



**AN ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST CRITICISM AND
DESCRIPTION OF THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE
MULTI-LEVEL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIETY IN THE SELECTED
WORK *A ROSE FOR EMILY* BY WILLIAM FAULKNER**

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Abstract:

This paper delves into the realm of feminist criticism and explores the portrayal of women in traditional society through a close examination of William Faulkner's renowned short story, "A Rose for Emily." The study aims to shed light on the patriarchal constructs that shaped women's roles and identities during the time the story was set. Drawing upon feminist literary theory, the research analyzes the ways in which Faulkner depicts the female character in "A Rose for Emily." Emily's life becomes a symbol of the oppression and control exerted on women in the patriarchal society depicted in the story. Using textual evidence and critical analysis, the paper explores the themes of oppression, control, and the limited agency granted to women in the traditional Southern society. Furthermore, the research examines the impact of societal norms on the character's choices, relationships, and sense of self. Through a comprehensive examination of the selected work, this research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on feminist criticism and the portrayal of women in traditional societies. By delving into the complexities of gender dynamics and societal expectations, it seeks to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies and the ways in which literature reflects and perpetuates these structures.

Keywords: "A Rose for Emily", feminist criticism, portrayal of women, traditional society, William Faulkner

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Literature, derived from the Latin word "*literature*" meaning "*writing formed with letters*", is a vast and captivating realm of human artistic expression. It encompasses a rich tapestry of written works, including poetry, prose, drama, fiction, nonfiction, and even journalism and song (Onebunne, 2023). Literature holds a significant place in society, serving as a means to convey meaning, evoke emotions, and preserve and transmit knowledge.

Literature plays a crucial role in promoting social change and awareness. It serves as a mirror that reflects the life and culture of society, allowing us to understand the history, beliefs, and values of mankind (Kardinamary, 2022). Through narrative, literature has the power to bring about positive change by engaging individuals and communities, enabling communication and fostering social and cultural transformation (Assmann *et al.*, 2023). By studying select short stories, literature can be seen as an instrument of social change, offering insights into the continuous process of societal transformation (Sahu, 2022). Additionally, literature, particularly positive media representation and creative works, can contribute to preventing violence against women by challenging gendered assumptions and practices and promoting bystander intervention (Pierre-Robertson, 2021). Moreover, contemporary literature, such as novels, reflects social progress and changes experienced by marginalized sections of society, highlighting the role of education in empowering individuals and promoting social acceptance (Bhuvanewari, 2022).

Furthermore, literature contributes to personal feelings by engaging readers in fictional worlds, fostering empathy, and manipulating emotions through rhetorical techniques (Hogan and Irish, 2022). Through literature, individuals can understand and evaluate their own emotions, leading to a better understanding of their uniqueness and distinguishing themselves from others (Lived and Ridor-Unciano, 2022). Reading literary works enables individuals to explore many viewpoints, empathize with characters, and feel a variety of emotions. These experiences can elicit strong feelings and promote personal development. Additionally, the study of literature can provide insights into the ways in which emotions are processed and expressed, offering principles for understanding and interpreting emotions (Johansen, 2010). Literature can also eliminate stereotypes, promote empathy, cultivate intercultural understanding, and contribute to the development of healthy interpersonal relationships (Sharma, 2022). Literature has the power to transport us, challenge our perspectives, and reflect the complexities of the human experience. However, through the ages, one crucial lens has often been obscured: the lens of feminism. Enter feminist criticism, a vibrant and dynamic approach to analyzing literature that unveils the intricate interplay between gender, power, and representation. At its core, feminist criticism delves into the portrayal of gender within literary works. This is a diverse and multifaceted approach that aims to analyze and

interpret literary texts through the lens of feminist theories. By examining the portrayal of women in literary works, feminist criticism aims to highlight and critique gender biases, such as the traditional domestication of women and the reinforcement of gender norms in storytelling (Meng, 2022). It meticulously examines how women and men are depicted, scrutinizes the societal roles assigned to them, and critically interrogates the power dynamics that operate within the narrative. One of the vital contributions of feminist criticism lies in its tireless efforts to excavate the often-buried voices of female writers. Throughout history, women's voices have been systematically silenced or relegated to the fringes of literary canons traditionally dominated by male voices. Feminist criticism actively seeks to rediscover and celebrate the works of these women, amplifying their narratives and enriching our understanding of the literary landscape. The core of feminist criticism lies in its commitment to uncovering the contingencies of gender as a cultural and political construct, and its aim to promote gender equality and challenge patriarchal norms and structures (Mohanlal *et al.*, 2010).

William Faulkner's haunting tale, "A Rose for Emily", becomes even more intricate when examined through the lens of feminist criticism. This approach reveals the story's subtle commentary on societal expectations, patriarchal control, and the struggle for agency, particularly for women like Emily Grierson. One of the most striking aspects of the story from a feminist perspective is the portrayal of Emily's entrapment within the confines of her Southern society. The town's rigid expectations for women, particularly those of Emily's social class, are evident in the gossip surrounding her unmarried status and her relationship with Homer Barron. These societal pressures shape Emily's life, limiting her choices and ultimately contributing to her tragic isolation. Emily's story is not simply one of victimhood. Feminist critics also recognize her acts of defiance against societal constraints. Her refusal to conform to the expectations of marriage and motherhood can be seen as an act of rebellion against the patriarchal system. Additionally, her decision to keep Homer's body can be interpreted as a desperate attempt to maintain a sense of control and autonomy in a life where she has had little agency. The story offers a glimpse into the struggles faced by women in a specific historical context.

The portrayal of women in literature has been a subject of rich and ongoing debate within literary criticism. Throughout history, literary works often reflected the social norms and expectations of their periods, providing insight into the prevailing views on gender roles and power dynamics. The impact of gender on literature is also examined, with discussions on gender roles and gender discrimination in closing the gender gap (Srilakshmi, 2023). Feminist criticism emerged as a powerful analytical tool to unveil these often-unacknowledged aspects of literary works and challenge the traditional interpretations of female characters.

This study investigates the representation of women in William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily". Set in the American South during a period of significant societal transition, the story provides a compelling case for examining gender portrayals within

a complex, multi-layered society. Feminist theory is integral to the analysis, offering a critical lens to deconstruct the various levels of female representation within the narrative.

1.2. Aims of the study

This study aims to delve into William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" through the insightful lens of feminist criticism; therefore, it can investigate the portrayal of women in traditional society as described through the feminist criticism in selected work. This first aim focuses on dissecting the story's portrayal of women through the various perspectives offered by feminist criticism. This involves analyzing how the text reflects or challenges societal expectations, power dynamics, and limitations placed upon female characters within a specific historical context. Examining different branches of feminist criticism can enrich the analysis by exploring the psychological and socio-economic factors shaping the experiences of women in the story. Building upon the previous aim, this second aim seeks to unveil the constraints women face within the traditional society. Examining how societal expectations, gender roles, and patriarchal structures limit their autonomy and opportunities is crucial. By analyzing the narrative, we can also explore how women resist these constraints, whether through subtle acts of defiance, subversion of expectations, or attempts to carve out spaces of agency within the confines of their societal roles.

By pursuing these refined aims, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation within feminist literary criticism. Through the nuanced analysis of "A Rose for Emily", we can gain a deeper understanding of how gender dynamics are intertwined with tradition, revealing the challenges and resilience of women within the story's specific historical and social context.

