

Original Paper

The Irrecoverable Trauma of Emily: A Study of Trauma in William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily*

Zhekang Jin^{1,a,*}

¹ School of International Studies, Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, China

* Corresponding author, E-mail: 3120264317@qq.com

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Abstract

William Faulkner's A Rose for Emily is a short story that describes the tragic life experiences of Emily, who goes through various traumas and becomes psychologically distorted. Based on Judith Herman's work, Trauma and Recovery, this thesis first analyzes the traumatic symptoms of Emily, using Herman's three main categories of traumatic symptoms, which includes the symptom of hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction. Then, the causes of Emily's trauma will be analyzed, focusing on analyzing the constraints of family, the social oppression and isolation, and the betrayal by her lover. Ultimately, under the guidance of Judith Herman's three stage model of trauma recovery, this thesis manages to demonstrate the inevitable failure of Emily's trauma recovery, focusing on analyzing Emily's failure in the establishment of safety, remembrance and mourning, and the reconnection with ordinary life.

Keywords

A Rose for Emily, William Faulkner, Trauma, Recovery, Inevitable Failure

1. Introduction

A Rose for Emily is a short story written by William Faulkner, who was awarded the 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature for his literary achievement and is now hailed as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. Through a non-linear narrative structure, this short story depicts the life of Emily Grierson, a faded Southern belle living in the Southern town of Jefferson. Emily encounters many misfortunes in her life, including her father's oppression, societal pressure, her lover's betrayal and so on. These experiences cause irrecoverable trauma to her, leading her into a state of psychological distortion and perversion. At the age of seventy-four, she passes away after living an isolated life and failing to recover from her trauma.

Since the publication of this short story, it has drawn significant attention from scholars across various

fields, who have analyzed this work from various perspectives, including ethical literary criticism, the narrative techniques, the Gothic style, feminism, existentialism, etc. However, traumatic elements in this story receive less attention and few studies have directly looked at the traumatic symptoms of Emily. Therefore, this thesis attempts to analyze the irrecoverable trauma of Emily, thus systematically exploring the psychological mechanisms behind her trauma and forging new pathways for the application of trauma studies in the field of literary analysis.

Trauma, a term widely used in the realm of literary criticism and psychology, originally refers to an injury to living tissue caused by the external force. Later, as contemporary trauma studies progress, the meaning of trauma expands to represent the intangible mental injury that cannot be seen or physically sensed. Many scholars have defined this term in their studies. According to Cathy Caruth, an important scholar of trauma studies, trauma is “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearances of hallucination and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth, 1996). This definition focuses on the mental symptoms following trauma experience, which is now a commonly understood interpretation of trauma. Moreover, Freud, the pioneer of trauma study, defines trauma as “any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. There is no long any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus” (Freud, 1961, p. 23). In addition, based on the studies of these scholars, Judith Herman, a famous psychiatrist, not only presents a summary of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms but also offers various therapeutic methods for the recovery of traumatized person in her book *Trauma and Recovery*. Her theories are widely used in the fields of literary criticism and psychology, and therefore serve as the theoretical basis of this paper.

Considering the above information, this paper will first analyze the traumatic symptoms of Emily, using Herman’s three main categories of traumatic symptoms. Then, the causes of Emily’s trauma will be analyzed. In the final part, this thesis will use Herman’s three stage model of trauma recovery to demonstrate the inevitable failure of Emily’s recovery.

2. The Traumatic Symptoms of Emily

Traumatic symptoms encompass both emotional and physical aspects. The various trauma can result in intense feelings, affecting one’s mindset, actions and perception of the world. Generally, the traumatic people often behave in ways that reflect their past traumatic experiences and show some specific symptoms. Herman points out that “the many symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder fall into three main categories. These are hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction” (Herman, 1997, p. 35). In *A Rose for Emily*, Emily has been through a series of traumas, showing the three symptoms to varying degrees.

