

Subjectivation through the Name-of-the-Father: A Lacanian Reading of William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily*

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Abstract- *This paper aims to interpret how the protagonist in William Faulkner's A Rose for Emily is re-identified under her father and the public's repression, and to apply Lacan's theory of "Name-of-the-Father" within two functions: to love and forbid, to analyze how subjectivation takes place regarding a woman in a conservative American southern society. The short story begins with the whole town's going to Emily Grierson's funeral and "male" participants are especially stressed on possessing "respectful affection" for her. In such traditional society, it is a common phenomenon that women repressed by patriarchal hegemony live without subjectivity but in Emily's burial rite, she is finally regarded a "fallen monument" instead of a desubjectivated individual. Emily even represents the "hereditary obligation and duty" in the town where simultaneously a black woman is not allowed to appear on the street without an apron. Due to the female protagonist's surviving in such social background filled with sexism, the unusual outcome of Emily's playing a representative "monument" among conservative southerners has aroused the significant issue that how subjectivation ultimately happens to a woman repressed by patriarchy.*

Keywords- Subjectivation; Name-of-the-Father; Masculinity; Subjectivity

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1950s, Jacques Lacan proposes "the name of the father" to explain how in the Oedipus complex, the role of Father prohibit the incest taboo. "The name of the father" is defined as the figure of law and the support of symbolic function. Further, in 1955-1956, he capitalizes and hyphenates such term as the Name-of-the-Father" and emphasizes the prohibitive and legislative function of the symbolic father (306). Two stages are included in the operation of the Name-of-the-Father: displacement and sublimation. At the first stage, displacement, the signifier (Name-of-the-Father) substitutes for another signifier (the subject's desire for the mother). In other words, the signifier, the Name-of-the-Father, makes the possibility of paternal metaphor refer to the function of interdiction for stressing the symbolic order. Such paternal metaphor which name and positions the subject guides the subject to the symbolic order and the social order beyond the relationship between the parent and the child. Accordingly, the subject turns to identify the role of imaginary father, a composite of all the imaginary. At the second stage, sublimation, the Name-of-the-Father plays as a signifier integrated with Autre (the big Other) relating to unconsciousness. The father here is identified as the symbolic one. (Chen 161) In the following discourses, how Emily's subjectivation is formed will be discussed in the light of Lacan's the Name-of-the-Father that names, positions and confers identity on the subject.

2. THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER AND THE SIGNIFIER OF THE NAME-OF-THE-FATHER

The appearance of the signifier of the Name-of-the-father closely relates to the death of Emily's father who in Emily's mind has already been sublimed and become the symbolic father (Chen 162). As for Emily's subjectivation, at the moment of the appearance of the dead father, merely a name in the signifying chain, the Name-of-the-father has empowered her with phallus. In the plot, three pictures (images) concerning the dead father have implied the bound relationship between the signifier and the Name-of-the-father.

Regarding the first image of her dead feather, when the deputations of tax affair sit in Emily's house, they see the "tarnished crayon portrait" of Emily's father before the fireplace. The portrait delivers the death of the biological father who loves and forbids Emily by driving away all men getting close to her and whose temperament "had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die" (Faulkner 127). The day after the death of the father, Emily reveals that her father is not dead yet as the context discloses, "She told them that her father was not dead" (123). Simultaneously, the Name-of-the-father had already shifted from the imaginary order into symbolic one. The symbolic father had already replaced the dead biological father in the

daughter's mind as Lacan expounds, "The father belongs to a reality that is sacred in itself, more spiritual than any other, since ultimately nothing in lived reality strictly speaking points to his function, his presence, his dominance" (1955-1956: 215).

Discussing the second image of her father, while people feel sorry for the situation that none of young men were good enough for Miss Emily, another image with regard to the dead biological father appears again. Images including Emily, horsewhip and her father have been taken as a "tableau" by the character "we" who comment on Emily thoroughly in the plot. Coexistence of the image of the father and the "horsewhip" in the tableau are revealed as follows, "We had long thought of them as a tableau. Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the back-ground, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them named by the back-flung front door" (Falkner 123). Due to the second stage of the Name-of-the-father, the biological father has already been sublimed and there comes phallus. Young and slender Emily possesses no right to pursuit her happiness due to the father's dominance. The death of the father represents liberty to some extent for Emily to control her own destiny. On the other side, Emily has not recognized that she had already morbidly depended on her father's rigid protection.