1.3. Research questions

Throughout the research process, this study attempts to answer two questions:

- 1) How is the feminist criticism analyzed in "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner?
- 2) How is the portrayal of women in traditional society described through the feminist criticism in selected work?

1.4. Significance of the study

William Faulkner's haunting tale, "A Rose for Emily", transcends its captivating narrative to offer a window into the complexities of gender roles and societal expectations. This study delves into William Faulkner's work, employing a feminist lens to analyze the portrayal of women and illuminate their significance within the story's historical and cultural context. The significance of this study lies not only in its contribution to the understanding of "A Rose for Emily" but also in its broader implications for feminist literary criticism and societal awareness.

Even though the story itself holds literary merit, its analysis through a feminist lens offers an invaluable learning experience for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. EFL students often come from diverse cultural backgrounds with unique societal structures and expectations. Delving into the historical context of “A Rose for Emily” and the portrayal of women within it provides a window into a different culture and historical period. This fosters cultural awareness and appreciation for diverse viewpoints, a crucial aspect of language learning. This approach equips students with valuable tools to dissect complex texts and formulate their own interpretations, enhancing their critical thinking and analytical abilities which are essential for academic success in any language. Besides, this fosters intellectual curiosity and encourages students to consider the complexities of a narrative beyond traditional interpretations. They may employ this result to logically interpret and sharpen their critical thinking skills in other works that use feminist criticism.

1.5. Scope of the study

To ensure that the researcher's limited knowledge and experience do not cause the research process to stray far removed from the study's objectives, this thesis only focuses on the feminist criticism and the portrayal of women in traditional society described through the selected work “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner. This research employs feminist critical frameworks to dissect the portrayal of female characters within the story. This involves analyzing how the text reflects or challenges societal expectations, power dynamics, and limitations specific to women in the narrative. Parallel to this, this analysis will be confined to the traditional society depicted in the story. This specific historical and cultural context plays a crucial role in shaping the lives and experiences of women in the narrative. By focusing on this context, researchers aim to gain a deeper understanding of the constraints and opportunities afforded to women within a specific societal structure.

2. Literature review and detailed analysis of “A Rose for Emily”

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1 Feminist criticism in literature

In literature, women are portrayed as subservient due to societal norms, long-standing traditions and laws, superstition, closed-eye religious dogmatism, faradism, and so forth (Rana & Rashid, 2020). Feminist criticism is a literary criticism approach that uses feminist principles and ideology to analyze and critique literature. It aims to explore how literature portrays narratives of male domination and to uncover the economic, social, political, and psychological forces embedded within literature (Borkfelt, 2022). It is rooted in feminist theory and seeks to challenge the dominance of patriarchal narratives in literature. Feminist literary criticism emerged as a response to the historical exclusion of women's voices in literature. It seeks to question and dismantle the patriarchal norms

that have long dominated literary works. By examining the portrayal of female characters, feminist critics challenge the male-centered perspective and aim to give voice to women's experiences. Feminist criticism acknowledges the differences between male and female characters in literary works, but also emphasizes the readiness and potential ability of women to establish interpersonal communication and recognize it as a symbol of compassion, empathy, and kindness (Awais, 2021). They also question the traditional literary canon, advocating for a broader inclusion of diverse voices and narratives. Feminist critics aim to subvert and challenge societal expectations by highlighting the harmful effects of gender stereotypes perpetuated in literature. By analyzing how women are represented as passive, weak, or overly sexualized objects, feminist critics expose the ways in which these portrayals reinforce and perpetuate gender inequalities. By doing so, they contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gender and its intersection with other identities such as race, class, and sexuality. By delving into concepts such as gender representation, patriarchy, agency, and intersectionality, feminist literary criticism unveils the intricate layers of gender inequality woven into literary texts.

Intersectionality plays a crucial role in feminist literary criticism. This approach recognizes that gender cannot be analyzed in isolation and that other social identities intersect with gender to shape experiences and representations. At its core, intersectional feminist literary criticism recognizes that individuals' experiences of gender inequality are shaped not only by their gender but also by their intersecting identities and social positions. It allows for the examination of the intersection of gender with race and color in literary texts, challenging stereotypical and victimizing accounts (Meyers, 2023). By incorporating intersectionality into literary analysis, critics can examine how multiple forms of oppression and privilege intersect and interact within the narrative, characters, and themes of a text. Moreover, intersectional feminist literary criticism often aims to amplify the voices and experiences of marginalized individuals and communities within literature. Overall, intersectionality helps to uncover and challenge the multiple axes of discrimination in literature and society (Savvias, 2022).

The evolution of feminist literary theory has seen the development of various waves or phases. Feminism as an organized movement to defend women's rights has roots in the European Enlightenment period and officially began its activity in the late 18th century (Fazli, 2023). The first wave, often referred to as "*liberal feminism*", focused on gaining legal and political rights for women. Second-wave feminism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and brought attention to issues of gender inequality in various spheres, including literature. The women's movement of the 1960s directly gave rise to today's feminist literary critic (Barry, 2020). This wave of feminism questioned traditional gender roles, challenged the representation of women in literature, and sought to give voice to women's experiences. Third-wave feminism, which emerged in the 1990s and continues today, expanded the scope of feminist literary criticism by embracing intersectionality and addressing the limitations of earlier feminist theories. The evolution of feminist thought has been explored using text mining and clustering techniques, revealing an

increasing emphasis on collectivism and globalization within the feminist movement (Goodman, 2015). Throughout history, various feminist literary critics have made significant contributions to the field. Virginia Woolf, a prominent figure of the modernist movement, wrote "A Room of One's Own". Feminist criticism significantly impacts Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" by highlighting the challenges women face in the literary field due to societal constraints like lack of private space and independent income (Suleman *et al.*, 2023). Through feminist stylistic analysis, it is evident that Woolf's language and style in the novel serve to challenge traditional gender roles and patriarchal power structures, conveying a strong feminist message (Vandenberghe, 2023). Woolf's work emphasized the importance of women's perspectives in literature and called for greater recognition of their contributions.

Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity has had a profound impact on feminist criticism. In her influential book "Gender Trouble", Butler argued that gender is performative, meaning that it is not an inherent trait but rather a social construct that is continually enacted and reproduced. This perspective has transformed the way feminist critics analyze gender in literature, emphasizing its fluidity and resistance to fixed categories. Feminist criticism in "Gender Trouble" by Judith Butler challenges traditional beliefs about gender by introducing the concept of performativity, disrupting established notions of gender identity (Dokumacı, 2023; Weiser, 2022). Feminist criticism indeed provides a valuable framework for literary analysis by challenging traditional gender norms and highlighting the representation of women in literature, enabling readers to delve deeper into the themes of power, agency, and identity present in literary works. It emerged as part of the broader feminist movement, aiming to dismantle patriarchal structures and address gender disparities in society (Fazli, 2022). This critical approach examines how literature reflects and perpetuates societal power dynamics, offering fresh interpretations of literary works by re-evaluating both male and female authors (Singh, 2022). By applying feminist perspectives, readers can uncover hidden gender biases, challenge prevailing narratives, and shed light on the experiences of marginalized groups.

