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FLAPPERS AND GIBSON GIRLS: FAULKNER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE FEMININE IDEAL

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When asked if it was easier to create a female character rather than a male character, Faulkner responded: "It's much more fun to try to write about women because I think women are marvelous, they're wonderful, and I know very little about them, and so I just — it's much more fun to try to write about women than about men — more difficult, yes" (Faulkner in the University 45).

Perhaps two of the most quoted female characters of American Modernism are F. Scott Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan — "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool" (Fitzgerald 17) and William Faulkner's Dilsey Gibson — of whom Faulkner famously wrote in his appendix to *The Sound and The Fury*, "they endured" (Faulkner 215, 2nd ed.). While Caddy Compson, Faulkner's "heart's darling" (*Faulkner in the University* 6), competes with (and triumphs over) Dilsey for the most written about female among all in his work, the accumulating critical discussions on Dilsey and Daisy alike are notable; however, the critical work regarding these characters contains striking gaps.

Often times, critics gravitate toward Dilsey because of the aforementioned quote as well as offer an interpretation regarding the significance of the novel's appendix and the way it reifies her incredible resilience. In his article "The 'Obverse Reflections': The 'Other' Negroes in Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*," John Rodden notes that Dilsey is frequently "regarded as the single ray of hope amid the bleakness and chaos... Faulkner's use of the the third person plural in his commentary on her in the novel's appendix has long been interpreted to mean that she symbolizes the plight and steadfastness of the novel's 'other Negroes' and, indeed, all African Americans" (74). Evidently, Dilsey's legacy survives through the conviction of these simple two words Faulkner wrote in the appendix. But this is not Rodden's focus. His study rightfully

begins to open up a discussion regarding Faulkner's African American characters beyond Dilsey, yet there remains much to be said about Dilsey beyond her role as a mother or a figure of her race. She is a figure of the time.

Conversely, when writing about Daisy, Fitzgerald's critics often discuss two ideas. They emphasize his relationship with his wife Zelda as it relates to Gatsby pursuing Daisy — "his wife, Zelda Fitzgerald, served as the model for the novel's Daisy Buchanan, a quicksilver beauty representing the unattainable" (Whitworth) — or Daisy's pioneering role as the new modern woman "whom the author immortalized as a flapper" (Donahue) (though the two commentaries are always not exclusive). Of course, there are other wonderful studies which consider the significance of Daisy's name, or compare her to other literary characters, like those in Chaucer (Luft and Dilworth) or in Henry James's work (Heims), but the point abides: Daisy is a 1920s icon.

Daisy is also a mother, but scholarship fails to thoroughly address this particular role, which is surprising when we consider her infamous response as she learns her child's sex at birth (quoted above). Sinead Moynihan begins to bridge this critical gap in her article "Beautiful White Girlhood?: Daisy Buchanan in Nella Larsen's *Passing*" as she considers Daisy as mother, though this topic is not her project's primary focus or purpose[1]. She notes that Daisy (as well as another character, Clare Kendry of Nella Larsen's *Passing*, whom I will not focus on in this essay) "poses a whole new set of questions regarding what Laura Doyle terms the 'racial matrix' of modern fiction and

[1] Moynihan's central argument offers a reading of Fitzgerald's novel that "Larsen perceived potential traces of 'invisible blackness' in *The Great Gatsby* and rewrote the novel to reflect this reading" (38).

culture whereby 'the mother figure or role represents complications not just in gender identities… but in the racial, ethnic, or national identities of the characters and narrators'" (45). This study offers a new perspective of Daisy not afforded by much of the existing criticism and provides opportunity for deeper consideration of how motherhood is connected to her overall character, race, and role as a flapper.

The flapper serves as the modern *white* woman's ideal. Thus, Moynihan appropriately designates Daisy as a "racialized mother" and argues that

> Doyle's analysis is particularly relevant here because she focuses on high modernist texts… alongside Harlem Renaissance texts… thus challenging readers to consider why "the mother figure's influence cuts across [these] two important modern literary traditions" and to throw "the strictness of the opposition" between the Harlem Renaissance and modernism into question (Doyle 3). (45)

Here, Moynihan comments on themes — race and motherhood — which unite literary movements typically viewed as separate; she dissolves the rigid binaries which distinguish "high modernism" as white and the Harlem Renaissance as black. While it is undeniable that the two movements are separated in part by race because of their respective authors' race, Moynihan simultaneously racializes each movement, thereby distinguishes them, *and* suggests a uniting, common experience: motherhood.

Aware that high modernism is skewed toward white male authors, I am interested in building on Moynihan's work by focusing on racial distinctions presented in just this movement and specifically how its authors portray racialized mothers. I agree that "motherhood" connects humanity, but also want to demonstrate how values related to motherhood vary according to culture and race; specifically in the instance of *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy's apathy to her role as mother reflects her identity as the flapper and

reveals her complicit "whiteness" and materialism; conversely, in *The Sound and the Fury* Dilsey's dedication as a mother evinces her identity as the female ideal that Faulkner, himself, creates. In fact, Dilsey's character redefines the modern woman, and by the novel's end she creates a legacy for people of color, but especially for colored women who were once intentionally excluded from these ideals.

In this project, I will reorient the critical discussion so that we can examine Daisy's role as a mother, and Dilsey's role as a cultural icon of her time. By analyzing these aspects of their character, I will ultimately demonstrate how Faulkner rewrites the feminine ideal. In order to examine Faulkner's commentary on the feminine, we will begin with an iconic female figure of the 20s: Daisy Buchanan.

The Great Gatsby is not Daisy's story, but the plot is driven by her character: her unmatched, charismatic persona as the flapper. Though the word flapper does not actually appear in this particular text, Fitzgerald uses descriptions like the "golden girl" and crafts Daisy in a way that suggests a flapper persona — one which Fitzgerald is attributed for promulgating in the first place.[2] Enigmatic, Daisy both fits the ideal and defies it. Nick introduces Daisy to readers:

> Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered "Listen," a promise that she had done gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour. (Fitzgerald 9)

[2] Fitzgerald's previous fiction like "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" (1920) is largely attributed to this craze: his "depictions of brazen women with bobbed hair and short skirts were credited with creating flappers" (Schafer).

