

English

William Faulkner's Depiction of Women: Motherhood and Its Effect on the Family

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Ideas of the South concerning female sexuality and motherhood—basically, the female role in its broad spectrum—have been the focal point of much literature that derived from that era. Much of it is because of the fact that those living in the South were surrounded by the ideas daily, and their experience with outside ideas and beliefs were limited. This was a common cause, but not the inspiration for every writer. Some had a genuine desire to delve into the topic, whether they agreed with it or not, and discover its causes and the extent of its effects. One of the most famous, but also most thorough and complex, writers to embark on such a task was William Faulkner.

Throughout his literary career, Faulkner's writing tended to focus on perceptions of women, giving special attention to their inability and unlikeliness to remain examples of purity when presented with the choice between promiscuity and virtue. His writings emphasized the ideologies of the South and the bias that was shown towards men when thinking of sexuality. A woman was thought to be of a lower class or caliber if she acquiesced to her sexual desires, whereas a man was considered only to be responding to human nature. While this is easily viewed as being unfair treatment in today's time, it was not a major cause of conflict during the 20th century.

There was a social expectation and everyone was encouraged to follow it. Most of the women seemed to understand the unspoken rules and attempted to comply, but there were times when the attempt proved to be futile and the women found themselves in compromising positions— positions that were destined to leave an impact in some way. The expectation of purity was not impossible to fulfill, but with marriage as the ultimate goal for a woman constantly being promoted, it was highly unlikely for it to be fulfilled. The unlikeliness increased significantly when the women felt that they had not lived up to their society's, nor family's, hopes for them and they were not where they were supposed to be according to their age. The impact that society had on them was evident in the way that everything seemed

to be based upon societal beliefs and rules. They were made to feel as if they failed if they had not received a marriage proposal. They were taught that marrying and raising a family was the quintessential goal and that any failure to attain this was a result of a lack in some area on their part. Everyone did not share this idea, but the few who disagreed had a hard time gaining a following. This did not keep them from trying. Paul Popenoe, a conservative writer on marriage in the Old South, argues that marriage partners “ought to have as much freedom of thought and action as possible” and that “the husband in particular must not get the idea that he acquires any rights in marriage [or] has [any] business to demand anything” (120). They received no alternative options so if they had not captured the attention of a man by the time they passed a certain age, which was quite young in that time, they had failed.

The failure did not only affect the girls, but the society, or family, as a whole all were somehow affected. There is still the question of why? What caused this behavior in the women? There is no definite reason, but there are several speculations. One speculative cause for the women’s behavior is the absence of a decent motherly figure. A close reading of several of Faulkner’s novels shows that he felt this to be the case. The young women who lacked a positive motherly figure always made an irrational decision that caused them and their family to be ridiculed.

Faulkner was well aware of the societal expectations, but he did not necessarily agree with them. He did not feel that society as a whole was capable of creating realistic expectations, so he encouraged his characters to go against what was deemed to be the norm. He acknowledged the social expectations, but he simultaneously disagreed with it and sought to prove that the embrace of individualism is what led to accomplishments and freedom. Ted Ownby concludes, “Faulkner as a romantic distrusted social institutions but had faith in what individuals could accomplish outside of society and all of its problems, corruptions, and inhibitions” (237).

In Faulkner’s literary works, the results of the women’s succumbing to their sexual desires were never restricted only to them and their personal lives. It clouded the lives of all of those who were close to them, in particular the lives of their immediate family members. The results varied with each person, but there were some that were very similar. Pregnancy, as an effect of not being married, was experienced by both Caddy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and Dewey Dell Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* (1930). The responses were different for each girl, but they were both influenced by the mothers. Caddy Compson was denied the rights to the child and Dewey Dell spent her time seeking an abortion. This showed a lack of motherly guidance. Their disap-

pointment is understandable, but their reactions to it is what ultimately drove them farther away and prevented them from rectifying their behavior. That failure caused the entire family to suffer because the women, though they did not receive just recognition, were pivotal members in the family unit.

Faulkner's portrayals of women seemed to be in support of the general Southern views of women, while simultaneously including a view of them that directly contradicted those views. The women in his novels adhered to the social expectation concerning the importance of marriage and ultimately motherhood, but it was contrary in relation to limitations on women. The women were often portrayed as being unimportant and inferior to men, but this was not the case. Peek and Hamblin support this argument by saying that "The South's (both Old and New) view of women as both central and marginal, both paragons of virtue and inferior beings, both powerful and ineffectual, permeates Faulkner's fictional world" (215). Women were viewed as being incapable of certain careers and responsibilities during that time, which was true considering the way things happened during that time, but they were not inferior and incapable in every aspect.