The impact of feminist literary criticism extends beyond the realm of literature. By challenging and expanding the literary canon, it has paved the way for the inclusion of works by women and marginalized groups. It has provided a platform for women to express their feelings and challenge societal norms and gender roles (Awais, 2021). This broader representation in literature has had a ripple effect on society, challenging and transforming societal norms and expectations. Additionally, feminist literary criticism has influenced contemporary literature, fostering a more inclusive and diverse literary landscape. By exploring diverse directions in how gender is represented in literature, feminist literary criticism has helped to bring about social change and challenge patriarchal structures and ideologies (Guo, 2019). While feminist criticism has made significant strides, it continues to face contemporary challenges. One such challenge lies in reimagining feminist criticism for a global and postcolonial context. Reimagining

feminist criticism for a global and postcolonial context involves challenging the Western-centric perspectives that have dominated feminist discourse. Postcolonial feminists critique the imposition of Western standards on all women, emphasizing the need to recognize the diversity and complexity of women's experiences (Bali, 2019). As literature becomes increasingly globalized, it is crucial to consider how feminist criticism can encompass and address the experiences and perspectives of women from different cultural backgrounds. This reimagining also involves moving beyond traditional feminist literary analysis to incorporate poststructuralist and postcolonial theories that question universalism and emphasize the importance of diverse voices and experiences (Saravanan, 2018). This requires engaging with literature beyond Western canons and exploring the intersection of feminism with postcolonial, indigenous, and diasporic narratives.

In conclusion, feminist criticism has played a pivotal role in reshaping literary analysis by challenging patriarchal norms, amplifying marginalized voices, and uncovering hidden power dynamics within literature. By examining gender representation, deconstructing gender roles, exploring female identity and agency, and critiquing the male gaze, feminist critics have enriched our understanding of literature and its social implications. As we navigate an ever-evolving literary landscape, feminist criticism continues to inspire and empower us, reminding us of the importance of equality and the need to embrace diverse perspectives in literature.

2.1.2 William Faulkner's biography

William Faulkner, a towering figure in American literature, was a man deeply shaped by the Mississippi soil. His life and work are intricately woven with the South's rich history, complex social fabric, and enduring human struggles. Born in 1897 in New Albany, Mississippi, Faulkner belonged to an upper-middle-class family. While not part of the entrenched aristocracy, his family history instilled a sense of the South's past glories and simmering social tensions. He spent his formative years in Oxford, Mississippi, a place that would later become the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, the fertile ground where his literary genius would flourish. Faulkner's creation of the fictional county of Yoknapatawpha symbolically represents the evolution of the United States, incorporating elements from the Civil War, World War I, and World War II into his narratives, showcasing the parallel development of his southern community with the nation as a whole (McKenna, 2022). Faulkner's formal education was short-lived, but his experiences working odd jobs after leaving high school honed his empathy for the working class, a theme that would resonate throughout his writing.

A yearning for adventure led Faulkner to join the Canadian Royal Air Force during World War I. This period not only fueled his desire to write but also prompted him to adopt the more British-sounding "Faulkner" spelling. Upon returning to Mississippi, he embarked on his literary pursuits, crafting poetry and short stories while honing his craft.

The mid-1920s marked a turning point. Faulkner's debut novel, "Soldier's Pay", published in 1926, explored themes of alienation and loss in the aftermath of World War I. More importantly, this period saw the birth of Yoknapatawpha County. Inspired by his beloved Lafayette County, Mississippi, Faulkner created this fictional world teeming with complex characters and a rich history that mirrored the South itself. Yoknapatawpha County would become the setting for many of his greatest works, including "The Sound and the Fury" (1929), "As I Lay Dying" (1930), and "Absalom, Absalom!" (1936).

These novels established Faulkner's reputation as a literary innovator. He experimented with groundbreaking narrative techniques, particularly stream-of-consciousness which allowed him to delve into the psyches of his characters, revealing their innermost thoughts and emotions. Faulkner's upbringing in the Southern folk tradition, exposure to both black and white folk cultures, and his examination of folk morality in his works shaped his writing style (Atkinson III, 2001). Faulkner's prose was dense and poetic, reflecting the complexity of the human condition and the South's intricate past. Despite critical acclaim, commercial success remained elusive for much of his early career. To make ends meet, Faulkner ventured into Hollywood screenwriting during the 1930s and 1940s. While not his true passion, this experience further honed his storytelling abilities. Finally, in 1949, Faulkner received the ultimate recognition: The Nobel Prize in Literature. The Nobel committee lauded his "*powerful and artistically unique contribution to the modern American novel*". This prestigious award cemented his place as a literary giant.

Faulkner continued to write prolifically until his death in 1962. He received a second Pulitzer Prize in 1963 for his novel, "The Reivers."

William Faulkner's legacy is undeniable. He is celebrated as one of the most important American writers of the 20th century. His masterful exploration of the American South's history, its social and racial complexities, and the enduring struggles of humanity continue to resonate with readers worldwide. Faulkner's groundbreaking narrative techniques and timeless themes have secured his place in the literary pantheon, ensuring his work will be studied and admired for generations to come.

2.1.3 Feminist criticism in Faulkner's works

Feminist criticism has been applied to the works of William Faulkner, shedding light on the portrayal of women and gender dynamics in his fiction. Faulkner's depiction of women in his works has been a subject of debate and analysis among scholars. In Faulkner's works, women are often associated with themes of blood, excrement, filth, and death, which can be seen as disturbing and unsettling. This portrayal has been examined through the lens of feminist criticism, which seeks to explore the representation of women and challenge patriarchal norms. Feminist scholars have challenged the male-dominated discourse of Faulkner criticism and put women at the forefront of analysis (Morrison *et al.*, 1985).

Faulkner's exploration of women's experiences and the limitations imposed on them by society can also be seen through a psychoanalytic and feminist lens. Psychoanalytic feminism asserts that men have an inherent psychological need to subjugate women, and this compulsion to dominate women is deeply rooted in the human psyche (Wolff, 2007). Scholars have analyzed the effects and reactions of female characters, in relation to Freud's psychoanalytic theory and feminist perspectives. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the characters' inner struggles and the societal forces that shape their lives.

The politics of Faulkner's criticism have traditionally been male-dominated, but feminist scholars have challenged this by putting women at the forefront of their analyses (Morrison *et al.*, 1985). It is important to note that Faulkner's portrayal of women is complex and multifaceted, and not all female characters fit into a single mold. Faulkner's works have been examined from various critical perspectives, including feminist and psychoanalytic methods, highlighting the richness and depth of his writing. One example of feminist analysis in Faulkner's work is the character of Addie Bundren in "As I Lay Dying". Addie has been characterized as an unnatural, loveless mother, and her demands are seen as driving her family on a miserable journey. Addie Bundren represents Faulkner's narrative ego and challenges traditional notions of femininity, offering a feminist voice for marginalized subjects (Altug, 2022). Feminist critics argue that understanding Addie requires moving beyond traditional patriarchal definitions of womanhood and motherhood, which often demand selflessness and blame mothers for familial dysfunction. By doing so, a more nuanced and positive reading of Addie's character can emerge.

Feminist criticism has provided valuable insights into the representation of women in Faulkner's works. By analyzing the portrayal of female characters, their agency, and the societal constraints they face, feminist critics have contributed to a deeper understanding of Faulkner's exploration of gender dynamics and the experiences of women in his fiction.

