly across Emily's lawn. Miss Emily found the neighbor noticed the smell and did some acts to get rid of the bad smelling. From there, we can see Emily tried to negotiate with the neighbor, keeping a harmonious environment.

By that time it was a cabal, and we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins. (Faulkner, 2007:7) [3]

We previously knew that the citizens in the town stayed in the way of Emily's love, and later we can see that they are in favor of this relationship and they helped Emily to circumvent Emily's cousins. We can see the attitude changed in the citizens in town-from opposition to approval on Emily's relation, which greatly displays the process of negotiation between Emily and the citizens in town.

As mentioned above, we can see that the residents in town respected Emily, and Emily and residents in town they compromised with each other, that is, the negotiation between them. Throughout all the descriptions of negotiation in the character Emily-the embodiment of the Old South, Faulkner wanted to reveal the dilemma of the Old South at that time. These negotiations really show us that the Old South was challenged at that time for the "New" South and the North had been exerting a great impact on the Old South. We can also see how hard the situation the Old South was, and it was struggling on the brink of elimination.

2.2.2. Consolidation of the Old South

Shi and Wang (2008:52) believed that "Consolidation mainly refers to the ideological method to the consolidation of the ruling order"[7]. In *A Rose for Emily*, we can figure out the consolidation of the Old South from the acts Emily did to stick to her identity as a northern aristocrat, preserving the traditions of the Old South. First of all, Emily's house is such a kind of traditional gothic architecture that belongs to the typical architectural style of the Old South. We can tell that Emily as a northern aristocrat, she still made herself live the life as she led in the old times. The following quote from *A Rose for Emily* will show how Emily stuck to her identity of southern aristocrat in the way she dressed.

They rose when she entered—a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. (Faulkner, 2007:2) [3]

We can see Emily still wore the luxuries to show her identity as a southern aristocrat. Also, these luxuries also showed the illustrious southern aristocrat. Both the housing space and the used items of Emily show that the declining aristocracy of the Old South was gradually eliminated by history. Even though the southern aristocrat was decay, Emily was still unwilling to accept the truth, she still wore a gold chain and used the golden ebony cane. Those belongings

of Emily's really show the status of a northern noble, as well as the scenery of the bygone northern aristocrat. Most importantly, when Emily knew the impossible love between her and Homer Barron, Emily finally decided to do something. Xu (2014:52) viewed that "When she found that Homer did not intend to marry her, she poisoned him with arsenic, and she thought that only in this way can retain her love and keep the reputation"[8]. In addition, women's chastity is of great importance, which is not only concerned with the reputation of woman individual, but her family and her class. To defend her aristocrat reputation and keep the love, Emily killed Homer Barron with arsenic. This act also indicated the failure of the negotiation between powers. We can see that though the Old South was decay, it still had a long-term influence on the South.

2.2.3. Submission to the Powers

Wang (2011:396) pointed out that "this kind of rebellious right challenges authority and the strong hatred to the hierarchy is often shown in the way of surface submission"[1]. Generally speaking, we can see Emily in a submissive under the powers, and Emily is always in the submissive positions both in her family and her relationship. First, we know that Emily's father controlled her relationship, and protected her. Under such situation, Emily had nothing to do with her father's strict control, but to obey her father. Apart from the submission to her father, there also existed the submission to her relationship with Homer Barron. In the relationship between Emily and Homer Barron, Emily knew that herself was in a failed relationship. She had nothing to do to dominate, or even change this situation, for women were not decisive and dominant in a relationship.

Given that Emily knew that Homer Barron liked men and also knew that he was not serious with this relationship, Emily just waited for the decision of Homer Barron. From there, we can tell that women had no rights or power in that society in the Old South. From here we can see the submission in Emily to the relationship between man and woman. In addition, we can see that from the fictionality of *A Rose for Emily*, it conveys us the submissive position of women in the society of the Old South. Apart from the submissive of the Old South to the "New" one, we can also see the submissive of the new southern generation to the Old southern generation.

2.2.4. Disappearance after the Civil War

In *A Rose for Emily*, we can tell that the disappearance of the Negro is the embodiment of the disappearance of the Old South after the Civil War in the following quote from *A Rose for Emily*.

THE NEGRO met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their husband, 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. (Faulkner, 2007:8) [3]

When Emily died, her steward-the Negro Tobe disappeared too. As we all know that the black slavery was deeply rooted in the society of the Old South, and black slavery was the foundation of the economy of the Old South. From the text mentioned above, we can tell that the disappearance of the Negro and the death of Emily indicated that the Old South came to an end, as well as the old ruling order of the Old South behind Emily.