Women were and still are dichotomous beings. During the time in which Faulkner was writing, they were marginal in some aspects, but they were also central in other areas. This was evidenced by the effects from their decisions throughout the novels. Deborah Clarke acknowledges the dichotomy and makes an accusation against Faulkner concerning it when she asserts, "Faulkner aligns himself with women writers through his manipulation of this dichotomy" (48). He portrayed women as being inferior to the male characters, but he also recognized and expressed the impact that the women had on the male characters. One of the more drastic effects was the fact that one of the siblings in *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin Compson, became so depressed and unhappy with his place in life and his sexual state that he eventually committed suicide. This is easily seen as being unlikely now, but for those living in that time, it was a true and common experience. It was viewed as being a big deal and the society worked collectively and communally to ensure that both the laws and the established rules were being obeyed.

It is easy to assume that Faulkner was hyperbolizing the extent of the impact that the women's personal decisions had on those around them, but that may have been the entire purpose for him writing his stories in such a way. It is possible—in fact, undeniable—that he was familiar with the beliefs of the people who inhabited the South because that was where he himself lived. While that granted him the right to speak on the prevalent occurrences that he witnessed, his living in that region did not guarantee that he shared the same opinions as

those around him. If he disagreed, what better way to express that dissimilarity than to write in a way that portrayed that thinking, and in doing so, show the unlikeliness of a small incident causing so much havoc?

Throughout his writing, it is apparent that the idea of female sexuality and the adherence to it or disregard of it was an issue that had a huge impact in the South. The fact that they held female sexuality on such a high pedestal was more of an effect of Southern tradition, rather than an exhibition of personal morals and values; however, this did little, if anything, to change the weight of its impact. The emphasis that was placed on the subject could have been an influence, however small. Society played a monumental part in ensuring that females followed the expected path by punishing and exiling those who did not.

This is not to say that the girls surrendered to their fleshly desires because of the pressure of the society. They were undoubtedly overwhelmed with all of the talk about sexuality and its evilness, but, in their adolescent age, they did not think much about it. As they grew older, the idea would have triggered more curiosity than fear. Even with this being the case, the actual act had to have a deeper influence. One of the major influences is the absence of a mother or motherly figure who has demonstrated and enforced the value of being pure and virtuous.

The beliefs of the society would have been much more effective if they had received support in the homes from the mothers. The girls in the novels were all products of a home that was destitute of a wholesome, present motherly figure. The mothers were all absent, either physically or emotionally. If they were physically present, they were self-centered and only concerned with maintaining their images for society. One mother, Caroline Compson, was immensely obsessed with the perceptions and ideas of those in the surrounding community. She stayed in her room, completely removed from the things that her family members were experiencing. She was not concerned with her children or her husband. As a result, the children all found different coping mechanisms to fill the void. Likewise, her husband was not an unaffected person. He turned to another woman to fill the void.

Caroline Compson, the mother in *The Sound and the Fury*, is one character who Faulkner portrays as being self-absorbed. She was always mentioning her sickness and how it affected her caring for Benjy, and she shunned nearly all of her motherly duties. In "Robbing the Mother", Deborah Clarke describes her as "a cold, selfish, complaining woman [who] neglects all of her children" (30). She burdened Caddy with the responsibility of caring for her younger brother and with the responsibility of being an example of femininity to her brothers.

Clarke further asserts that “Her [Caroline’s] maternal absence is largely filled by Caddy, but Caddy has no maternal model” (31). This fact alone is not what led to her receiving the reputation of being a bad mother because every older sibling helps with those who are younger, but she cast all of the responsibility on her children, namely Caddy, when it came to Benjy. Benjy was a middle-aged man who had the mentality of a young child. He, like a child, cried a lot and needed to be calmed down when things did not go the way that he expected. Caroline could have been embarrassed of him or disappointed in the way that he was born, but whatever the reason, she wanted nothing to do with her own child, but she did not hesitate to “adopt” Quentin, Caddy’s illegitimate daughter, as her daughter, rather than accept her as her granddaughter. Fear was the inspiration for this decision. She was unsure of what the members of her society would say if they found out what Caddy had done, so she took on the extra responsibility as a way to make things easier for herself, rather than in an attempt to help her daughter.

Caroline was obsessed with the idea of being perceived as a lady, and having a grandchild by an unwed mother was going to mar that image, which she had fought so hard to maintain. It was not that she doubted Caddy’s capability of caring for a child; rather, she just wanted to keep her societal status. She obviously felt that Caddy knew something about caring for a child because she always wanted her to care for Benjy. The only warning that she gave to Caddy concerning Benjy was against carrying him because it would ruin her back. “All of our women have prided themselves on our carriage,” she says at one point. “Do you want to look like a washerwoman?” (72). This further shows her obsession with appearance. She felt that being a lady entailed a lot of restrictions and she never failed to verbalize her feelings, but she was especially emphatic about the idea that engaging in sexual activities was a deterrent from being a true lady. She did not say this verbatim, but the emphasis that was placed on Caddy’s virginity by her brothers was evidence of their mother’s beliefs, especially that of Benjy.