Like the flapper, Daisy is both aloof and energizing in the way that she exudes a quality of mysterious and captivating excitement. She emanates a unique magnetism which compels others to "lean toward her" (9) as she speaks. Her "singing compulsion" is just one part of her physical appeal by which she manipulates her presence to affect the room she occupies; Nick's description (quoted above) demonstrates others' preoccupation with her voice, to which Nick continually returns.

In fact, when Nick tries to describe Daisy's voice later in the novel, he "hesitates": "She's got an indiscreet voice… It's full of — ." When Nick stumbles, Gatsby demonstrates his dedication to her, and even a part of the way he idealizes her, by the way he aptly supplies what Nick cannot articulate: "Her voice is full of money." This declaration spurs Nick's epiphanic understanding of his cousin; he elucidates, "That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money — that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it…. High in a *white* palace the king's daughter, *the golden girl*" (Fitzgerald 120, emphasis mine). Here, Nick connects her voice not only to money but also to whiteness, thus entangling social class and economics with race and the ideal of the age. Daisy is viewed as the "golden girl" because of her physicality: her voice, her beauty, and her whiteness (notably, attributes out of her control). For this reason, Nick calls Daisy the "King's daughter" so as to emphasize that she was born into not only a financially fortunate placement in society, but one of color privilege and therefore power.

Nick's comment prompts readers to view Daisy as a racialized figure (as other critics like Moynihan suggest), which forces us to consider how her racial identity

influences her decisions as well as others' response to her. Others are attracted to her not only because of her flapper persona, but largely because of what constructs the persona: her whiteness. It certainly serves as a source of attraction to her husband, Tom, who expresses blatantly racist ideas and supports contemporary white supremacist ideology, concerned with preserving the "Nordic race."

When Nick first encounters the Buchanan's, he innocently comments that Daisy makes him "feel uncivilized," which spurs Tom's sudden outburst: "Civilization's going to pieces." Tom persists, "I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read 'The Rise of the Coloured Empires' by this man Goddard?" (Fitzgerald 12). Tom's mention of this text is one of the most loaded allusions in Fitzgerald's novel, which demands careful attention in order to understand the weight it places on the Buchanan's dinner conversation and the way it illuminates Tom's expectations of Daisy, as related to the pressures of the feminine ideal.

In the article "Notes on F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Passing of the Great Race," M. Gidley points out that the mention of "The Rise of the Coloured Empires" by "Goddard" obviously suggests a connection to another "source for the 'decline and decay' philosophy of history implicit in The Great Gatsby: Theodore Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color*" (172). In fact, Gidley even proposes a rationale for how Fitzgerald developed the name "Goddard":

> in the "intellectual" sphere Stoddard's most prominent mentor and contemporary was Madison Grant (1865-1937), anthropologist, Trustee of the American Museum of National History, Chairman of the New York Zoological Society, and author of a best-seller, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). Grant wrote the "Introduction" to Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color* and it seems reasonable to

> suggest that the name of the author of the book Tom Buchanan cites — Goddard — is an amalgam of the names of these two race thinkers. (Gidley 173)

In light of these facts, the connection to Stoddard's text is undeniable, yet raises the question: Why did Fitzgerald parody this specific contemporaneous text?

The allusion to Stoddard's text achieves multiple aims in the novel. Firstly, and most simply, Fitzgerald uses the allusion to demonstrate Tom's hate-driven racism as well as his stubborn self-righteousness. Readers experience these character traits when Nick first describes Tom's intimidating persona:

> two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. … His speaking voice, a gruff husky tenor, added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal contempt in it, even toward people he liked - and there were men at New Haven who had hated his guts. "Now, don't think my opinion on these matters is final," he [Tom] seemed to say, "just because I'm stronger and more of a man than you are." (Fitzgerald 7)

Fitzgerald clearly crafts Tom as an unsympathetic character (probably the flattest of the novel), and by virtue of designating Tom as the mouthpiece of racist ideals, perhaps this also reveals to readers that Fitzgerald does not tolerate these extremist views, though we will revisit this issue later in this essay.

Secondly, citing this particular author and work connotes other issues beyond issues of race; other critics indicate that

> both *The Rising Tide of Color* and *The Great Gatsby* subscribe to certain historical notions. In both books western civilization is depicted in a state of incipient decline due to excessive emphasis on *materialistic values at the expense of idealistic ones*. Just as in Stoddard's treatise American materialism is viewed as having triumphed most rampantly on the eastern seaboard, so Nick thinks of the story he has to tell as one of individuals from the purer West who could not adapt to eastern life. (Gidley 172, emphasis mine)

Fitzgerald may not agree with Stoddard's overtly racist ideas, but as Gidley points out, mentioning Stoddard's text reiterates a recurring motif of ruin. This motif also appears in *Gatsby* in the way Fitzgerald describes the "Valley of Ashes" as a "desolate area of land" (Fitzgerald 23) — lower class area which juxtaposes the lavish lifestyle of old money in the East Egg or Gatsby's parties in the West. The image of the "Valley" simultaneously parallels the moral and social decay of these upper classes. Referencing contemporaneous texts like Stoddard's elucidates these cultural shifts and illustrates this issue of "incipient decline due to excessive emphasis on materialistic values" (Gidley 172).

Finally, Fitzgerald's allusion to Stoddard thereby connects issues of economics and race. Stoddard himself responded to the Harlem Renaissance thinkers, such as Alain Locke, while simultaneously condemning materialism. In his view, both the Harlem Renaissance and materialism threatened the "culture" of the white race (Moynihan 37). All of these issues — race, materialism, economics — conjured by the simple gesture of alluding to Stoddard's text, redirect us back to Daisy and her role as "the golden girl." With this knowledge of Stoddard's work, we can better understand the tension of Daisy's role during the dinner party when Tom mentions "this man Goddard."

If readers do not catch Fitzgerald's vaguely disguised, contemporaneous white supremacist text, Tom amends the gap of knowledge, while also informing readers of his personal views: "Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be — will be utterly submerged. It's all very scientific stuff; it's been proved" (Fitzgerald 12-13). Tom grovels to justify his views and in the process heeds to the mold of the "hulking," "brute of a man" Daisy labels him (12).

After Tom explains how his "science stuff" has "been proved," Daisy remarks "'Tom's getting very profound'... with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. 'He reads deep books with long words in them'" (13). Though Daisy seemingly affirms Tom's thought process, she also undercuts his outburst by measuring his study by "long words," demeaning what Tom perceives is a highly intellectual text and humanist pursuit. Tom stubbornly persists to justify "Goddard" and his view, arguing: "It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things" (13). Daisy concedes in a whisper, "We've got to beat them down," then she winks "ferociously toward the fervent sun." Though Daisy clearly indulges in sarcasm and does not fully take Tom seriously — as demonstrated through her body language — she verbally affirms him.