2.1.4 A Rose for Emily (1930)

2.1.4.1 Setting

"A Rose for Emily" is a short story that was first published in 1930. The story is set in the American South and revolves around the life of Emily Grierson, an unmarried woman who becomes the subject of curiosity and speculation among the townspeople. The Grierson's house, which represents the microcosmic setting and provides insight into Miss Emily's motivations and actions (Huang, 2019). The story is narrated from the perspective of the townspeople, who provide their own interpretations and speculations about Emily's life. Faulkner's narrative style and use of symbolism contribute to the atmospheric and mysterious tone of the story.

2.1.4.2 Plot summary

The story is divided into five sections. In section I, the narrator recalls Emily Grierson's death and how the entire town came to her funeral at her home, which no stranger had entered in over ten years. Emily's house is the last relic of a bygone age in a beautiful, expensive neighborhood. Colonel Sartoris, the town's former mayor, had postponed Emily's tax responsibilities following her father's death, saying that Mr. Grierson had once lent the town a large sum. As new town officials take over, they make failed attempts to persuade Emily to begin payments. When members of the Board of Aldermen pay her a visit in the dusty and archaic parlor, Emily insists that she is not compelled to pay taxes in Jefferson and that the officials speak with Colonel Sartoris about it. However, by that time, he had been deceased for about a decade. She asks her servant, Tobe, to show the men out.

In section II, the narrator relates a day thirty years ago when Emily refused another official investigation on behalf of the town leaders when the townspeople smelled a strong stink emerging from her farm. Emily's father has just died, and she has been abandoned by the man the townspeople expected her to marry. As complaints rise, Judge Stevens, the mayor at the time, decides to sprinkle lime on the Grierson home's foundation in the middle of the night. The stink fades after a few weeks, but the townspeople begin to feel sorry for Emily, who has become increasingly reclusive. They still remember her great-aunt dying of insanity. The townspeople had always assumed that the Griersons thought too highly of themselves, with Emily's father turning down numerous men judged unsuitable to marry his daughter. Emily is still unmarried at the age of thirty, with no marriage proposal in sight. The day following Mr. Grierson's death, the town's women call on Emily to express their grief. Emily meets them at the door and claims that her father is not dead, a ruse she maintains for three days. She ultimately gives her father's body over for burial.

In Section III, the narrator covers Emily's extended illness following this occurrence. The summer after her father's death, the town hires workers to pave the sidewalks, and a northerner foreman, Homer Barron, is granted the project. Homer quickly becomes a prominent person in town and is spotted accompanying Emily on buggy rides on Sunday afternoons, which scandalizes the town and heightens their contempt and pity for Emily. They believe she is losing her family pride by becoming connected with a man beneath her station. As the affair continues and Emily's reputation is harmed, she goes to the drugstore and purchases arsenic, a potent poison. She is compelled by law to declare how she plans to utilize the arsenic. She provides no explanation, and the package arrives at her place with the label "For rats".

In Section IV, the narrator discusses the townspeople's worry that Emily may use the poison to commit suicide. Her marriage to Homer seemed increasingly implausible, despite their ongoing Sunday ritual. The town's most upset women request that the Baptist minister speak with Emily. After his stay, he never talks about what happened and swears he would never return. So, the minister's wife writes to Emily's two cousins

in Alabama, who have arrived for an extended stay. When Emily orders a silver toilet set personalized with Homer's initials, discussion of the couple's marriage resumes. Homer's absence from town is thought to be due to Emily's upcoming move to the North or to avoid Emily's intrusive relatives. After the cousins leave, Homer enters the Grierson home one evening and is never seen again. Emily becomes corpulent and gray while confined to her home. Despite the infrequent sessions she teaches in Chinese-painting, her door remains closed to visitors. Emily refuses to acknowledge the tax bill, as has been an annual tradition. She finally closes up the top level of the house. Except for the occasional glimpse of her via the window, nothing is heard from her until she dies at the age of seventy-four. Only the servant gets to see entering and leaving the house.

In Section V, the narrator tells what happened after Emily dies. Emily's body is put out in the parlor, and the women, town elders, and two cousins gather for the service. The townsfolk eventually break down the door of a sealed upper room that has not been opened in forty years. The room seems stuck in time, with items for an approaching wedding and a man's suit on display. Homer Barron's body is also splayed out on the bed, deteriorating rapidly. The townspeople then notice a head imprint on the pillow next to Homer's body, as well as a long strand of Emily's gray hair.

2.2. Exploring feminist criticism and unveiling the shackles of women in traditional society in "A Rose for Emily"

2.2.1 Feminist criticism in "A Rose for Emily"

Feminist criticism in "A Rose for Emily" focuses on exploring the gender dynamics and power structures within the story, as well as the ways in which the female characters are portrayed. This approach examines the social and cultural context of the time in which the story is set and highlights the ways in which women are marginalized or oppressed. Emily's life is seen as tragic, symbolizing the fallen monument of her era and the end of the aristocratic era (Khrais, 2017).

One aspect of feminist criticism in "A Rose for Emily" is the examination of the protagonist, Emily Grierson, and her struggles within a patriarchal society. Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily" is a woman who is psychologically traumatized and living in isolation due to the persecution of patriarchy, family, tradition, and Puritanism (Sultan, 2023). She is depicted as a woman who defies societal expectations and refuses to conform to traditional gender roles, showcasing her rebellion against the limitations imposed upon women in her time. She is seen as a symbol of resistance against the oppressive norms of her community.

After her father's death, she refuses to allow his body to be taken away for burial, keeping it in her home for days.

"Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face."

"Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down..."

The phrase “*dressed as usual*” implies that Emily presents herself in her typical manner, adhering to her established appearance and routine. This suggests that she is determined to maintain a sense of normalcy and control over her own image, even in the face of a significant event like her father's death. The absence of “*no trace of grief on her face*” indicates that Emily does not display the expected signs of mourning. This defiance of societal norms challenges the traditional gender roles that dictate how women should express their emotions. It suggests that Emily refuses to conform to the expected behaviors and expectations placed upon her as a grieving daughter. This sentence also hints at Emily's ability to conceal her true emotions and maintain a sense of privacy. By presenting herself without any visible signs of grief, she keeps her inner thoughts and feelings hidden from the prying eyes of the townspeople. This further emphasizes her resistance to conforming to societal expectations and her determination to maintain control over her own emotions and actions. This act of defiance displays her determination to hold on to the past and exert control over her own circumstances, despite the disapproval and shock it generates among the townspeople.

Another focus of feminist criticism in the story is the exploration of the limited agency and autonomy of Emily Grierson. The woman in “*A Rose for Emily*” is often restricted by the expectations placed upon her by a patriarchal society. She was expected to be submissive and obedient, and her actions and decisions were often controlled or influenced by the men in her life. Emily's relationship with Homer Barron, a northerner and a laborer, challenges societal expectations and defies traditional gender roles.

“Of course, a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day labor.”

“... even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige - without calling it noblesse oblige.”

Homer Barron, described as a “big, dark, ready man” and a foreman from the North, represents modernity and industrialization, while Emily is portrayed as a recluse from an old Southern aristocratic family. Their differing social backgrounds and power dynamics suggest that their relationship would be strongly discouraged by Emily's family and the traditionalists in the town. However, Emily defies societal expectations and engages in a romantic relationship with Homer, challenging the gender norms and expectations placed upon her. This act of rebellion can be seen as a feminist assertion of agency and autonomy, as Emily pursues her own desires and disregards the judgment and gossip of the townspeople.