Concerning the third image of the dead father, when Emily's cousins hold her funeral on the second day of her death, the "crayon face" of the dead father is profoundly above Emily's bier and the town goes to the funeral, including the young and very old men. The father's portrait on the coffin announced the sublimation of the imaginary father again. Acquiring the Name-of-the-father results in subjectivation of Emily who was originally alienated but ultimately won the reverence of the town.

3. THE NAME-OF-THE-FATHER IN THE OLD AND NEW GENERATION

The conservative power and the new one are resisting against each other in the town. Mayors and aldermen of the next generation and Homer Barron who accept the change of the new society symbolize new and progressing power. In contrast, the old generation is represented by Emily, Colonel Sartoris and the black server.

Those characters belonging to the old social system with conservative living style, represent the remnants of old phallus to hamper the progression and revolution of the new society. Also, the description of the black server in Emily's house provides clues for readers to distinguish the old and new generations. In the short story, when the time falls on the old age, the black server is depicted as "a young man then---going in and out with a market basket" and on the new age, "we watched the Negro grow grayer

and more stooped, going in and out with the market basket" (Falkner 122 and 128). Beside the portrayal of the black server's youth and grey hair (being young and old), the death of Emily's father could be regarded as the line between the old and new time of the town. In the span of the two periods, the Name-of-the-Father, also called the fundamental signifier is alternate in Emily's Subjectivation and the function of the symbolic father concerning solicitude and prohibition appears everywhere in Emily's life.

Referring to the depiction of the heroine, Faulkner ingeniously arranges the character "we." For instance, while mentioning the father's rigid attitude toward the daughter, the character "we" state, "We remembered all the young men her father had driven away" (124). The character, "we" bound with appraisal of Emily's deeds has emerged all the time—"We all said; and we said; we had said; we were disappointed; we expected" (126-7). It implies that one's desire is equal to Other's desire which exists depending on relationship (Lacan 1953: 75). Here, Other refers to not only other people and but also the social standard. The character "we" is similar to "authority figures—the teacher, headmaster, policeman, or ultimately, God,—may take his place in instilling in the child the sense of lawfulness and willing submission to social customs" (Grosz 68). Moreover, the character "we" also disclose the background how Puritan doctrines in the South society oppress women with patriarchal dominance.

Focusing on the displacement of the old age by the new one, the death of Emily's father symbolically announces the decline of the old power conferring identity on Emily, and the appearance of the Yankee, Homer Barron, supplies a substitutive function in the Name-of-the-Father. For being subjectivated, an individual has to obtain the name to identify himself/herself. As to Emily, the biological father and Homer are the two intimate characters who provide signifiers—"horsewhip and whip" that symbolically refer to phallus.

People in the town believe that Emily, like the Greisons holding themselves "a little too high for what they really were," and think of Emily and her father as a tableau that has been mentioned above. Such tableau with the images of the father, the daughter and the horsewhip has delivers the message that Emily has already been positioned as the result of being positioned with the phallus. And when getting along with Homer on Sunday afternoon "in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove" (126). In paternal metaphor, the signifier/desire also can be replaced by another signifier (Father). After the death of Mr. Greisons, the disappearance of the father's law reflects that Emily is not prohibited to date with men. Emily has outings with Homer on Sundays. Homer's "whip," the

symbol of phallus, parallels with the biological father's "horsewhip" in Emily's subjectivation.

4. IMAGINARY AND SYMBOLIC IDENTIFICATION OF EMILY

Subjectivation begins in mirror stage containing aggressiveness and alienation, a process from "insufficiency to anticipation," and ends in Oedipus complex, the stage relating to "paternal metaphor" in which Lacan metaphorically regards the Name-of-the-Father as law, intimidation of castration (Lacan, 1949: 78). Also, in one's identification, the imaginary identification happens at the mirror stage where the subject feels alienated and aggressive; the symbolic identification emerges in Oedipus complex where sublimation also works.