Throughout the dinner, Daisy is frustrated with Tom, yet allows herself to appear as though she humors his ideas. For this reason, Daisy's fickle attitude serves as the source of tension among critics debating whether to defend Daisy's agency or not (as captured in Leland's article "'Herstory' and Daisy Buchanan"), but in this instance, the stakes are higher because of the subject matter. While Daisy attempts to undermine her husband in the way she responds to him, she does not outwardly condemn him, forcing readers to question her complicity to his racism.

Concluding his points, Tom shifts his racist preoccupation on "the other race" to assert the role of the white race in culture. He reasons with the table, "'this idea that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and—' after an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. 'And we've produced all

the things that go to make civilization—oh, science and art, and all that. Do you see?'" (13). This concern for white culture (science, art, etc.) again alludes back to Stoddard who debated about the legitimacy of African American participation in "culture" (Moynihan 37), but it also elucidates the theme/issue of whiteness and white culture in the text overall. Interestingly, Nick stresses Tom's lingering uncertainty of including Daisy in the Nordic race (which seems odd to Nick in the moment and we will come back to this point). Tom's intentional hesitation simply emphasizes Daisy's crucial role as a part of the Nordic race as Daisy's personal connection to white ideals surfaces more clearly in her role as a mother.

The novel alludes to Daisy as a mother only a few times. I will address these moments chronologically as they appear in the story and ultimately exhibit how Tom's view of the white race connects to Daisy's role as a "racialized mother" and "the golden girl."

Upon reuniting with Nick, Daisy immediately asks if everyone back in Chicago misses her. Nick responds that "the whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the North Shore." Satisfied, Daisy exclaims "'how gorgeous! Let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow!' Then she added *irrelevantly*: 'You ought to see the baby'" (Fitzgerald 9, emphasis mine). This comment suggests a quality about Daisy as a mother. Nick is not quite incorrect to deem Daisy's mention of the child "irrelevant"; the word itself connotes disconnection and a tangential thought process. In just this word, Nick introduces part of Daisy's personality and her attitude toward motherhood. She asks about herself first, only

to then suggest showing off her child, which intimates her carelessness (or even self-absorbed tendencies) and implies that her child is an afterthought. Though her progression of ideas is disconnected, Daisy becomes animated by talking about her child and exclaims more declarative, and somewhat disjointed, thoughts: "She's asleep. She's three years old. Haven't you seen her?" (10). Regardless of her sporadic and self-centered thoughts, Daisy appears excited about her child.

As Daisy and Nick continue to reacquaint with one another, Nick returns "rather feebly to the subject of her daughter." Daisy quickly suggests "let me tell you what I said when she was born. Would you like to hear?... It'll show you how I've gotten to feel about—things" (Fitzgerald 16). During this moment on the veranda Daisy appears vulnerable and candid as she willingly treats Nick as a confidant. She recalls:

> Well, she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. "All right," I said, "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." (Fitzgerald 16-17)

Tom's absence demonstrates how alone Daisy feels and has felt since she became a mother, but more importantly her pessimistic outlook illuminates her awareness of the system in which she operates. She recognizes that the world expects an ideal woman, which limits her own opportunities and will also restrict her daughter.

When Tom inquires about her "heart-to-heart" talk with Nick, Daisy feigns vagueness: "I can't seem to remember, but I think we talked about the Nordic race. I'm sure we did. It sort of crept up on us and first thing you know—" (19). Though Daisy *appears* to dismiss her confession to Nick, her comment bears a striking connection to

their previous conversation regarding Tom's views of the Nordic race. And by proclaiming "I think everything's terrible anyhow" (17) she even mirrors her husband's negativity regarding the racial situation —"I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things" (12). Though Daisy is not as concerned with such topics, she seems to lack the energy to share the true content of her conversation with Nick, so instead appeases Tom by referencing a topic of importance to him.

This connection between Daisy's daughter to the Nordic race evidences the specific role that women possess in the white system as mothers. Drawing on Richard Dyer, who notes that "as the literal bearers of children and because they are held primarily responsible for their initial raising, women are the indispensable means by which the group—the race—is in every sense reproduced," Moynihan argues that "in an era in which Nordics were perceived to be in danger of being submerged, white women bear the responsibility for stemming 'the rising tide of color'" (46). This view reveals the significance of Tom's lingering glance at the table (until "he included Daisy with a slight nod") (Fitzgerald 13); his hesitation demonstrates Tom's awareness of Daisy's influence as a mother passing on "white culture." Daisy does not appear to be fully compelled to advance the white system as Tom does, but as "the golden girl" her awareness of the system itself, and her own husband's preoccupation with it, create her anxiety and wariness that her daughter must also live in it. Her mention of the Nordic race to Tom after talking about her daughter's birth with Nick only heightens the tension that Daisy experiences as a white mother and her complicity to the system.

More revealing of Daisy's approach to motherhood than this initial conversation about her daughter, "Pammy," is simply the fact that Pammy is virtually absent from the novel. She only appears once. When Nick and Gatsby visit the Buchanan's home one day, a "freshly laundered nurse leading a little girl came into the room." The little girl is Daisy's and as she entered the room with her nurse Daisy "crooned," "Bles-sed pre-cious" (once again suggesting Daisy's song-like voice). Daisy then extends her arms and implores her, "Come to your own mother that loves you" (117). The first time we meet her daughter, her nurse accompanies her which suggests to readers that Daisy is not involved as a mother. Daisy emphasizes "own" mother, acknowledging that there are other mother figures in her life. In fact, Nick tells us that "the child, *relinquished by the nurse*, rushed across the room and rooted shyly into her mother's dress" (117, emphasis mine), suggesting that the nurse guides and disciplines the child, as she only rushes to her mother upon the nurse's signal.