According to the history, it merely noted down the divergences between the South and the North, and how these divergences turned into contradiction. In addition, we can also know that how the contradiction became increasingly fierce and irreversible by a series of "big histories" in this history book. From the denouncement on *Liberator* by Garrison in the North, we can see the anti-slavery movement was growing in the North. From the strong disagreements of the Fugitive Slave Law in *Compromise of 1850* by the North citizens, we can know that the North citizens was trying to protect law at that time. Besides, the North passed Personal Liberty Law

and abolished Fugitive Slave Law latter, in order to protect the fugitive slaves from being captured by the state officials. The *Kansas Nebraska Act* allowed the opening discussion about the slavery right, which caused a great disturbance: northerners condemned this act for its legalization of keeping the slavery, while southerners demanded the North the realization of the recognition of the rights slavery on a national scale. In addition, Lincoln wanted the north and the south in a harmonious situation, so he did not object to the constitutional amendment's prohibition of federal intervention in the southern states to keep slaves at that time. However, the North owned the Emigrant Aid Society and the South owned the Blue Lodge, these two organizations at last led to the Bleeding Kansas event. Furthermore, these acts and events all caused tension between the South and the North. In view of the growing abolitionist movement in the North, the South feared that abolishing slavery in the North would jeopardize the livelihood of the South and sought to secede from the union for self-preservation. The North feared that the South would spread slavery throughout the country.

From these acts and big events, we can see historians tended to conceal the attempts that made by the Old South. In the history, we can see the historians prefer to note down many rightful actions of the North, thus we can also tell that the justice of the North and the injustice noted in the history. However, the negotiation, consolidation, subversion, and disappearance of the Old South mentioned above in *A Rose for Emily* were missing from history books. These manifested in this short story- *A Rose for Emily*, gave us a look of how the Old South was doomed to decline. From these aspects, we can see the Old South was also making its efforts, and the Old South had its positive side in the course of history. The textuality of history also means that historical books are more or less inconsistent with historical facts due to the angle of the compiler and the historian. More often than not, we have no access to the "small history" in the historical books. In other words, historical books usually ignore or overlook the "small history", and merely note down the "big history" in it. And as we all know that Emily and the town Jefferson were not really exist in the history of America, and we cannot find those recordings in the history. But the texts were greatly influenced by the specific history or the experiences of the writer. Just as Zhu (2010:42) pointed out that "any big histories we read were just composed by persons after selecting and erasing some materials. And these persons who composed history also have their own understanding and various perspectives and who were also controlled by their own societies" [9].

On the contrary, we can see some "small history" by the look of the textuality of history. We can find out that the historical book may not give readers a complete view of history, but it is actually by the look of the textuality of history we can see the "small history" in a non-historical form, namely, the literary texts. So, by the fictional events in *A Rose for Emily*, we can notice that Faulkner wanted to uncover the real South at that time to the readers. The Old South had its positive side during the history. The Old South also made its efforts trying to negotiate and trying to keep the equilibrium of the North and South, while the historical texts tried to erase or conceal its efforts, and few descriptions about the efforts made by the Old South at that time. Thus, we can seek for "small history" in the novels and other non-historical texts as a supplement on an in-depth understanding of history.

3. Nation Fashioning on the Old South

As the analysis from two perspectives-the historicity of texts and the textuality of history above, we can see the culture-specific histories from the perspective of the historicity of texts, and we can see how the fictionality of the texts to compose the history from the perspective of the textuality of history. Thus, under the analysis of the combination of this two-way street theoretical framework of New Historicism, we can also see the nation fashioning on the Old South by the self-fashioning of the southern aristocrat Emily. Just as Greenblatt said,

Of course, there is some absurdity in so bald a pronouncement of the obvious: after all, there are always selves-a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires-and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity. (Greenblatt,1980:1) [10]

Undoubtedly, the description of a person always expresses the thoughts of the writer. By deliberately shaping the characteristics of a person, a writer can express his or her personal feelings and emotions towards a specific kind of people or a group or a nation they belong to. Zhang (2004:6) believed that “people in literary activities are historical people and aesthetic people, as well as the history of literary nature” [11]. In *A Rose for Emily*, Faulkner portrayed the characteristics of Emily in order to display how her characteristics were influenced by the Old South and the Old South how to shape her characteristics as well. Thus, by depicting the characters of southern aristocrat Emily, this short story also achieved the nation fashioning of the Old South. Also, by the portraying of the fictional character Emily, Faulkner tried to retrospect and refashion the real Old South at that time and expressed his great memory and emotion towards the Old South.

