

**“THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON CHARACTERS IN “A ROSE FOR EMILY” BY WILLIAM FAULKNER**

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**Abstract.** *This paper explores the influence of political and institutional discourse on the life and identity of Miss Emily Grierson in William Faulkner's A Rose for Emily. Although the story does not present overt political debates, it is deeply shaped by authoritative speech acts produced by local officials and social institutions. The study focuses on key political interactions, such as Colonel Sartoris' tax exemption decree, the Board of Aldermen's bureaucratic demands, and the indirect handling of the odor from Emily's house by judicial authorities. Using pragmatic analysis—particularly speech act theory, politeness strategies, power relations, and indirect communication—the paper demonstrates how institutional language functions as a mechanism of social control. The findings suggest that political discourse not only regulates behavior but also constructs social identity, contributing to Emily's isolation, resistance to change, and psychological decline within a rigid, tradition-bound society.*

**Keywords.** *political discourse, institutional authority, pragmatic analysis, speech acts, politeness strategies, power relations, social isolation*

**Introduction.** In William Faulkner's A Rose for Emily, the social and political language used by town authorities profoundly shapes Miss Emily Grierson's identity, behavior, and psychological state. From a pragmatic perspective, the story demonstrates how speech acts, politeness strategies, indirect communication, and power dynamics operate within a rigid social hierarchy.

For example, Colonel Sartoris' declaration that Emily is exempt from paying taxes functions as a performative speech act: through language alone, it alters her legal and social status [1, 6]. This act of politeness, while seemingly protective, also traps Emily within a symbolic role as a monument of the Old South [4, 116], limiting her autonomy and participation in civic life. Similarly, the Board of Aldermen's formal tax notice illustrates a face-threatening act in bureaucratic language. Their direct, transactional tone challenges Emily's established authority and creates confusion and defensiveness [2, 65], highlighting how linguistic strategies can exert social control.

Pragmatic aspects can also be observed in Emily's own speech. When Emily confronts the aldermen about the tax notice, she asserts, "I have no taxes in Jefferson", this utterance functions as a refusal speech act [4, 119], expressing resistance to authority

while maintaining a polite, formal tone. Through this, Emily attempts to preserve her social face and assert control, demonstrating the tension between individual agency and institutional power. Another example is her indirect communication with Homer Barron, where she silently signals her attachment and intent through actions rather than words, such as purchasing items for him and maintaining his room in secrecy. These nonverbal speech acts convey dominance and desire without explicit confrontation, revealing how pragmatic strategies extend beyond verbal language to shape interpersonal dynamics.

Finally, when Judge Stevens and the sheriff address the odor from Emily's house indirectly-sprinkling lime at night rather than confronting her-this secretive communication maintains social politeness while simultaneously excluding Emily from meaningful interaction, reinforcing her isolation [3,54]. Through these pragmatic aspects, Faulkner emphasizes that political and personal language is not merely communicative; it actively constructs social identity, regulates behavior, and shapes the trajectory of an individual's life within a tradition-bound society.

**Conclusion.** William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily* demonstrates that both political and personal discourse have a profound impact on individual identity, social behavior, and psychological well-being. The pragmatic analysis of key speech acts reveals how authority, politeness strategies, and indirect communication shape Emily Grierson's life. Colonel Sartoris' tax exemption functions as a performative act that elevates Emily while simultaneously limiting her autonomy. The Board of Aldermen's bureaucratic tax notice represents a face-threatening act, disrupting her established social position and creating defensiveness. Emily's own refusal—"I have no taxes in Jefferson"—demonstrates a speech act used to assert agency and protect her social face, while her silent gestures toward Homer Barron convey dominance and desire through nonverbal pragmatic strategies. Furthermore, the judge and sheriff's indirect approach to the odor problem reinforces Emily's isolation while preserving social politeness.

Together, these examples illustrate that Faulkner's use of both political and personal language functions as a mechanism of social control, shaping Emily's interactions, identity, and ultimate psychological decline. Pragmatic strategies-whether verbal or nonverbal, direct or indirect, polite or bureaucratic-highlight the power of discourse in determining personal destiny within a tradition-bound society. Ultimately, the story shows that language is not neutral; it is a tool that constructs authority, governs behavior, and shapes the course of an individual's life.

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