As mother and child proceed to embrace, Daisy repeats "The bles-sed pre-cious! Did mother get powder on your yellow hair? Stand up now, and say—How-de-do." Clearly eager to show her daughter off, Pammy matches her mother's enthusiasm and "turning eagerly to Daisy" proudly announces "I got dressed before luncheon." Daisy quips "That's because your mother wanted to show you off." Her child eagerly attempts to please her (as most children who desire attention from their parent do), while Daisy shallowly perceives the moment together as an opportunity to flaunt her daughter. Emotional rapport is unapparent and Daisy only comments on Pammy's physical traits, "Her face bent into the single wrinkle of the small *white* neck" and she murmurs "you

dream, you. You absolute little dream" (117, emphasis mine). Both of the physical traits mentioned in this scene mirror Daisy's Nordic appearance: "yellow hair," "white neck." Even the child's attire appears to be white by the way she innocently mentions "Aunt Jordan's got on a white dress too" (117). The girl wants to be connected somehow to Daisy and Jordan so that she could be included, and ultimately spend time with Daisy.

When Pammy asks where her father is, Daisy ignores her question, but instead chirps "She doesn't look like her father… She looks like me. She's got my hair and shape of the face." With that, the nurse steps forward and beckons Pammy to "come." Daisy detachedly says "goodbye, sweet-heart!" and "with a reluctant backward glance the well-disciplined child held to her nurse's hand and was pulled out the door" (117). This moment is the only interaction readers witness between Daisy and her child, and it appears that they lack any type of emotional attachment as a result of not spending time together.

As an upper class, white young woman, Daisy struggles between the pressure of Tom's ideal (to be the mother that preserves a race) with the ideals of a flapper; she sacrifices the intimacy of motherhood, perhaps in an attempt to be free of Tom's ideal, in order to align herself with other attributes of the feminine ideal. Though physical characteristics form a large part of the persona, "The golden girl" is not simply defined by the way she dresses and styles her hair, her social status, or skin color: "despite her notorious frivolity, [the flapper] was also a version of the new woman,' who fought for independence, equality in marriage and pay and a political voice" (Simon 10). In addition to these new political roles "flappers refused to stay at home and be domestic wives and

mothers. Instead, they pursued social opportunities previously considered unfeminine, such as attending sporting events at male colleges and driving automobiles" (Schafer). In fact the interaction with Pammy is cut off just as Tom returns with "four gin rickeys that clicked full of ice," quickly followed by Daisy's suggestion "Let's all go to town!" (118). As a modern woman that consumes alcohol freely and dictates social decisions, Daisy neglects her role as a mother. They hire a nurse to raise their daughter while she subsumes the flapper mold — one who prioritizes social life.

The issue of absent mothers is not simply an issue of the modern woman, but (by virtue of the feminine ideals) a racial and economic issue. Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury* also details an infamous absent mother, Mrs. Compson. Though she is physically present with her children in the text (and strikingly more so than Daisy), her emotional absence mirrors Pammy's circumstance in *The Great Gatsby*. Rather than a nurse like Pammy's (whose race cannot be determined) raising the Compson children, a black nanny, along with her family, supports them.

One of the first impressions of Mrs. Compson in the novel is a mother who cannot be bothered with her children, as Benjy bellows and she responds "what is it now" and "stop that, now." Rather than attending to him, she is ashamed of him, but pities herself, "It's a judgement on me" (Faulkner 5). She treats Benjy as a social punishment. In fact, she is so preoccupied with her image that although Benjy was named Maury after her brother, the family eventually calls him Benjamin or Benjy, so as to dissociate an "idiot" from a member of her birth family and the Bascomb name. Though Mrs. Compson motivates this name change, she is unable to let go of a sense of propriety and ironically

refuses to call him “Benjy” (as everyone else does), for she feels “nicknames are vulgar. Only common people use them” (64). Too caught up with her class and image, Mrs. Compson continually makes efforts to distance herself from her children if they somehow do not meet her approval — and most of them do not.

Because of this emphasis on image, the family refrains from speaking Caddy’s name in the household after her failed marriage and child out of wedlock. So when making a space for Caddy’s daughter, young Quentin, in their home, Mrs. Compson tells Dilsey “If she could grow up never to know that she had a mother, I would thank God” (199). She refuses to allow anyone to speak of Caddy and, like most of her children, Mrs. Compson is barely involved with young Quentin. Because of her preoccupation with social rules, she not only abandons her daughter, but also prohibits her granddaughter’s relationship with her mother, leaving yet another generation of Compson’s motherless.

Frustrated that his wife, Dilsey, is responsible for the children of a woman who refuses to become involved, Roskus critiques Mrs. Compson’s absent mothering, “They aint no luck on a place where one of they own chillen’s name aint never spoken… Raising a child not to know its own mammy’s name” (31). Even as Mrs. Compson attempts to intervene to guide her own children, it is often affirmed by Dilsey’s insights. When she suggests to Caddy to keep Benjy inside, she reasons, “it’s getting colder, Dilsey says” (7). Though she is giving an order, she is doing so with Dilsey’s guidance. In other moments, Dilsey actually needs to interfere to mediate an issue; when Benjy cries uncontrollably, Mrs. Compson weakly tells him, “Stop, Benjamin,” but Dilsey

intuits, “Give him a flower to hold… That’s what he wanting” (10) — with the sensitivity and understanding of a mother.

Like Daisy, Mrs. Compson compromises motherhood for the sake of feminine ideals, but Faulkner’s novel affords a more encompassing view of an absent mother’s impact on home life. His portrayal of Mrs. Compson also invites a more critical view of the way feminine ideals dictate both men and women’s actions (and sometimes even empower men), and especially privilege whiteness. Mrs. Compson is a product of her time and its social, racial, and economic expectations. Her marriage to a Compson attaches her to white upper class women of the traditional, Old South’s patriarchal system — a social position in which male power dictates her opportunities. In fact, she relinquishes her authority of the home and financial accounts to her son Jason when her husband dies (only for Jason to take advantage of her).

Unlike Daisy who at least smirks at Tom’s patriarchal ideas, Mrs. Compson unquestioningly abides by female stereotypes, making comments like “I suppose women who stay shut up like I do have no idea what goes on in this town.” She feeds into Jason’s negative view of women, and adheres to the Southern Christian ideals by concluding “Thank God I don’t know about such wickedness. I don’t even want to know about it. I’m not like most people” (259). Her attempt to exemplify Christian virtues is half-hearted at best and a means to show others, “I’m a lady” (300). Though she constantly demands Dilsey to move her bible closer to her, she never reads scripture, and it is apparent that her attachment toward Christianity is informed by her expectations as a Southern woman.