With the reference to the mirror stage, in *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, Lacan emphasizes that subject is usually pushed back to the mirror stage where the subject does not recognize the stage as been enclosed. That is to say, "If the subject did not rediscover through aggression—often taken as far back as the mirror stage [stade]—the inside of a stadium [stade] in which his ego contains his imaginary exploits, there would hardly be any assignable limits to the credulity to which he would have to succumb in this situation" (1953: 282). Similarly, in Emily's life, psychological regression in relation to the "mirror stage" makes her aggressive and alienated more than once. In the mirror stage, the desire of the subject is substituted and the father is defined as the imaginary one. In such primary stage, aggressiveness and alienation are disclosed on the subject. After the death of the father, isolation and loneliness make her at a loss about what to do and the generation has apparently changed. Disclaiming the loss of the father, Emily misses the past glory and reluctantly faces the truth. Immersing herself in the past makes her inharmonious with the society. Moreover, regarding the new welfare of the free postal delivery in the town, Emily alone objects to fasten the metal numbers above her door. The female protagonist's staying in the old rut is even depicted as the following sentence, "She would not listen to them" (Falkner 128).

Resistance of the tax notice of the new mayor also demonstrates the subject's alienation and aggressiveness in the process of acquiring subjectivity. Colonel Sartoris, who remitted her taxes dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity plays a part in the old phallus (Falkner 120). Due to possess the old phallus where Emily considers it is the official's obligation to remit her tax, the new mayor and aldermen's imposing taxation arouses Emily's dissatisfaction. Steeped in old phallus, Emily answers the new officials in a dry and cold voice: "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and

satisfy yourselves" (121). Actually, Sartoris has been dead for ten years. Accordingly, Emily's cognition apparently discloses how she refuses to accept the truth that the old generation has been replaced by the new one and she endeavors to safeguard the standpoint of old southern noble privilege. The characteristic of stubbornness leads Emily to predicaments and tragedy.

In the period of Oedipus Complex, one obtains subjectivity through recognizing distinction between self and other and the fear of castration forces an individual to obey laws and rules as Lacan proposes,

The Oedipus complex means that the imaginary, in itself an incestuous and conflictual relation, is doomed to conflict and ruin. In order for the human being to be able to establish the most natural of relations, that between male and female, a third party has to intervene, one that is the image of something successful, the model of some harmony. This does not go far enough—there has to be a law, a chain, a symbolic order, the intervention of the order of speech, that is, of the father. Not the natural father, but what is called the father. The order that prevents the collision and explosion of the situation as a whole is founded on the existence of this name of the father. (1955-1956: 96)

Indeed, the Father and the biological father easily confuse readers. Without Lacan's specific explanation, Emily's father, who is merely a follower of the patriarchy in such traditional environment, might be mistaken for the people who trammel the daughter's life. To pinpoint what really oppresses Emily, the Father, representing laws and doctrines stipulated by the society and the country, tremendously influences the heroine's life.

In addition, in *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, Grosz explains how the subject is socially constructed relating to the character of the paternal figure by proposing,

Together they explain the psychological dimensions of the social constructions of subjectivity. Independent of these cultural givens, the child has neither a stable identity nor a determinate sexuality. This process of social construction is predicated on the necessary renunciation and sacrifice of the child's access to the maternal body and the child's submission to the Law of the Father. The paternal figure serves to separate the child from an all-encompassing, engulfing, and potentially lethal relation with the mother. The

father intervenes into this imaginary dyad and represents the Law. The Father embodies the power of the phallus and threat of castration. Accepting his authority and phallic status is the precondition of the child's having a place within the socio-symbolic order, a name, and a speaking position. (143)

With regard to the paternal metaphor, the new signifier of the Name-of-the-Father reveals with the appearance of Homer Barron, a white worker from the North. Precisely in the year of the father's death, Homer comes to Emily's life and immediately becomes "the center of the group." And people see him and Miss Emily "on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow wheeled buggy and the matched team of hays from the lively stable" (Faulkner 124). Even though being the only lover of Emily, Homer, who is familiar with the operation of machines ironically stands for the opposite north area on behalf of advanced social production and progression. Howbeit, Emily is considered as the representative of the decayed south society. After the death of Emily's father (a significant process of the appearance of the Name-of-the-Father in the old society mentioned above), Homer, substitute for the father in Emily's life, is dead, too. Homer's death could be interpreted as a sacrificial lamb of the battle of the new and old society. Besides, his death also symbolizes the death of the biological father in the new society that causes the reemergence of the Name-of-the-Father for Emily.