2.1 Hyperarousal

The first cardinal symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder is hyperarousal, an abnormal state of increased responsiveness to stimuli. According to Herman, “after a traumatic experience, the human

system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment. Physiological arousal continues unabated” (Herman, 1997, p. 35). Hyperarousal causes people who have been traumatized to react irritably to small provocation. They are more sensitive to noise and experience difficulties with sleep. Some may become fractious and lose their temper easily. The traumatized people are more vigilant than those who have not experienced trauma, focusing their attention on potential dangers.

In *A Rose for Emily*, Emily’s symptom of hyperarousal can be seen in her reactions to certain stimuli. One significant manifestation of Emily’s hyperarousal is her extreme vigilance towards the intrusion into her secluded life. After murdering Homer Barron, Emily locks herself in her house and withdraws from society. As a result, she knows nothing about the changes in the social system and holds the firm belief that she has no taxes in Jefferson as Colonel Sartoris has remitted her taxes as a gesture of respect to her family. In her secluded house, she conceals her perverted acts of crime and clings to the past, refusing to acknowledge the present-day authorities who, years later, attempt to collect the due taxes. When a delegation from the Board of Aldermen arrives at her home, her reaction is described with a sense of indifference and defensiveness, reflecting her symptom of hyperarousal. “She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt. Then they could hear the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain”(Faulkner, 1995, p. 81). It’s clear that she is extremely wary of this group of people and adopts a cold and indifferent attitude towards them. Then, when the delegation continues to reason with her, Emily immediately loses her temper and kicks them out of the house. She says, “See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe! Show these gentlemen out” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 81). It can be seen from these words that, though the delegation communicates with Emily in a respectful manner, she still reacts strongly to it and becomes very irritable. This shows her extreme vigilance towards other people, which is the symptom of hyperarousal.

2.2 Intrusion

Intrusion reflects the lasting impact of the traumatic moment. Even though the traumatic event happened a long time ago, the traumatized person still can’t stop thinking about the painful experience. According to Herman, “long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts” (Herman, 1997, p. 37).

For Emily, she is constantly disturbed by the memories of her past traumas. Emily’s refusal to accept her father’s death and the refusal to allow his body to be removed immediately is a notable example of her intrusion. As a Southern belle, Emily is confined to her house by her father and is still single at the age of thirty. When her father is still alive, her fate is determined by him. Her father imposes traditional values on her, firmly controls her life and exerts pressure on her, causing her great trauma. He prevents Emily from pursuing her own love, turning down many men who expressed their love for Emily. As a result, people in the town believe that “None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily

and such” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 82). Over time, Emily’s negative outlook on her life gradually develops and she becomes extremely obedient to her father. Eventually, the traumatic memories caused by her father’s oppression transform into her mental pillar. When her father passes away and this mental pillar collapses, all of her traumatic memories, however, do not disappear. In fact, these traumatic memories have become an indispensable part of her life. In order to rebuild her mental pillar, she forces herself to believe that her father is still alive and has not passed away. “Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 83). It can be seen from these words that she is constantly disturbed by her past traumatic memories and even sees these traumatic memories as the foundation and pillar of her life, showing the symptom of intrusion.

2.3 Constriction

Constriction, the numbing response of surrender, is the third cardinal symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. According to Herman, “when a person is completely powerless, and any form of resistance is futile, she may go into a state of surrender. The system of self-defense shuts down entirely” (Herman, 1997, p. 42). In the face of unavoidable danger, people who are haunted by trauma may not only show fear and anger but also enter a state of numbness and calmness. Additionally, one significant impact of constriction is its interference with an individual’s ability to plan for the future. Herman points out that “constrictive symptoms also interfere with anticipation and planning for the future” (Herman, 1997, p. 46). When someone is trapped in a state of numbness, they may find it difficult to set goals for themselves