As Ulrike Nüssler points out in "Reconsidering the Function of Mrs. Compson in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*," "Mrs. Compson's pseudo-aristocratic values are based on the ideal of 'true womanhood' and give her the power to manipulate others through such attitudes as rigidity, physical immobility, bigotry, and neglect of maternal duties" (573). Her complicity to this system in part creates and reifies Jason's disrespect toward women: "I never promise a woman anything nor let her know what I'm going to give her. That's the only way to manage them. Always keep them guessing. If you can't think of any other way to surprise them, give them a bust in the jaw" (Faulkner 193). Sadly, Mrs. Compson succumbs to Jason's "managing women" and "willfully blind[s]" herself to the old order, which informs the way she ultimately views motherhood:

> this is a domain she has neglected because she could afford to have Dilsey and her family. Emotionally cold, Mrs. Compson is too self-centered and class-conscious to be more than just a biological mother to her children. She does not even attempt to take full responsibility for raising them because society permits and encourages her not to do so. (Nüssler 579)

In this way, social class and white privilege dictate her lack of involvement with her children, and like Daisy she becomes complicit to whiteness and materialism.

Mrs. Compson's absence serves as foil to Dilsey's unwavering compassion as a mother. As mentioned previously, critics often gravitate toward this motherly role that Dilsey naturally exudes, but often miss how her persona serves as a model of a new ideal Faulkner creates. Rather than a flapper or "golden girl" like Daisy, Dilsey balances modern attributes of female agency without abandoning the loving intimacy of motherhood. Ultimately, Faulkner re-writes the American female standard contemporaneous of Dilsey's time: "Gibson girls."

While Daisy is the visual representation of the flapper, Dilsey's physical appearance is anything but "ideal" according to her contemporaneous American standards. *The Sound and The Fury* is published four years after *Gatsby* and the novels are set in a similar time period. Faulkner's novel, however, spans before and after the early 1920s, the time when the majority of Fitzgerald's plot occurs. These distinctions bear significance to the cultural climate in which mothers of either text operated. As already demonstrated, Daisy navigates a white, materialistic standard of the flapper as a woman and mother, a shift that transpires uniquely in the 1920s. Dilsey predominantly mothers the Compson family and her own in the decades just prior to the flapper period (though also spans into the flapper period as well), when another popular feminine ideal was the craze for two decades. A mother during this period (1890s-1910s), Faulkner curiously names her Dilsey Gibson.

Most critics do not entertain this connection or consider the potentially loaded connotation of Dilsey's name. While discussing Dilsey, Rodden notes,

> It is fitting, however unintentionally, that Dilsey's surname should be "Gibson." During the 1890s (probably about the time Dilsey began working for the Compsons), illustrator Charles Gibson became famous internationally for his pictorial conception of the ideal American girl, a tall young woman characterized her calm and stately bearing, "the Gibson Girl." … Dilsey, whose name may derive from "Dulce," is, as Faulkner once famously described Caddy, his "beautiful one." (Rodden 79)

Rodden appears to be one of the few (perhaps the only) critic who acknowledges the potential significance of Dilsey's name, but he overlooks just how intentional Faulkner was when he named her. In order to consider Faulkner's intentionality, we must examine

the breadth and depth of Charles Dana Gibson's work as well as the way it circulated in the time leading up to *The Sound and the Fury*'s publication.

Born in 1867, Gibson is 30 years Faulkner's senior (Croce). In 1895, he married a Virginian girl, Irene Langhorne, who both fits and breaks the mold of the Southern Belle. In fact, thinkers of the time considered their marriage as a symbolic merging of North and South and "end of the Civil War." Additionally, their union "represented the end of the golden age of the southern belle: an institutionalized fiction that placed Southern white and wealthy women on an imaginary antebellum pedestal of inviolate purity despite the challenges brought on by defeat in war" (Lawing). Irene renounced her "Southern belle" identity when she moved North with her husband and quickly transformed into the "Gibson girl" model. By the time the two married in 1895, Gibson had already debuted his "Gibson Girls" illustrations, but upon their meeting and marriage, Irene became the sole muse for his work.

With Irene's roots in the South — her "innate" feminine gentility — along with her inclination to participate in politics and social circles unique to most women of the time, she forged a new way for women: "to contemporary eyes the Gibson Girl represented the sophisticated and self-determining 'new woman,' the product of the preceding generation's efforts toward gender equality" (Croce). Though some traits of Gibson's American women are inconsistent among writers of the time (for instance, Irene, herself was politically active, but not all Gibson girls were expected to be) a few aspects of her persona remain consistent: whiteness, socially progressive, middle or upper class. Although Gibson "seldom pictured her with offspring, the Gibson Girl promised

fertility if not maternal devotion since she attended to men and the mirror rather than books"; thus the "Gibson girl" combined a variety of traits, and "the archetypal 'New Woman' was a liminal figure between the Victorian woman and the flapper, a 'pioneer [of] new roles,' able to 'insist upon a rightful place within the genteel world'" (Patterson). This "New Woman's" presence exploded in the rising media and in the arts.

In fact, Charles Gibson's work appeared in a variety of artistic mediums. His depiction of this feminine ideal

> appeared in prominent periodicals such as Scribner's Magazine, Harper's Magazine, Life, and Collier's from the early 1890s until well after World War I, a period that also saw the publication of Gibson's sixteen books and of dozens of novels in which his illustrations appeared. The Gibson Girl's image was reproduced on clothing, dishes, pillows, and wallpaper; her hair and clothing styles drove fashion; and popular stage plays and songs paid tribute to her. Although Gibson was his generation's highest-paid illustrator, earned respect as a painter, and directed the U.S. Government's Division of Pictorial Publicity during World War I, the popularity of his namesake character eclipsed the rest of his accomplishments both during and after his lifetime. (Croce)

This list exhibits his work's undeniable prolificacy in American culture, but it is only a partial mention of his impact. His images of the Gibson Girl also "inspired the song 'Why Do They Call Me a Gibson Girl?' from the musical *The Belle of Mayfair* (1906), and the revue *The Gibson Bathing Girl*, which was performed by the Ziegfeld Follies (1907)." Not only was Charles Gibson popular in the U.S., he was acclaimed internationally. "In Britain she was personified by the American actress Camille Clifford, who first appeared on the London stage in 1904," a near equivalent to the American figure Irene Langhorne (O'Hara Callan).