Furthermore, Emily's relationship with Homer can be interpreted as a form of resistance against the patriarchal control and dominance that she has experienced throughout her life. By engaging in a relationship with a man of her own choosing, Emily asserts her independence and challenges the traditional gender roles that dictate women should be submissive and passive. The most noteworthy is Emily Grierson comes from a

proud and aristocratic family in the town of Jefferson. Her family's status is emphasized throughout the story, and the townspeople view them as superior to the rest of the community, and that *"the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were"*. Despite the changing times and the disintegration of the Old South, Emily maintains her family's values and aristocratic status. Emily's family's values and aristocratic status continue to influence her life, even though the world around her has changed. This also explains her refusal to pay taxes, which brought her into conflict with town leaders.

One notable thing that drives Emily's refusal to pay taxes is her resistance to change and her desire to maintain the status quo. Emily is portrayed as a recluse who lives in her own world, where she still reveres Colonel Sartoris and resists acknowledging the passage of time. She rejects the new aldermen's attempts to fasten metal numbers above her door or attach a mailbox to her home, symbolizing her resistance to the changing times and her desire to hold onto the past. And because of the *"unchanged"* aristocratic status of her family, she insists that she is still a noble daughter and she does not allow any of the townspeople or anyone from the *"rising generation"* to treat her as an equal. She maintains a sense of control and holds onto her family's aristocratic status, even in the face of changing times.

"She did not ask them to sit."

"... stood in the door and listened quietly..." "Her voice was dry and cold."

She holds a position of power and expects others to adhere to her rules and expectations. By not offering the deputation a seat, she establishes a subtle dominance over them, reinforcing her status as a member of the old aristocratic family in the town. This detail highlights Emily's resistance to conforming to societal norms and her inclination to assert her own authority. She maintains a sense of emotional distance and control through her *"dry and cold"* voice, even in the face of external pressures and inquiries. This detail adds to the enigmatic nature of Emily's character, as it implies that she keeps her true thoughts and emotions hidden beneath a calm and collected exterior. It also hints at her ability to navigate social interactions with a sense of poise and self-assurance. And *"she vanquished them"*.

As time passes and a new generation grows up, the townspeople begin to regard Emily as an oddity, someone who refuses to adapt and change. They view her as a relic from a bygone age, violating the codes of behavior that govern the designation of a lady. This perception leads to gossip and speculation about her life, making her a source of fascination for the townspeople. While there may be a mix of sympathy and satisfaction among the townspeople regarding Emily's decline, they still regard her with a certain level of awe and respect. She is seen as a living legend, a part of the town's history and heritage. However, there is also an element of judgment and gossip surrounding her, as the townspeople are curious about her life and eager to see inside her house. Despite all

that, Emily's attitude toward the townspeople remains one of superiority and separateness.

"She carried her head high enough - even when we believed that she was fallen."

This haughtiness is evident in her interactions with the townspeople. Her refusal to conform to societal expectations and her disregard for the opinions of others suggest a certain level of arrogance and a belief in her own superiority. Her sense of status is clearer and more intense when Emily is purchasing arsenic from the town druggist.

"She looked back at him, erect, her face like a strained flag."

That "erect" and "strained flag" suggests Emily's defiance and determination. She stands tall and resolute, and refuses to back down or show any signs of weakness. Furthermore, Emily's "head tilted back" to look at the druggist "eye for eye" indicates her desire for control, suggesting a sense of superiority and dominance. By maintaining direct eye contact and asserting her presence, she exerts power over the druggist. The druggist's reaction, looking away and complying with Emily's request, demonstrates her ability to assert her will and have others submit to her demands. It also suggests that the townspeople treat her as a representation of the former aristocracy, giving her a certain level of influence and authority.

"... she passed from generation to generation - dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse."

Emily was a figure who was known and remembered by multiple generations of the town's residents. This indicates that she held a significant place in the community's collective memory. They could not escape her presence or the impact she had on their lives. These details provide insight into Emily's character and her interactions with others. She is depicted as a strong-willed and determined individual who is willing to defy societal norms and assert her own authority. Emily's actions and demeanor throughout the story reflect her resistance to change and her desire to maintain control over her own life, even if it means resorting to extreme measures. Feminist critics also examine the role of the narrator in shaping the portrayal of women in the story. They question the reliability and perspective of the narrator, as the story is told from a male point of view. The oscillation between third-person limited perspective and the focal characters' perspective creates an effect of omniscience within limitation. The transgression of the narrator's limited point of view into an omniscient point of view creates double-layer effects of foreshadowing and self-exposure (Jumpertz and Tary, 2022). Additionally, the omitted point of view of Emily, Homer, and the negro servant is

closely related to the social, historical, and cultural background of the South in the first half of the 20th century (Nebeker, 1970).

In “A Rose for Emily”, the narrator serves as the collective voice of the town, providing insights into the community's perceptions and judgments of the female protagonist, Emily Grierson. The narrator's gender is left ambiguous, allowing readers to interpret the story from different perspectives, including a feminist lens. Faulkner's use of a collective 'we' as the narrator in the story serves to highlight the societal constraints and patriarchal influences on Emily Grierson's life (Bergonzoni, 2011). The use of the collective pronoun “we” enables the narrator to attribute thoughts and opinions to the townspeople, turning private ideas into commonly held beliefs. This narrative technique highlights the town's ambiguous stance on Emily, oscillating between empathy and judgment. The narrator also highlights the town's gossip and judgment towards Emily's actions, particularly in her relationship with Homer Barron.

“... it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people.”

The scandalized reactions of the townspeople reflect the patriarchal norms and expectations placed upon women in the community. This thing explores the potential biases and limitations of the narrative, and how it may contribute to the marginalization of women. It is worth noting that the narrator's perspective is not entirely objective. The narrator makes judgments both for and against Emily, presenting outside observations and changing opinions throughout the narration. This subjective viewpoint adds complexity to the portrayal of women in the story. The narrator's attitude towards Emily differs from that of the townspeople. The narrator takes pride in Emily's ability to maintain her dignity and hold her head high, even in the face of adversity. The narrator recognizes and appreciates her aristocratic haughtiness and respects her privacy, contrasting with the townspeople's curiosity and judgment.

In conclusion, feminist criticism in “A Rose for Emily” offers a deeper understanding of the story's portrayal of women. By analyzing the character of Emily Grierson through a feminist lens, we gain insight into the complexities of Emily's character and the larger implications of the patriarchal society in which she exists. Faulkner's narrative prompts us to question and challenge the traditional gender norms that restrict women's lives and aspirations.

2.2.2. Portrayal of women in traditional society as depicted in “A Rose for Emily”

The portrayal of women in literature has often reflected the societal norms and expectations prevalent in traditional societies. Similarly, in traditional societies, the portrayal of women has often been influenced by cultural norms and expectations. Set in the post-Civil War era, the story explores the life of Emily Grierson, a woman confined by societal expectations and the limitations imposed upon her by a patriarchal society. Emily is portrayed as a mysterious and enigmatic character who is trapped in the customs

and traditions of her time. She is a symbol of the fading glory of the old South, where women were expected to conform to societal norms and live within the confines of their prescribed roles. However, Emily Grierson is also portrayed as a complex character who challenges the norms and expectations of traditional society.