3.1. Dignity Revealed from the Analysis of New Historicism

It is no doubt that Emily was a descendant of a southern aristocrat. So, we can tell that Emily had the nobleness in her to be dignified in the following quote from *A Rose for Emily*.

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town. (Faulkner, 2007:1) [3]

To be dignified is the symbol of a southern aristocrat, we can see that Emily as a descendant of a southern aristocrat, still in high places in Jefferson, and the dignified in her had been long even though it had been a long time since the decay of the Old South. By describing the dignified in Emily, Faulkner also wants to describe the nobility of the Old South and to achieve the goal of cherishing the memory of the Old South- the dignity of the Old South in his mind, as well as the precious position of the Old South in his mind. After all, the depicting of the dignified in Emily expresses the heavy position of the Old South in Faulkner's mind. Emily was greatly influenced by her identity southern aristocrat, and the Faulkner was greatly affected by his memory to the Old South. In the eyes of Faulkner, the Old South was always glorious. Besides, the fashioning of 'dignity' has something to do with the past glorious Old South, for they were lived in opulent circumstances and they rested content with their agricultural production based on the rural resources. In addition, the social hierarchy in the Old South dominantly depended on the color of their skin, not depended on whether they were rich or not. It means that all white people, rich or poor, belong to the upper class and were treated with great respect in the Old South.

3.2. Conservativeness and Obstinateness Revealed from the Analysis of New Historicism

From *A Rose for Emily*, we can tell Emily was a typically conservative and obstinate northern aristocrat in some aspects. From the previous analysis, we can know that Emily was too conservative and obstinate to accept the truth that the decay of the southern aristocrat. Emily refused to accept the convenient tools that the Industrial Revolution brought to the Old South, such as cotton wagons, gasoline. Moreover, Emily refused to move to the emerging industrial area, but persisted to live in that traditional house, and adhered to the tradition of the Old South.

A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in

a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer
went out at all. (Faulkner, 2007:1) [3]

From this sentence, we can know that Emily refused to go out and isolated herself in her house, which shows that she refused to accept the change of the Old South; she used the outdated traditional material for writing, which also indicated her denial to the decay of the Old South as well.

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. (Faulkner, 2007:8) [3]

We can also see that Emily also refused to accept the new things, and she always stuck to the old ways. Xu (2014:53) believed that “Emily tried to use her subjective will to subvert the external objective time” [8]. By cutting off all the connections of the outside world, Emily wanted to preserve the old lifestyle of the Old South and to preserve bygone glory of the Old South in her own traditional gothic style building as well. The description of conservative and obstinate in Emily, to some extent, conveys Faulkner’s criticism towards the Old South’s conservative and obstinate. The conservative and obstinate in Emily implied that the conservative and obstinate of the Old South that made the tragedy of the Old South. Besides, the conservative and obstinate also referred to Old South’s persistence in keeping slavery.

3.3. Subversion Revealed from the Analysis of New Historicism

Shi and Wang (2008:13) viewed that “an attempt to stabilize order may become an act of subverting the order” [7]. In *A Rose for Emily*, Jefferson was a town of southern American. A town was greatly influenced by the Industrial Revolution. The mainstream culture in the Old South had enormously changed. Under such change, Emily began her subversion against mainstream culture, tradition and unshakable power. Just as Greenblatt (1980:9) said that,

Self-fashioning for such figures involves submission to an absolute
power or authority situated at least partially outside the self-God, a
sacred book, an institution such as church, court, colonial or military
administration. [10]

It is clear that there existed submission in Emily. Emily was unwilling to accept the changes that the industrial revolution brought to the Old South, while most people in Jefferson accepted the changes. Emily confined herself in her house, and never stepped out her house to deny the change. Emily used her solo isolation with the outside world, trying to subvert this change. This relationship between south woman Emily and north man Homer Barron was not acceptable in that society of the Old South.