In addition to this artistic prolificacy — beyond the U.S., but especially within American culture — Gibson was constantly engaged in the political and social sphere. He was often called upon by politicians to draw sketches during World War I and even collaborated with other American modernist writers of the time. In fact, one of his Gibson girl drawings was featured in an artistic project edited by Edith Wharton. The collection titled *The Book of the Homeless* featured poems, songs, stories, and sketches and the proceeds from the book supported refugees displaced by World War I.

The project energized Wharton, who was described to be "determined that her book would amount to something, and with characteristic energy and ambition, she set about amassing a dazzling list of almost sixty contributors, and arranging with her publisher Charles Scribner to produce the volume on a nonprofit basis" (Hutchinson 123). Within just a few weeks of this request, Wharton gained the support of many artists including Gibson. With the hope that the book would be on the market in October 1915, Wharton exhibited "her own sense of urgency and with the astonishing amount of energy that she mustered for all of her war projects, she found it hard to understand why others could not instantly meet her demands" (Hutchinson 127). The book was published instead in January of 1916, just two years before Faulkner himself entered the army to embark on his short career in aviation (Williamson 176).

In her article "Burying the Regional Mother: Faulkner's Road to Race Through the Visual Arts," Candace Waid notes that

> Faulkner was profoundly influenced by Edith Wharton despite the fact that he appears never to have spoken her name. This gifted literary mother, the sworn enemy of cubism, modernism, and what she understood as their context, the cacophony of post-World War I culture, can be said to have established the terms

> for the creation of William Faulkner. Indeed, Edith Wharton provoked his most radical experiment: the novel he repeatedly referred to as his "most splendid failure." In 1925 as he was preparing his first novel for publication, Faulkner was not only reading Wharton's fiction, he was reading her literary criticism. (43)

It seems that while Wharton's style contrasted Faulkner's sharply, some of her own writings have indeed influenced *The Sound and The Fury.* Wharton famously condemned modernism, "she chastised this literary fad for its fealty to a 'pathological world where the action, taking place between people of abnormal psychology and not keeping with our normal human rhythms, becomes an idiot's tale, signifying nothing' (Wharton, *Writing* 27- 28)" (44). As a Faulkner and Wharton scholar, Waid has long noted this journal entry as proof of the undeniable influence of Wharton on Faulkner's work, and the inspiration for the title of his novel. Faulkner appeared to have been closely following Wharton's work — which specifically influenced *The Sound and The Fury* — and it is likely that Faulkner would have encountered *The Book of the Homeless*, and therefore Gibson's drawing.

Considering Gibson's ubiquitous success and his direct collaboration with other artists like Wharton, it seems impossible that he was unaware of the "Gibson Girl" ideal or that he alluded to the image unintentionally, especially as a man writing about Southern anxieties of losing the Southern belle in a novel set in the exact time span that the "Gibson Girl" was rising into popularity and replacing these Southern ideals. The Gibson girl image motivated a pervasive shift of feminine ideals across the nation, and Irene Langhorne's personal evolution from Southern Belle to this "new woman" bespeaks some of the themes of sexuality, purity, and the Southern female ideal with which Quentin is preoccupied in *The Sound and The Fury*. With the advantage of

hindsight while writing the novel in the mid to late 1920s (after both the Gibson girl and the flapper recede in popularity), Faulkner aptly names a mother during this time "Gibson" to create a statement not only about her role in the text, but also to rewrite the standard.

Dilsey's physical appearance reflects nothing of the "Gibson Girl" who "is loveliness personified. In every way the ideal American beauty—the woman every girl wanted to be" (Patterson). In the fourth section of the novel, Faulkner dedicates a few pages to detail Dilsey's attire. She is described as with "a stiff black straw hat perched upon her turban, anonymous fur above a dress of purple silk, and she stood in the door for a while with her myriad and sunken face lifted to the weather, and one gaunt hand flac-soled as the belly of a fish" (Faulkner 265). Though disheveled, descriptions like "purple silk" and "myriad" suggest a grandeur about her presence; she appears almost like royalty in the way Faulkner ascribes mythic qualities to her. These imperfect characteristics drastically differ with the dainty vision of "the Gibson Girl's tall, erect figure, straight nose, and evenly proportioned features identified her as a member of the Anglo-American aristocracy" (Croce). The Gibson girl is young and petite, while of a class which can and ought to dedicate time to one's appearance. More importantly, she is a product of white, middle-upper class America, a society of which Dilsey is not a part.

In addition to "Anglo-American" characteristics, the ideal woman had an hourglass figure: a "Gibson girl" appeared in "high-collared and long sleeved, with an ample bosom and a tightly fitted and boned waistline curving onto full hips" (O'Hara Callan). Dilsey's physique is just the opposite. Her body haunches with ill-fitting clothes:

"the gown fell gauntly from her shoulders, across her fallen breasts, then tightened upon her paunch and fell again, ballooning a little above the nether garments which she would remove layer by layer as the spring accomplished and the warm days, in color regal and moribund." In fact, the way her dress fits (loose on her "fallen breasts" and tight "upon her paunch") indicates that her figure curves in exactly the reversal of an hourglass. All the more striking than these features is the description of her worn body,

> She had been a big woman once but now her skeleton rose, draped loosely on unpadded skin that tightened again upon a paunch almost dropsical, as though muscle and tissue had been courage or fortitude which the days or the years had consumed until only the indomitable skeleton was left rising like a ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts. (Faulkner 265-266)

Faulkner appears to be interested in Dilsey's physicality only because it reveals the wear of countless, tireless hours she dedicates to others, most especially to the Compsons and her family.

The female body is important to the "Gibson girl" ideal as it was an image driven movement started by Gibson's illustrations of women. Unlike the way that the movement emphasizes a woman's body, sometimes to the point of female objectification, Faulkner juxtaposes this sexualized appearance with Dilsey's "withered, harried, doddering, shriveled old washerwoman" body (Rodden 79). Inverting the ideal, Faulkner uses Dilsey's worn body to tell the story of tireless acts of love, which creates a bigger impact on the families surrounding her than any dress a woman wore. Her body serves as a vehicle to work for her family; it's a tool to accomplish tasks, not a means to attract her male counterpart. By assigning Dilsey with practically the opposite traits of the ideal physicality of a Gibson girl, Faulkner rewrites the ideal and redirects the focus to a

woman's actions rather than her appearance. And it is Dilsey's actions that carry her legacy, but also serve as a source of tension among critics.