As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Emily's life is marked by isolation and loneliness. The character of Emily in the story showcases a woman trapped in her societal role, unable to break free (Ajmal *et al.*, 2023). In many traditional societies, women were primarily seen as caretakers and homemakers. Women were expected to conform to traditional gender roles and were confined to their households, serving their families and lacking independent identity (Lee, 2022). They would be submissive, obedient, and prioritize the needs of their family over their own ambitions or desires. Women's worth was often measured by their ability to fulfill these roles effectively. Emily's submission and obedience are evident in her relationship with her father. After his death, she continues to live in their decaying family home, preserving it as a shrine to her father's memory. She doesn't even want to admit her father's death.

"She told them that her father was not dead."

This representation aligns with the concept of objectification of female characters in literature, where they are often depicted as passive and helpless, dependent on men (Ismail, 2023). Emily's father was known to be a controlling figure who sought to stifle and control her with strict rules and demands. He believed that no one in town was good enough for his daughter and that she had to be protected from dishonor and those beneath her.

"None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such."

"...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."

But,

"We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that."

The townspeople's perception of Emily's behavior is influenced by their knowledge of her father's actions. They remember how her father had driven away all the young men who showed interest in her, and they understand that Emily clings to the memory of her father as a result. The townspeople believe that Emily's denial of her father's death is a way for her to hold onto the only connection she has left, even if it has robbed her of a normal life. She adheres to the traditions and values instilled in her by her father, even when they conflict with societal norms or her own personal desires

because she is *"a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town"*. Despite her desire for companionship and love, she ultimately sacrifices her own happiness to maintain the appearance of propriety and uphold her family's reputation. However, Emily's inability to adapt to the changing times and her refusal to accept the loss of her loved ones reflect her struggle to conform to the expectations placed upon her as a woman.

As the story progresses and Emily Grierson becomes more reclusive, her physical appearance is said to mirror her deteriorating social life, with her body and appearance becoming unhealthier and uglier.

"... a small, fat woman in black..."

"She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue."

"... she had grown fat and her hair was turning gray."

This physical deterioration parallels the decay and deterioration of her family's once prestigious status and the declining fortunes of the old South. The emphasis on women's physical appearance and beauty was also common in traditional literature, reflecting the societal expectations of the time. These standards often lead to discrimination and social issues such as bullying and low self-confidence (Klinkosumsivadol *et al.*, 2022). Beauty standards set by society dictated that women should conform to specific ideals of attractiveness, which could involve aspects such as fair skin, a certain body shape, or specific facial features. The descriptions of Emily's physical appearance also serve to highlight her isolation and otherness. The townspeople view her as an eccentric and peculiar figure, and her physical appearance contributes to this perception. She is often seen from a distance, observed through windows or glimpsed in her doorway, reinforcing her status as an object of curiosity and speculation. Additionally, her physical appearance is sometimes described in divine or angelic terms, *"angels in colored church windows"*, which further emphasizes her separation from the ordinary world.

One significant aspect of Emily's physical appearance is her hair. After her father's death, she cuts her hair short, giving her a youthful and girlish appearance. This symbolizes her sexual immaturity and the frozen state of her sexuality due to her father's overprotectiveness and the lack of opportunities to marry. As time passes and her chance for marriage slips away, her hair turns gray. The detail of *"vigorous iron-gray"* hair in *"A Rose for Emily"* represents the transformation and merging of Emily's feminine and masculine qualities, reflecting the impact of her father's influence and the suppression of her own desires.

"Up to the day of her death at seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-gray, like the hair of an active man."

The iron-gray color of her hair also carries symbolic weight. Iron is associated with strength and durability, while gray is often associated with aging and wisdom. The iron-gray color suggests a sense of durability and steadfastness, reflecting Emily's unwavering nature despite the challenges she faces (Ryu, 2016; Zhao, 2018). The combination of these elements suggests that Emily has endured and adapted to her circumstances, but it also signifies the loss of her youthful vitality and the fading of her femininity. Furthermore, the mention of Emily's hair in relation to the pillow next to Homer, whom she killed, suggests a connection between her masculine qualities and the act of violence.

"... in the second pillow was the indentation of a head." "... we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair."

It implies that her suppressed desires and frustrations manifest in destructive ways, leading to the demise of her romantic interests. Moreover, traditional societies often imposed strict codes of conduct and morality on women. These codes were deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and were aimed at maintaining social order and stability (Ella *et al.*, 2023). Women were expected to adhere to social norms and behave in ways that were deemed *"respectable"* by society. Taboos and prohibitions were used to control women's behavior and restrict their interactions with men, particularly during certain periods or situations (Coe and Palmer, 2008). Any deviation from these expectations could result in severe consequences, including social ostracism or even violence. The traditional moral systems in these societies were often biased and unjust, leading to the subordination and manipulation of women. In *"A Rose for Emily"*, the townspeople view Emily with a mix of pity, irritation, and fascination. They gossip about her and speculate on her actions, often judging her for not conforming to their standards. They *"were not pleased exactly, but vindicated"* when *"she got to be thirty and was still single"*. They *"were glad"* when *"her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her"*. They look at her like *"a sort of tragic and serene"*. They just said *"Poor Emily"* but *"behind their hands."*

"Poor Emily." reflects the townspeople's collective perception of her and their judgment of her circumstances. It implies that the townspeople view her as a tragic figure, someone to be pitied due to her difficult and isolated life. It suggests a recognition of the societal pressures, expectations, and limitations that have shaped her life and contributed to her current state. Additionally, the sentence reflects the townspeople's collective judgment of Emily. The word *"poor"* implies a condescending tone, as if the townspeople see themselves as superior to her. It suggests that they view her as a pitiable and tragic character, reinforcing their position as observers and commentators on her life.

Overall, “A Rose for Emily” presents a complex portrayal of women in traditional society. It explores the limitations and expectations placed upon them, the struggle to maintain tradition, and the consequences of defying societal norms. Faulkner's narrative prompts us to reflect on the societal roles, demands, and pressures faced by women during the early 20th century.

2.3. Discussion

2.3.1 Insights from feminist criticism impacted in analyze the portrayal of traditional women through “A Rose for Emily”

William Faulkner's “A Rose for Emily” stands as a seminal work of American literature, renowned for its rich portrayal of the themes and characters. Among its many layers, the depiction of women within the traditional Southern society of the narrative offers a compelling lens through which to explore feminist criticism. Feminist literary theory provides a critical framework through which to examine the representation of women in literature. Feminist critiques of libertarianism have highlighted overlaps and divergences in key principles, pointing out shortcomings in addressing gender inequality and advocating for a comprehensive critique and policy framework (Scot, 2020). It challenges traditional gender roles, scrutinizes power dynamics, and highlights the ways in which women are portrayed and marginalized within narratives. By applying this framework to “A Rose for Emily”, this analysis unveils the underlying themes of patriarchy, gendered expectations, and female agency within the text. One significant aspect to discuss is the role of patriarchal norms and societal expectations in shaping the lives of women in the story. Faulkner's work challenges traditional gender roles (Morrison *et al.*, 1986), portraying female characters with significant influence on manhood establishment and the ability to speak in male-dominated societies, reflecting a positive attitude towards women (Cao and Cao, 2011). This research highlights how Miss Emily's character, who is subject to the strict social norms and expectations of her time, is trapped within the confines of traditional gender roles, which limit her agency and autonomy.

