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Archetypes in A Rose for Emily

Archetypes are, by definition, previous images, characters, or patterns that recur throughout literature and though consistently enough to be considered a universal concept or situation. Archetypes also can be described as complexes of experiences that come upon us like fate, and their effects are felt in our most personal life. A Rose for Emily by William Faulkner contains many of this particular critical method. Although there are several archetypes found, the most important is Emily's father.

Archetypes are like riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them, but it can find it again at any time. This short story offers many interpretations. However, the structure of the story breaks down into two stages: past and present. By examining the archetypes within the story, it can be suggested that Emily's over-protective father stands to represent Emily's feminist struggle, the ongoing battle for women to have an equal place in society. Emily should be able to do as she pleases, but her dependence her father does not allow her to have that freedom.

Her father's over-protection is evident in this passage, "We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will" (279). Her father robs her from many of life's necessities. She misses out on having friends, being a normal "woman," and her ability to be happy. Emily is not able to live a normal life which she indirectly blames on her father. Emily is so used to having her father be there for her, she figures that by keeping his body he can still be part of her life.

The Jungian archetype of this feminist struggle can be noted as: Emily is not able to live a normal life because her father keeps under his thumb. In relation to keeping her father's body, she keeps Homer Barron's body so long because she feels that she has finally accomplished something in her life. Emily is not ready to give up that feeling. The feminist struggle is hard to detect but it is still there.

In conclusion, there are two archetypes in A Rose for Emily: Emily's father and Homer Barron. Emily's father is the chief archetype because he is the reason for Emily's breakdowns. She has been scarred for life which she obviously never over comes.