In *A Rose for Emily*, the most prominent traumatic symptom of Emily is constriction. After the death of her father and her lover, Emily’s actions and behaviors demonstrate a clear sense of surrender and numbness in the face of her past traumas. She spends her days locked inside her house, refusing to communicate with the outside world and ignoring any visitors to her house. “After her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 82). From this description, it can be seen that Emily is immersed in her own world and tries to escape from the reality. Later, when people attend Emily’s funeral, they discover the secret that Emily had poisoned Homer and slept with his corpse for decades. In fact, after suffering all kinds of traumas, Emily imprisons herself in the fantasy of her “happy” marriage with Homer. She has become completely numb, unable to distinguish between illusion and reality and has lost her sanity. Therefore, it is evident that Emily is completely unaware of her current situation and gives up on planning for the future, rotting away in her own house. This extreme act of secluding herself can be seen as a very serious symptom of constriction. As a result of her constriction, Emily is trapped in a world of delusion and gives up her plans for the future.

3. Causes of Emily's Trauma

Throughout her life, Emily has encountered numerous traumas, which are caused by various factors. In this section, this paper will analyze the causes of Emily's trauma, focusing on analyzing the constraints of family, the social oppression and isolation, and the betrayal by her lover.

3.1 Constraints of Family

Emily's trauma stems from her family. According to the family systems theory, "the emotional symptoms of an individual are an expression of the emotional symptoms of the family, which are often embedded in patterns of behaviors from past generations" (Haefner, 2014). Therefore, the family environment has a tremendous influence on an individual's life and can cause people to experience emotional distress, which may lead to the emergence of trauma.

Emily's father is a traditional Southern aristocrat who firmly believes in Southern traditional values, viewing women as the property of men. He tightly controls Emily and keeps her living in an oppressive family environment, depriving her of the right to pursue love. To achieve this, Emily's father drives away all the young men who tries to pursue Emily, which makes the townspeople think of them as a tableau: "Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip" (Faulkner, 1995, p. 83). From this description, it can be seen that Emily's father has managed to create an oppressive family environment in his family. As a result, Emily loses her autonomy in this environment and becomes a tool of her father, causing her great trauma.

Moreover, according to Bowen's family systems theory, the process of individual growth is referred to as the differentiation of self in the family and "Bowen proposed that the level of chronic anxiety correlated with the level of differentiation of self" (Haefner, 2014). In a free family environment, individuals can attain self-development and progress towards maturity, whereas in an oppressive family environment, they are denied the freedom to grow independently and become reliant on their parents. As the daughter of a noble family, Emily is taught how to be a proper southern belle from a young age. Also, every word and action of Emily's father subtly influences and controls her thoughts, causing her to willingly accept his manipulation and lose her independent spirit. Therefore, Emily's personal growth is impeded and her mindset is stuck in an immature state. When her father dies, Emily fails to accept the reality and even tries to deny it. In fact, her immaturity and excessive reliance on her father have made her quite vulnerable. As a result, her father's death has inflicted a profound trauma upon her. And it's clear that without the constraints of her family, the trauma she experiences would not be so severe.

3.2 Social Oppression and Isolation

Emily's trauma also stems from social oppression and isolation. Social oppression can be defined as the systemic and institutional subjugation of individuals or groups based on their social identity, such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, or disability. After the Civil War, the Southern aristocracy is in decline, and Emily, as a member of the Southern aristocracy, becomes a representative of the remaining

Southern spirit. At this time, the people in the town have not moved away from the traditional values of the South, and many still believe in the Southern traditional values. Therefore, they regard Emily as a symbol of their past Southern spirit and believe that Emily should adhere to Southern traditions. “Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 80). As a result, when Emily tries to pursue her own love and dates with a day laborer from the North, the townspeople begin to oppose this behavior and believe that she has fallen. Some of the ladies even say that “it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 85). This social oppression hurts Emily’s dignity as a noblewoman. Although she still puts on her noble demeanor and “carried her head high enough” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 84), her heart has been greatly traumatized. This noble tradition, which she is so proud of and is respected by the townspeople, becomes the source of her pain under the great oppression of the society.