However, we can see that no matter how hard the residents in Jefferson tried to interference this relationship, Emily still pursued her love stiffly and bravely. Despite the objection of the citizens in the town, Emily still stuck to her love. From the acts of Emily, we can see Emily’s subversion against mainstream culture and tradition. Apart from the subversion against the mainstream culture and tradition, we can also see Emily’s subversion against unshakeable power. In *A Rose for Emily*, the power here refers to the dominant power of her father, and her lover. We know that Emily is under the control of her father in family and of her lover in the relationship. After the long control from both family and relationship, we can see Emily did began to turn subversive. Emily’s father disposed and instilled the passive position of women to Emily. However, after the death of Emily’s father, Emily disobeyed her father’s will, and fall in love a north man Homer Barron. On the other hand, although she knew Homer Barron would

not marry her, she still chose to follow her heart. It is evident that in the relationship between Emily and Homer Barron, Emily against the tradition, for women had no right to choose her own life. Shi and Wang (2008:127) believed that “in the representation of the past, these writers gradually come to realize that the defect of tradition is that it wants to defeat time, it wants to defeat temporal transience through eternity. Self-fashioning lies in how to retain the glory of the past and get rid of the repeated fate in the southern context” [7]. And at last we can see that when Emily knew the impossible for her to keep Homer Barron, Emily bought some poison and killed Homer Barron:

...but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust. (Faulkner, 2007:9) [3]

From there, we can know that Emily killed her lover Homer Barron, keeping his dead body in one room in that region above stairs and trying to protect her love in an extreme way. By doing this, Emily wanted to keep her lover Homer Barron to be with her forever, trying to defeat temporal transience through eternity. Shi and Wang (2008:123) have said that “southern writers attempt to subvert the historic images of the Old South” [7]. In addition, the fashioning of the ‘subversion’ also reflected the divergence between the North and the South on the issue of slavery, and the differences between the South and the North. Under the great disagreement between the North and the South, the situation between the North and the South became irreconcilable at last, and the war became inevitable, so as the subversion of the Old South.

We can see that by depicting the subversion of a descendant of southern aristocrat Emily, Faulkner tried to subvert the tragic history of the Old South. Faulkner wanted to reconstruct and refashion the real Old South in his short story.

4. Conclusion

This paper has implemented the study of New Historicism on *A Rose for Emily*. The historicity of texts and the textuality of history of this short story has been analyzed by using New Historicism. From the perspective of the historicity of text to view this text, we can see there are many specific histories contained in this short story - the South after the Civil War, the impact of the Industrial Revolution, male-dominated society, and black slavery in the Old South. These all reflect the economy, political, history of the Old South at that time. From the perspective of textuality of history, we found out that the fictionality and reconstruction of the history by this text. From the perspective of the textuality of history, we can see that these “small histories” seem to be erased or wiped from the history book. On the contrary, by the textuality of history, we can see the texts were gravely affected by the specific historical events of the Old South. Thus, we can seek for “small history” in the novels and other non-historical texts as a supplement on an in-depth understanding of history.

Importantly, by the portraying the fictional events and stories of Emily’s in this text, we found that Faulkner tried to reveal the ideology, power, and social order of the Old South at that time in the text. Besides, under the analysis from the perspective of the historicity of texts and the textuality of history, we can also see Faulkner’s attempt - by the self-fashioning of Emily to achieve the nation fashioning of the Old South.

Most importantly, the personalities of Emily were fashioned from the peak to the decline of the Old South, such as dignified, conservative and obstinate, and subversive. These characters vividly show that Emily’s personality was greatly affected by the impact of the Civil War.

Consequently, with the process of the decline of the Old South, we can see the personality changed in Emily. Under the new historical interpretation, we can grasp that how this short story participates in the process to retrospect and refashion the Old South, and that Faulkner's attempt to subvert the historic image of the Old South. "From the perspective of new historicism, southern literature does not 'reflect' histories, but produces another kind of historical discourse". By doing so, Faulkner tried to provide a particular view for readers – if the Old South was the dominant power.

We can, therefore, draw a conclusion that the "rose" in the title of this short story expresses Faulkner's great emotion and memory towards the embodiment and fictionality of the Old South-Emily. The Old South is dignified and subversive, which represents the positive upward force. Though Faulkner was passionate about the Old South, he also expressed the criticism towards the Old South. Through the description of the story of Emily, Faulkner revealed that it was its conservative and obstinate that finally resulted in the decline of the Old South. Consequently, the decline of the Old South was predetermined by its environment and history at that time. In *A Rose for Emily*, Faulkner cared about the "small history" in the course of the Civil War.

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