Faulkner described Dilsey simply as "a good human being. That she held that family together for not the hope of reward but just because it was the decent and proper thing to do" (*Faulkner in the University* 85). Dilsey exhibits unconditional love and agency in the way that she treats others, but especially young Quentin and Benjy — characters who will not or cannot reciprocate care.

When Jason threatens young Quentin or antagonizes her in general, Dilsey immediately rushes to Quentin's aid. Unlike Mrs. Compson, who weakly succumbs to Jason's ideas or complaints, Dilsey confronts Jason plainly, "You, Jason! Aint you shamed of yourself" (Faulkner 185). Despite her gender, race, or social position — which as a mother and black nanny is to serve — Dilsey asserts her agency, but not for her own sake. Her motives consistently emerge as other-oriented.

She defends Quentin even to the point of her own harm. When Jason attempts to whip Quentin with his belt, Dilsey calmly assures Quentin "I aint gwine let him" and "Dont you worry, honey." Relentless, and feeling justified in his actions, Jason refuses to back down so Dilsey "came hobbling between" the two of them and, thinking only to protect Quentin, says "hit me, den… ef nothin else but hittin somebody wont do. Hit me" (185). Struggling with age to even walk in between them, Dilsey exhibits tremendous agency and selflessness. She loves the Compson children, even Quentin who only pulls away from her touch after the episode and frustratedly says "you damn old nigger" (185). Though Quentin pushes her away, Dilsey remains empathetic to her because she

recognizes that Quentin is a victim of her situation. Without a mother or blood relative to genuinely care for her, Quentin suffers under Jason's manipulative bullying.

Dilsey also exhibits love and tenderness to Benjy — a character who, like young Quentin, cannot reciprocate, but for different reasons. Most characters interacting with Benjy are simply attempting to quiet his constant "bellowing," but when Dilsey tends to his needs, she carries herself with utmost magnanimity toward him. At one such time, she led him to the side of a bed and gingerly "held him, rocking back and forth" and — as though his own birth mother — she compassionately reaches down to wipe "his drooling mouth upon the hem of her skirt" (316). Rather than quieting him in annoyance, she accepts the way that he processes life experiences. Even when her daughter Frony expresses her anxiety about bringing Benjy to church because "folks talkin,'" Dilsey steadfastly defends Benjy and retorts, "Den you send um to me… Tell um de good Lawd dont keer whether he bright er not. Dont nobody but white trash keer dat" (290). Though incredibly kind, Dilsey refuses to allow other people tell her how to act or to betray her family, whether the Compson children or her own.

Faulkner himself considers Dilsey the figure of hope in his novel. When a student at the University of Virginia commented to Faulkner that Quentin "seemed to have the cards stacked against him," Faulkner conceded, "True, and his mother wasn't much good and he had an idiot brother, and yet in that whole family there was Dilsey that held the whole thing together and would continue to hold the whole thing together for no reward." Dilsey humbly serves and expects nothing in return. In this discussion, Faulkner also clarifies that humanity will "prevail" and "in order to prevail he has got to… [try to be

good]" (*Faulkner in the University* 5). Simply, Faulkner crafted his novel in such a way that humankind "will prevail, will *endure* because [humankind] is capable of compassion and honor and pride and endurance" (5, emphasis mine). Using the word "endure," Faulkner evokes Dilsey's final words in the appendix and thus applies these traits — compassion, honor, pride, endurance — to Dilsey, the new woman he created.

Though Faulkner's feelings toward Dilsey are undeniable, attaching her to the feminine ideal introduces tension when we consider part of the Gibson girl's identity as one who "focused all of her energies on maintaining her image and acquiring a mate, thereby helping to alleviate the Rooseveltian fear of 'race suicide' committed by educated white women (Everyday People) [Fig. 1]" (Patterson). Faulkner not only inverted the qualities and traits of the Gibson girl, but also her race. In fact, advertisements featuring women of color — and "her unmanaged body" compared to her white Gibson girl counterpart — "often served as parodic reminders of the importance of maintaining a contract with the more highly valued Gibson Girl" as she "unites the best of Western European characteristics and stands with her mate not only as the culmination of American progress but also as the ultimate justification for imperialism and institutionalized racism" (Patterson). This racial hierarchy of the "Gibson girls" era precedes the racialized ideal that remained during the rise of the flapper persona (and the expectations of Daisy as a racialized mother in *The Great Gatsby*).

More significantly, this racial exclusion reveals something remarkable about Faulkner's inversion of the Gibson girl ideal: a Southern male not only crafts a black character with unmatched agency, but also names her the American ideal that

traditionally could not be attained by African Americans because of the racist hierarchy. In fact, Faulkner rewrites the story so that the white family line crumbles and the black race endures: the very fear of Gibson/flapper girl ideology, or of someone like Tom Buchanan. While most critics agree that Faulkner attempts to portray Dilsey positively, her character depiction is still heavily debated, particularly the way that she so lovingly attends to everyone around her.

As Sandra D. Milloy points out in her article "Dilsey: Faulkner's Black Mammy in *The Sound and the Fury*," Faulkner's portrayal of Dilsey has spurred a variety of interpretations and critiques: "Black and white writers have expressed disapproval of Dilsey. They see in her portrait the typical elements of the stereotyped black mammy. James Baldwin interprets her as merely the comforting illusion of black forgiveness to which the white man must cling" (70). Milloy's central focus problematizes the way that Dilsey treats her own family far differently from the way that she treats the Compson children. She points out that Dilsey treats the Compsons with kindness, willing to make Christ-like sacrifices for them, while conversely "there is a forcefulness, a certain kind of arrogance and harshness, that surfaces when Dilsey deals with her own family" (70-71). In particular, Milloy cites the way that she harshly criticizes her grandson Luster, hitting him "on the back of his head with the flat of her hand" (Faulkner 269), for the way he clumsily completes his chores.

Other critics have responded to such claims about Dilsey's unbalanced affection for her white family by reasoning that "it is essential to realize that Dilsey's loyalty to the Compson family exists only in her dedication to fulfilling her employment obligations"

(Speaker 27). And while Dilsey is certainly doing hard work, this interpretation does not solve the unquestionable affection she exhibits for the Compson children; it is undeniable that her job is not a matter of completing tasks by the way that she interacts with the them: she consistently protects young Quentin, provides tireless care for Benjy, and is pained by the way that the Compson children meet their fate ("I seed de first en de last") (Faulkner 301). It is not sufficient to deny the love she provides for the white family, but necessary to hold this love in tension with the way she treats her immediate family and her community. In this way, Milloy's concerns are merited, but also must be viewed alongside the way Dilsey loves and disciplines both of her families.