In addition, social isolation, a result of her previous painful experiences, exacerbates Emily’s trauma and leads to further harm. Social isolation refers to “the absence or paucity of contacts and interactions between a person and a social network” (Gardiner, Geldenhuys, & Gott, 2018). As previously mentioned, the most prominent traumatic symptom of Emily is constriction. The symptom of constriction prevents her from interacting with the people around her, leading to the absence of contacts between her and the society. Therefore, social isolation appears in Emily’s situation. It deprives Emily of opportunities for emotional support, leaving her more vulnerable to negative thoughts and memories associated with her trauma. In turn, her indifferent and repulsive attitude causes people in the town to fear her and distance themselves from her. As time goes by, she is described by the townspeople as an “inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse” person. This forms a vicious cycle, which brings more harm to Emily and deepens the extent of her trauma.

3.3 Lover’s Betrayal

According to the betrayal trauma theory, “relational traumas—traumatic events that occur in the context of an ongoing relationship, and which involve the betrayal of important bonds are more highly correlated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other symptoms of emotional distress than are non-relational traumas” (Freyd, Klest, & Allard, 2005). It can be seen that the trauma caused by betrayal in interpersonal relationships is much more severe than that caused by other factors. Therefore, emotional betrayal is likely to bring great trauma to the victims. Emily, the poor woman who has suffered so much trauma, is completely shattered by the trauma brought about by Homer’s betrayal, losing her own soul.

After her father’s death, Emily’s self-awareness wakes up for a short period. She bravely breaks tradition and chooses to enter into a romantic relationship with Homer, a foreman from the North. Despite the social oppression she faces, she persists in pursuing her love. They go on outings together and attend gatherings. Their love brings her a new sense of hope. Therefore, she wholeheartedly devotes herself to this love, putting all her heart into it and even preparing the necessary items for their marriage. “We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jeweler’s and ordered a man’s toilet set in silver,

with the letters H.B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men's clothing" (Faulkner, 1995, p. 85). However, the passion and the dedication she offers are met with heartless rejection and betrayal. The harsh reality is that Homer is merely playing with this romance and has no desire to marry Emily. This betrayal utterly shatters Emily's fragile self-esteem as a noblewoman. In fact, constrained by the ideals of being a Southern belle, Emily believes that finding a husband can change her current helpless situation and help fill the void left by her father's death. However, Homer's betrayal undoubtedly turns her dreams into ashes. This emotional trauma causes her to completely give up on her own life, shattering her last psychological line of defense. At this point, Emily has already lost her soul, falling into her symptom of constriction.

4. The Inevitable Failure of Emily's Trauma Recovery

Suffering from a series of traumas, Emily has gone through many difficulties and hardships. For Emily, her tragic ending is inevitable and her trauma will never recover. In Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, there are three main stages in trauma recovery: "Recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety. The central task of the second stage is remembrance and mourning. The central task of the third stage is reconnection with ordinary life" (Herman, 1997, p. 155). Obviously, Emily has failed in each of these three recovery stages. Based on Herman's theory, this paper will analyze the inevitable failure of Emily's recovery from the following three perspectives: failure in the establishment of safety, failure in remembrance and mourning, and failure in the reconnection with ordinary life.

4.1 Failure in the Establishment of Safety

The traumatized people often experience a deep sense of insecurity within their own bodies and feel unsafe in their interpersonal relationships with other people. According to Herman, "the first task of recovery is to establish the survivor's safety. This task takes precedence over all others, for no other therapeutic work can possibly succeed if safety hasn't been adequately secured" (Herman, 1997, p. 159). Thus, the initial step of recovery is the establishment of safety. In Herman's theory, "Establishing safety begins by focusing on control of the body and gradually moves outward toward control of the environment" (Herman, 1997, p. 160). The control of the body includes "attention to basic health needs, regulation of bodily functions such as sleep, eating, and exercise and control of self-destructive behaviors" (Herman, 1997, p. 160) and the control of the environment includes "the establishment of a safe living situation" (Herman, 1997, p. 155). As no one can build a safe environment alone, "a component of social support" (Herman, 1997, p. 155) is needed in the control of the environment. Therefore, to recover from her trauma, Emily has to first control her bodily condition. Then, she should try to establish a safe environment by developing a trusting relationship with others. Unfortunately, Emily has failed in both of these aspects.