Referring to the issue of law, the old society had imposed pressure and responsibility upon Emily by regarding her as an idol with phallus, especially after her father was dead. Thus, people cannot tolerate her marrying a physical labor and try to interfere with her love with the Northern worker. Although ladies who connects the image of "blessed oblige" with Emily, criticize her as disgrace of the town owing to her dating with the Northern laborer, Emily determinedly regarded the public opinion for retrieving the lost phallus resulting from the father's death. Ladies even force the Baptist minister to visit her. Here, the public and the minister's calling on Emily both belong to the figure of law to emphasize the legislative and prohibitive function of the Name-of-the-Father where the signifier lets signification progresses normally and makes possible paternal metaphor referring to the prohibition, repression and law for stressing the symbolic order. That is to say, the Name-of-the-Father sustains the structure of "desire" with the structure of "law" (Lacan 1964: 34) and it is the basis of symbolic function that has identifies an individual with the figure of law (1953: 278).

Being a lover of Homer makes Emily uneasy owing to the traditional doctrines, the so-called "law," of the society. Nevertheless, Emily falls in love with homosexual Homer, who liked men. It is known that he drinks with younger men in the Elks' Club and he declares

that he is not a marrying man (Faulkner 126). For eliminating her uneasiness, committing a homicide becomes Emily's only route since she has been prohibited from being a wife of the Northerner. In order to sustain her character as a paragon and monument for the old ages, Emily would rather murder the lover and put the corpse in the old house which is left by the old parent rather than hear others' negative comments against her.

5. FORMATION OF EMILY'S SUBJECTIVITY AND MASCUNITY

Disregarding the ladies' animadversion, the heroine buys a complete outfit of men's clothing and goes to the jewelers and ordered a man's toilet set in silver, with the letters H.B. on each piece although finally the monogram was obscured (Faulkner 127 and 130). Conspicuously, the "letters H.B." is defined as the fundamental signifier to permit signification to proceed in Emily's psychological development, to converse on the subject and to connect to the function of symbolic father (Lacan, 1964: 282). Within the symbolic order, Emily is named and positioned.

The conception of the Name-of-the-Father provides a significant function in the constitution of the subject and the Name-of-the-Father provides the support of the symbolic function to identify the subject with figure of law (Glowinski, et al., eds. 120). To discuss further, subjectivation takes place in symbolic order premised on the recognition of the unattainability of desire. With reference to the experience of lack, the subject is always influenced by the desire of the Other resulting in anxiety where the objet petit a (the cause of desire) is what falls from the subject (Lacan 1974: 82). As Lacan revealed, a signifier is characterized by its representing a signifier to another subject (Seminar 49). Before being subjectivated, a subject must obtain the name. H.B. plays the role of a signifier to trigger the Name-of-the-Father. Such procedure of signification can be attributed to the second stage of the Name-of-the-Father with regard to libidinal normalization and sublimation (Chen 161).

6. CONCLUSION

In the procedure of subjectivation, Emily's masculinity is disclosed in parallel. After getting sick, her hair has been cut. Furthermore, she was shaped with fat body and grey hair at end of the short story: "Up to the day of her death at seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-gray, like the hair of an active man" (Faulkner 127-8). There is another situation to prove Emily's subjectivation. While describing how people participate in Emily's funeral ceremony, the narrator divides people into "men" and "women," and particularly stresses that those are "men," who possess masculinity in such patriarchal society, respecting the fallen monument, Emily. Through the function of Name-of-the-Father, Miss Emily becomes "a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation

upon the town” (119). Lacan’s amplification interprets how the heroine socially constructs herself through filling up the deficiency of her subjectivity. Accordingly, Emily Grierson’s death unexpectedly makes the whole town go to her funeral and men embrace a sort of respectful affection for such “fallen monument” in such patriarchal conservative society.

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