Furthermore, the research examines the ways in which Faulkner portrays the struggles and challenges faced by women in traditional societies. Emily's character represents the effects of patriarchal control and societal pressures on women. Emily's inability to assert her own will and the interference she faces when deviating from tradition highlights the oppressive nature of the societal expectations placed upon her (Zhang, 2016). The research points out the themes of isolation, loneliness, and the loss of personal freedom experienced by women like Miss Emily. This portrayal sheds light on the oppressive nature of traditional gender roles and the impact they have on women's lives.

Additionally, the research delves into the concept of agency and resistance within the traditional societal framework. Within this framework, agency and resistance are intertwined concepts (Haslanger, 2019; Medina, 2020). It explores how Miss Emily's actions can be seen as both conforming to and challenging the expectations placed upon

her. The analysis emphasizes how Emily, as a woman from a noble family, is constrained by her societal rules, leading to a life filled with fear and limitations (Huang, 2019). While she conforms to certain societal norms, such as maintaining her family's reputation, she also exhibits defiance and rebellion, particularly in her relationships with men. This juxtaposition highlights the complexities of female agency within a traditional society. It is important to analyze the ways in which Faulkner portrays the complexities of women's experiences within the traditional society depicted in the story. The research points out the themes of isolation, loneliness, and the loss of personal freedom experienced by women like Miss Emily. This discussion delves into the emotional and psychological impact of such oppression, as well as the potential for resistance and resilience in the face of societal constraints.

2.3.2. Comparative analysis of women's portrayal in “A Rose for Emily” and in Vietnamese literature

Societal expectations and limitations have a profound impact on women's lives, shaping their freedom and agency. In William Faulkner's “A Rose for Emily”, the protagonist, Miss Emily Grierson, is a woman confined by the traditional values and expectations of the Southern society in which she resides (Asmarani, 2017). As an unmarried woman, she is expected to conform to societal norms and conventions, particularly when it comes to her relationships and interactions with men. Her father's controlling nature and the judgmental gaze of the town further restrict her autonomy and agency. On the other hand, Vietnamese literature offers a broader exploration of societal expectations and limitations, delving into the complex interplay between historical events, cultural traditions, and women's roles. These literary works provide insight into how Vietnamese women navigate various factors such as colonialism, war, and cultural norms that shape their lives. It explores the impact of external factors on human behavior (Hoang and Hoang, 2016), challenges normative literary forms, and redefines traditional tropes (Janette, 2018). Additionally, Vietnamese literature sheds light on the position of women in society, contributing to a better perception and status of women. The expectations imposed on Vietnamese women go beyond societal norms and are also influenced by external forces, creating a more intricate and multifaceted depiction of their struggles.

Vietnamese literature showcases women who actively challenge societal norms and exhibit remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. The theme of self-sacrifice in Vietnamese romantic literature sheds light on women's positions in society, influenced by traditional norms. These women navigate through a complex web of cultural expectations and historical events, refusing to be confined by the limitations imposed upon them. War narratives in contemporary Vietnamese fiction portray women's beauty, desires, and condemn the brutal impacts of war on women, emphasizing feminist perspectives (Thai, 2016). Ecofeminist perspectives in Vietnamese literature emphasize the intersection of nature, war, and societal issues, advocating for a transformative moral consciousness (Vo, 2022). Additionally, feminine symbols in Vietnamese prose

underscore the importance of female characteristics and feminist themes in literature (Pham, 2022). Vietnamese fiction also explores war through a feminist lens, condemning the impact on women and challenging gender stereotypes (Thai, 2016). Their resilience serves as a testament to their determination and strength, inspiring readers with their unwavering spirit. In contrast, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" presents women who are more confined by their circumstances. Emily Grierson, trapped in the traditions and expectations of her Southern society, struggles to break free from the chains of her family's legacy. This confinement is further emphasized by the symbolic elements in the story, such as the decaying house and the theme of death, reflecting the entrapment of Emily within the confines of her family's history and the societal pressures of the Old South (Ajmal *et al.*, 2023; Yu, 2023). The narrative also highlights the consequences of nonconformity, as Emily faces segregation and gossip from the community, illustrating the severe discipline imposed on those who challenge societal norms (Sultan, 2023). While she displays moments of defiance, such as her secretive relationship with Homer Barron, they are ultimately overshadowed by the weight of the societal constraints placed upon her. Her defiance is limited and does not lead to the liberation she desires, highlighting the oppressive nature of her environment.

In conclusion, the portrayal of societal expectations and limitations, as well as the resilience and defiance exhibited by women, varies between "A Rose for Emily" and Vietnamese literature. Faulkner's story focuses on the restricted agency of women within the confines of traditional Southern society, while Vietnamese literature provides a more expansive exploration of women's struggles, encompassing historical events and cultural traditions. Vietnamese literature presents women who actively challenge societal norms and exhibit remarkable resilience, refusing to be confined by the limitations placed upon them. These works shed light on the importance of fighting for freedom and agency, regardless of the societal expectations and limitations that may be imposed.

3. Research methodology

It was a descriptive approach. While doing this research, the authors used "close reading," "textual evidence," "critical analysis", and "comparative analysis" to explore the theme "feminist criticism and description of the portrayal of women in the traditional society in selected work" "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner.

4. Findings towards the research questions

The Chapter II with detailed development and discussions to "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner, which covered the two research questions:

- 1) How is the feminist criticism analyzed in "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner?
- 2) How is the portrayal of women in traditional society described through the feminist criticism in selected work?

It was found that in William Faulkner's renowned literary piece, "A Rose for Emily", the portrayal of women within the traditional society becomes a captivating subject of examination. Several key insights emerged regarding the application of feminist criticism and the depiction of women within the traditional society presented in Faulkner's acclaimed literary piece. Firstly, the analysis revealed that feminist criticism provides a valuable lens through which to examine and interpret the representation of women in literature. By examining the treatment of female characters, feminist criticism sheds light on issues such as domestication and limitations imposed on women (Awais, 2021). This critical approach shows that the portrayal of women in "A Rose for Emily" is heavily influenced by societal expectations and gender norms prevalent in the traditional society of the narrative. The research uncovered the ways in which women's roles are limited and confined, denying them agency and autonomy. This confinement is evident in the character of Emily Grierson, who is restricted by societal expectations and faces severe consequences for attempting to defy them.

The research also uncovered the pervasive power dynamics that govern the relationships between males and females. Through feminist criticism, it became apparent that male characters exert control and dominance over female characters, reinforcing traditional gender roles and reinforcing patriarchal structures. This power imbalance further restricts the agency and choices available to the women, ultimately leading to their subjugation and tragic outcomes. Furthermore, the study highlighted the impact of patriarchal societal structures on the lives and experiences of women in the traditional society depicted in "A Rose for Emily". Women in the narrative are constrained by societal expectations, forced to conform to prescribed roles, and face severe consequences for deviating from the established norms. This analysis underscores the oppressive nature of traditional gender norms and sheds light on the challenges faced by women striving for agency and independence in a male-dominated society. Overall, the research findings underscore the significance of feminist criticism in illuminating the portrayal of women in the traditional society depicted in "A Rose for Emily". The application of feminist criticism reveals the ways in which societal expectations, power dynamics, and gender norms shape the lives and experiences of female characters.

5. Conclusions and further suggestions

5.1. Conclusions

The application of a feminist lens to the analysis of "A Rose for Emily" provides valuable insights into the portrayal of women in the story. By examining the text through this critical perspective, several crucial aspects come to light, shedding light on the societal constraints, power dynamics, and hidden realities faced by women in the traditional American Southern society depicted in the work.