First, Emily has failed in controlling her bodily condition. Initially, Emily is a slender traditional noblewoman, attracting numerous young men. "Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the

background” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 84). After her father’s death, Emily cuts her hair short and looks like a girl. During this period, her self-awareness wakes up and her body is still in good condition. “When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows: sort of tragic and serene.” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 83). However, from Homer’s rejection of her love, her body has undergone a huge change, and she begins to lose control of her body. “She was still a slight woman, though thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eye sockets as you imagine a lighthouse-keeper’s face ought to look” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 84). After Homer’s death, Emily isolates herself from the outside world and spends her days in her house. Under this great trauma, she is completely unable to control her body and emotions and sleeps with Homer’s corpse, the smell of which even begins to affect the neighbors. Living in this extremely detrimental environment, Emily makes no changes, refuses to go out and has almost perverse lifestyle habits. Over time, this very unhealthy and oppressive living environment causes her body to deteriorate significantly. Therefore, when the deputation arrives at her home, Emily’s terrifying bodily condition gave these people a big shock. “A small, fat woman in black...Her skeleton was small and spare...She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 81). From this description, it can be seen that Emily completely fails to control her body, which prevents her from establishing a sense of safety in the first stage of recovery and deprives her trauma recovery of the most fundamental physical foundation. Additionally, Emily never tries to build a trusting relationship with others, failing to establish a sense of safety in interpersonal relationships. She refuses to engage with anyone, and cuts off all the possibilities of social support, making it impossible for her to establish a safe environment. This will be analyzed in a detailed way later in the part of “failure in the reconnection with ordinary life”. In summary, Emily has failed in both the control of her bodily condition and the control of the environment. She is unable to fulfill the recovery task of establishing safety in the first stage, which undermines the foundation of her trauma recovery and makes the subsequent two stages of recovery even more difficult to carry on.

4.2 Failure in Remembrance and Mourning

Remembrance and Mourning is the central task of the second stage. In the second stage of recovery, “the survivor tells the story of the trauma. She tells it completely, in depth and in detail” (Herman, 1997, p. 175). It can be seen from Herman’s words that sharing traumatic stories is of vital importance in the recovery process. In fact, retelling trauma stories helps the patients to integrate their traumatic memories into their life stories and is crucial for recovery. It allows survivors to understand their traumatic experiences, turning their stories into a testimony for healing and relieving them of the burden of traumatic past. Moreover, telling the trauma story inevitably plunges the survivor into profound grief. This process of mourning is the most necessary and the most dreaded task of this stage of recovery.

In *A Rose for Emily*, Emily never retells her traumatic stories or mourns for her past traumas. After her father's death, Emily does not release her grief through storytelling. She is tightly controlled by the pain caused by the trauma and buries it deep within her heart, which prevents her from expressing her emotions and mourning for her father. In fact, she even attempts to escape her mourning for her father by imagining that her father is still alive. "Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead" (Faulkner, 1995, p. 83). As previously mentioned, her symptom of intrusion constantly disturbs her, making it difficult for her to break free from her own world and mourn for her father. Later, after being rejected by Homer, Emily does not retell the betrayal trauma she experiences to anyone. She keeps this trauma buried deep within her, causing psychological distortion and ultimately poisoning Homer. This perverse behavior may appear to fulfill Emily's desire to be with Homer through marriage, but in reality, it further intensifies her trauma and plunges her deeper into her own fantasy world. Also, as the perpetrator of Homer's death, Emily cannot disclose her crime to others, leaving her with no opportunity to share and retell her traumatic story. This accumulation of her great trauma and turbulent emotions prevents her from mourning for Homer's death. She remains completely controlled by the memories of her trauma and even sleeps with Homer's corpse until her own death. "Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron gray hair" (Faulkner, 1995, p. 88). It can be seen that Emily always believes that Homer is still alive and will never mourn for him or for her own traumatic experiences.