It is undeniable that Dilsey scolds Luster harshly, yet Milloy overlooks the way that she similarly disciplines the Compson children. She addresses Caddy "You, Satan" and commands her, "you hush your mouth and get quiet" when Caddy disobeys her orders (45). Her treatment of Luster includes physical reprimanding which is arguably harsher (she likely does not have the authority to punish a white child in this way), yet she still addresses both children's actions.

Additionally, Dilsey refuses to allow anyone to treat her family poorly. When Jason bullies Luster and plays off of his desire to attend the show in town, she tries to protect Luster, just as she had for young Quentin. First, she condemns Jason, "Whyn't you hush up?" and then gently tries to teach Luster, "He jes teasing you. He fixin to use dem tickets hisself. Go on, Jason, and let him alone" (255). Relentless, Jason continues to taunt Luster, attempting to take his spare coins from him in exchange for tickets he does not seem to value. As an excited child Luster anxiously explains, "I aint got dat much."

Jason coldly drops a ticket to the show in the stove and Dilsey scolds him, "You, Jason… Aint you shamed?" (255). Her loyalty to her family balances her reputation with the Compsons so that she "contains more depth than a reductive mammy stereotype who exists merely to accentuate aspects of the white world. She possesses a complexity of character and a morality that receives recognition from her own community, a group of people whose vision of her actions is unclouded by racial prejudice" (Speaker 26). Though Dilsey certainly can be harsh on her own family, her reputation among her family and their community is highly regarded.

As Dilsey walks to the Easter service near the end of the novel, their neighbors and people from the community they pass instantly brighten when they recognize Dilsey, addressing her formally: "Sis Gibson! How you dis mawnin?" (Faulkner 291). As Speaker notes, "there is an excitement surrounding her journey to the church, as if the whole community is aware she is on her way. She is an authoritative presence not just to the Compson children but to the young children of the negro community as well" (26). It seems that both young and old acknowledge her presence with a unique type of respect, as the children resist teasing Benjy "case Miss Dilsey lookin," as "steadily the older people speaking to Dilsey" (Faulkner 291). The community desires to please Dilsey and act in awe of her — whether a small child in fear, or a peer friend.

These positive experiences with her family and community illumine the complexity of Dilsey's character; yet, in order to fully consider Dilsey's character, it is important to also include Faulkner's experience with his mammy, Caroline Barr, in the discussion — something critics have long noted was influential in his depiction of Dilsey.

Faulkner experienced a deeply intimate relationship with his mammy and even wrote her eulogy, noting that "Mammy Callie" had given "a half century of fidelity and devotion" to his family. He believed that their relationship "never became that of master and servant." She was his teacher and from her, he learned "'to tell the truth, to refrain from waste, and to be considerate of the weak and respectful to age.' He concluded the eulogy with his conviction that 'if there is a heaven, she has gone there'" (Hamblin 31). Faulkner's experience with his mammy further explicates the tension Milloy raises about Dilsey's skewed love for her white family. Yet, it also seems that this intimate relationship with Caroline Barr also positively motivated him to write a story in which a black family line survived a white family, even in the midst of the racist, Deep South. And when he felt he had failed at the novel and returned to it sixteen years later to write in its appendix, Dilsey became a feminine model for a legacy: "they endured."

So although a white man writing about a black mammy who lovingly defends her white family rightfully raises questions as Milloy points out, Faulkner's portrayal of Dilsey's character surpasses a reductive stereotype. Each of Faulkner's characters wrestle with reality and the ideal; they are challenged "both to know the real world and to transcend it—to walk the middle line… between the ideal and the real. Dilsey Gibson did it. Somehow, she had achieved and continued to maintain a superb balance between an awareness of what is and a concern for what ought to be" (Williamson 361). As a black woman, Dilsey is not in a position in society to exhibit the agency characteristic of a feminine ideal (one who enters political or social conversations, like the flapper or Gibson girl), yet her character still works to re-write racial and gender hierarchies.

Though loving of all her children, she exhibits the greatest love to some of the most vulnerable in society: women and social outcasts—particularly in her community and immediate family—as well as Quentin, Caddy, and Benjy, while simultaneously standing up to the abusive power of blatantly racist, patriarchal characters like Jason.

While Dilsey is often regarded as the arbiter of the African American race in Faulkner's novel, this role is both too broad and too narrow. Dilsey achieves a balance between motherhood and the new woman, ideals that claim both agency, which the flapper or Gibson girl strives for, and virtues, which each movement rejects. Unlike Daisy, the typical modern woman ideal who cannot be bothered with motherhood, Dilsey dedicates her whole life to service of others. Nonetheless, she maintains her sense of self and personal agency and as a mother, she helps to preserve her family line by creating a home environment in which "they [could] endure."

When Faulkner published *The Sound and The Fury*, "Gibson girls" and the flapper ideal had died, but their legacy remained. It is a legacy of a feminine movement that sought to dramatically change a woman's opportunity in the emotional, social, and political sphere. Though these goals sparked a movement, they only served as a starting point of feminist efforts still persisting today. When one recalls a flapper, he or she often thinks of Zelda Fitzgerald or F. Scott Fitzgerald's iconic figure Daisy: rebellion, parties, sex, shorter skirts, and a change. Daisy begins to achieve some feminist goals: she subtly undermines her patriarchal husband with her sarcasm, while also challenging traditional standards of femininity and feminine sexuality in her social life. The end of the novel

mutes these attempts: we are left with her lover's murder and a rich, upper class couple — a white supremacist and, at best, a complicit white wife — still on top.

Faulkner — aware of both ideals, and with the advantage of hindsight — named his muted hero "Gibson" so as to invert the ideal. Dilsey became a figure for African Americans, women, mothers, and especially those who fall into all of these categories, but by directly rewriting the "Gibson girl" ideal Faulkner also provides a new paragon for an age. In doing so, he crafts a more authentic vision of the human spirit. The tensions with ideals and stereotypes of both gender and race in Faulkner's work, best exhibited through Dilsey's character, prompt us to consider the fundamental issues of not just literary projects, but the society from which they are conceived. While Faulkner's work challenges the white complicity in Fitzgerald's, its faults remind us of the work to be done in our own contemporary context regarding issues of race and gender.

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