Firstly, the story exemplifies the societal constraints placed upon women during that time period (Ajmal *et al.*, 2023; Sultan, 2023; Hu and Zhong, 2022). Women were

expected to conform to strict norms, adhering to traditional roles of marriage, domesticity, and proper behavior. These expectations limited their autonomy and agency, trapping them within prescribed gender roles. The story portrays Emily Grierson's entrapment in her societal role, showcasing her submissiveness and inability to break free from the expectations imposed upon her (Huang, 2019). Through the character of Emily Grierson, the story vividly illustrates the consequences of such societal pressure, as she struggles to navigate the expectations imposed upon her.

Secondly, the feminist analysis uncovers a power imbalance that favors men within the story. Men hold authority in various spheres, including politics, social circles, and even within familial dynamics. Women's attempts to exert power or challenge established norms are often met with disapproval or social sanctions. The research by Hussain and Jabeen highlights how female characters in literature are often portrayed with more emphasis on emotions, vulnerability, and experiences compared to male characters, who are depicted based on physical strength and dominance (Feng, 2021). This power dynamic is evident in the interactions between Emily and the male characters, highlighting the patriarchal structure that restricts women's agency and reinforces male dominance.

Moreover, the feminist lens reveals hidden realities within the text. Through close reading and examination, the analysis challenges traditional readings that may overlook the nuances of female experiences. It exposes potential subtexts and biases embedded in the narrative, offering a more nuanced understanding of the frustrations and complexities women face within a restrictive society. By examining the female subject status and self-identity, feminist theory challenges traditional thoughts and highlights the importance of recognizing and empowering women in literature, urging society to break free from oppressive norms and take control of their destinies (Leruth and Nicolas, 2010).

This research encourages readers to question the traditional interpretations of the story and consider the marginalized voices and experiences of women within the narrative. Most importantly, it underscores the need for critical examination of traditional gender roles and inequalities in literature, prompting further exploration of the complexities of women's experiences in society.

5.2. Limitations

The research study aims to explore the representation of women in traditional society, specifically through the lens of feminist literary criticism. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations that may impact the scope, generalizability, interpretive bias, intersectionality, and reader response in this research. One significant limitation of this study lies in the selection of the literary work to be analyzed, which is limited to "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner. Relying on a single work may restrict the breadth and depth of feminist themes and the portrayal of women in traditional society. The findings may not capture the full range of experiences or adequately represent the diverse

ways women are depicted in other works of literature or different cultural contexts. Due to the narrow focus on “A Rose for Emily”, the generalizability of the research findings may be limited. The portrayal of women in this specific literary work may not be representative of the broader landscape of literature or the multifaceted experiences of women in traditional societies. Consequently, caution should be exercised when extrapolating these findings to other works or societies.

Interpretation of literary texts is inherently subjective, influenced by the researcher's own perspectives, biases, and theoretical framework. This subjectivity can significantly impact the researcher's interpretation of the text and subsequent conclusions about the portrayal of women. Moreover, different feminist critics may have divergent interpretations of the same text, leading to variations in findings. Recognizing this interpretive bias is crucial for maintaining objectivity and acknowledging diverse perspectives. A potential limitation of this research lies in the insufficient consideration of intersectionality. Gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, sexuality, and ability, shaping women's experiences and representations in literature. A narrow focus exclusively on gender may overlook important dimensions of identity and power dynamics that influence the portrayal of women in the traditional society within the selected literary work.

The research may not fully account for the varied ways in which readers interpret and respond to literary texts. The portrayal of women in “A Rose for Emily” is subject to multiple interpretations and readings, reflecting the diverse perspectives and experiences of readers. Therefore, the research may not capture the complete range of reader responses and interpretations, which could contribute valuable insights to the analysis.

While conducting research on the portrayal of women in traditional society using feminist criticism within the context of “A Rose for Emily”, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in the study.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

Within the realm of feminist criticism, the portrayal of women in traditional society has been a subject of great interest. For those who want to advance feminist literary criticism, there are further avenues of research to expand our understanding of this topic, building upon the analysis of William Faulkner's “A Rose for Emily”. By delving into comparative literature analysis, intersectional analysis, reader response studies, and authorial intent analysis, we can deepen our understanding of women's portrayal in traditional societies and contribute to the ongoing feminist discourse. Firstly, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the portrayal of women in traditional society, a comparative analysis of multiple literary works becomes imperative. By selecting works from different time periods, genres, and cultural contexts, researchers can identify common themes, variations, and changes in the depiction of women. This approach allows for a broader exploration of the ways in which women's roles, agency, and experiences have been represented.

Recognizing that gender intersects with various social categories such as race, class, sexuality, and ability is crucial in understanding the multifaceted portrayals of women in traditional societies. An intersectional analysis would explore how overlapping identities influence the experiences and representations of women in literature. By considering the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression, scholars can uncover the nuanced complexities of women's lives and challenge essentialist notions of gender. Reader response studies provide invaluable insights into how different audiences interpret and respond to the portrayal of women in traditional society. By employing qualitative methods such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups, researchers can capture diverse reader perspectives and interpretations. This approach acknowledges the subjective nature of literary interpretation and highlights the role of individual experiences, biases, and cultural backgrounds in shaping readers' responses.

Understanding the intentions and motivations of authors in depicting women in traditional society is essential to fully grasp the complexities of their portrayals. Analyzing authorial statements, biographical information, and textual evidence allows researchers to uncover underlying ideologies, biases, and artistic choices that shape the representation of women. This analysis can reveal the authors' engagement with societal norms, their critiques, or their perpetuation of traditional gender roles.

By embracing these research avenues, researchers can advance our understanding of the portrayal of women in traditional society from a feminist perspective. Comparative literature analysis, intersectional analysis, reader response studies, and authorial intent analysis offer complementary approaches that collectively contribute to the ongoing exploration of gender dynamics in literature. By shedding light on the diverse experiences of women and challenging existing narratives, this research can foster dialogue, inspire critical thinking, and promote social progress.

Acknowledgements

To have this paper done successfully, the authors, firstly, would like to express their gratitude to the teaching staff from the School of Foreign Languages (SFL), Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam for their valuable instructions with good advice towards doing research. Furthermore, they greatly owed their debts to Mrs. Ho Phuong Thuy and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Nguyen Tuyet, senior English lecturers of British-American literary works at SFL, CTU, Vietnam, for their practical feedback for the paper format and literature analysis techniques and to Miss Thai Phan Bao Han for her useful assistance with the entire article proofreading, English modification, and format as well. And, last but not least, their respectful thanks would go to *the European Journal of Literary Studies Board* for this paper to be published to the public worldwide, for those interested in doing research in EFL and TESOL issues, especially learning and teaching British-American literary works in Vietnam on the way to integrate into the regional and global higher education level.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Both authors strongly agreed on the publication of this paper and there was no contention or rivalry during finishing the work. In other words, the authors declare no conflicts of interest in this article. Both authors are fully and equally responsible for the benefits and harms after this article is published. The authors, moreover, declare that the material presented by us in this paper is our original work, and does not contain any materials taken from other copyrighted sources. Wherever such materials have been included, they have been clearly indented or/and identified by quotation marks and due and proper acknowledgments given by citing the source at appropriate places.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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