It's evident that Emily's second stage of trauma recovery also winds up in failure. She fails to complete the task of retelling her stories and mourning. This makes it impossible for her to express her trauma and understand her traumatic experiences, leaving her trauma with no chance of being treated.

4.3 Failure in Reconnection with Ordinary Life

Reconnection with ordinary life is the central task of the third stage. According to Herman, the survivors must "develop new relationships", "find anew a sustaining faith" and "build a new life within a radically different culture from the one they have left behind" (Herman, 1997, p. 196). In the first stage, the focus is on achieving basic safety. However, by the third stage, survivors become prepared to actively engage with others. Therefore, in the third stage, the survivors are already able to trust others and begin to risk deepening their relationships. For them, reconnecting with others can foster a sense of belonging and offer them a chance to express their emotions, ultimately aiding in their recovery from trauma. However, Emily does not fit into the category of these survivors who already possesses the foundational conditions for recovery. Therefore, her third stage of recovery is bound to be a failure.

It's clear that Emily has already failed in the first two stages, which means that she has neither established her basic safety nor integrated her traumatic experiences into her life experiences, leaving her completely lacking in the basis for reconnecting with others. As previously mentioned, Emily stops going out after Homer's death and refuses to make contact with anyone else in her town. Therefore, the

only person who has a connection with Emily is the Negro man, who is responsible for taking care of her daily needs. “The only sign of life about the place was the Negro man, a young man then, going in and out with a market basket” (Faulkner, 1995, p. 82). However, their relationship is clearly limited to that of master and servant. During that period, in the confines of traditional Southern beliefs, black people were still seen as subordinate to white people and it was not possible for them to establish deep friendships with their masters. As a consequence, despite the frequent visits of the Negro man, Emily has not formed any trusting relationships with anyone and she has completely isolated herself from the society. In fact, severe social disconnectedness has occurred to her. “Social disconnectedness can be characterized by a lack of contact with others. It is indicated by situational factors, like a small social network, infrequent social interaction, and lack of participation in social activities and groups” [8]. This causes her to develop a strong sense of fear and aversion towards social interaction, making her unwilling to reestablish connections with others. As a result, her third stage of recovery becomes a distant hope. She cannot even establish the basic connections with other people in the first stage of recovery, let alone actively build trusting relationships with others. In summary, without the foundation of the first and second stages of recovery, Emily cannot accomplish the task of the third stage and cannot establish trusting relationships with others. Up to this point, based on the discussion of the three stages, it can be concluded that all three stages of Emily’s trauma recovery have ended in failure, which proves that her trauma is irrecoverable.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, in *A Rose for Emily*, William Faulkner depicts the tragic life experiences of Emily. She goes through a series of traumas and becomes psychologically distorted. After failing to progress through all three stages of trauma recovery, her trauma becomes permanently irrecoverable. Based on Herman’s trauma theory, this paper has thoroughly sought out and analyzed the traumatic symptoms of Emily, including her hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction. After analyzing the causes of Emily’s trauma, this paper uses Herman’s three stage model of trauma recovery to demonstrate the inevitable failure of Emily’s recovery, discovering Emily’s failure in the establishment of safety, remembrance and mourning, and the reconnection with ordinary life. By combining trauma theories to analyze this short story, this thesis has systematically explored the traumatic elements in this work and analyzed the psychological mechanisms behind Emily’s irrecoverable trauma, paving new way for the application of trauma studies in the field of literary analysis.

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