Benjy was considered to be mentally challenged, yet he knew when Caddy’s physical state had been altered. He associated a smell with her that, once absent, signified a change. He did not blatantly announce that she was no longer a virgin, but he kept repeating that she “smelled like trees” (19). So much so, that when he did not say it, it was very noticeable. It alerted the readers that there had been a big change. The novel is not in chronological order, so it is not immediately obvious what the change is or what the significance of the smell is, but with further reading comes clarification.

Similar to Benjy's, but significantly more extreme, was the perception that Quentin had of his sister's virginity. He was disturbingly concerned with what she did sexually, and he often made references to the idea of him and her sharing the experience together. When conversing with his father in the novel, his father speaks as if the issue were not a big deal. That leaves the mother to have been the one who was promoting its importance. It is possible that the society itself was causing the men to see it as a big deal because they were taught to marry a pure girl, but it is also highly probable that the teachings were being implemented at home.

Caroline Compson was adamant about the fact that the expression of sexuality was a deterrence from being a lady. She believed that all affection should be avoided until a wedding had taken place. She wore black and went into mourning after seeing Caddy kiss a boy. For her, that meant that Caddy was not being a lady. She says, "I was taught that there is no halfway ground, that a woman is either a lady or not" (118). Essentially, she was denying and disowning the idea of motherhood by failing to realize and acknowledge that there is a "halfway ground," a meeting point because, according to Deborah Clarke, "motherhood itself is predicated upon a duality [of being a lady and engaging in sexuality]" (31). There was the insistence on presenting one's self as being a lady so that the chance of being pursued with the intent of marriage would be increased. Once married, there would have to be an engagement in sexuality in order to have children, which was the ultimate purpose of marriage. In spite of this idea, Caroline was unable to accept that the two merged into being motherhood, so she separated the two and, ultimately, chose being a lady over being a mother. She makes this assertion concrete by insisting, "I'm a lady. You might not believe that from my offspring, but I am" (31).

Caddy suffered greatly from her mother's denial of the two being a single unit. Her life choices cannot all be blamed on her mother, but the absence of a good motherly example was influential in her inability to make good choices. She would have had less time to sneak out and be promiscuous if her mother had been a more consistent presence. While Caroline Compson was a strong influence on her daughter's decisions, the effects were not limited to her alone, but they trickled down to the lives of her brothers also. This novel is oftentimes assumed to be a story centrally about Caddy. Deborah Clarke, however, believes differently. She argued that the central theme of the novel is of a family adapting to the decisions of one character, Caddy. The decisions are referred to often, but they are not constantly dwelled on. The family members' personalities are explained in depth and Caddy's choices are portrayed as being the cause of the different behaviors; they help the reader to understand. The brothers' reactions receive the most attention in the novel. Deborah Clarke supports this by say-

ing, "This is not a novel about Caddy..., but about her brother's responses to her, about how men deal with women and sexuality" (20). Clarke's main reasoning for disagreeing with the popular interpretation of the novel's focus being Caddy is that she does not have a section in the novel. Her argument is that if she were truly the central character, then she would have had a section. She argues that "Caddy's linguistic absence from the novel undercuts her centrality in a text formed and sustained by voice" (20).

The brothers in *The Sound and the Fury* do not usually get the credit that they deserve because it is widely accepted that Caddy is the central figure. Further reading shows the opposite. Caddy and her promiscuity are the events that are written clearly so they are impossible to ignore, but the events that take place in the brothers' lives are not written with such clarity. Even with the insinuations and implications, they are given more emphasis than Caddy. David Minter believes that Faulkner used indirection as a way to approach forbidden words and desires, but the indirection approaches male desires, not those of Caddy (103).

The fact that Caddy's importance takes a backseat to that of her brothers is definitely well supported by scholars, but, as always, there are those who disagree. There are still those who believe that Caddy is the main character and that the impact that she had on her brothers' lives proves her centrality. Linda Wager argues that Caddy and her mother control the narrative in spite of their silence and minimal speaking. They do not need to have lengthy sections because their actions are so powerful. She says that their lack of a full section is what emphasizes the impact that they have on the entire novel. All of the separate sections [from the brothers] show influence from both Caddy and Caroline:

Linguistic theory would define the narrator of any fiction as the person whose speech act dominates the telling of the fiction, yet Caddy and Caroline Compson are in many ways essential narrators of the Compson story. So much of their language, so much of their verbal presence, emanates through the novel that they are clearly and vividly drawn. Rather than being given one section, they take the novel entire. (61)

They were huge influences without having their own sections. This was true, but in spite of this, "the fact [remained] that they [were] drawn rather than draw-ers, constructed rather than constructors...the Compson brothers drew their women" (21). Although the women are the characters who influence most of the occurrences through the novel, the men are the ones who paint the images of the women in the readers' minds.

Faulkner did not rely on one novel only to express this belief; he made this a

theme in several of his novels. He knew this topic would stir the emotions of people in his town—he was, after all, essentially writing for profit at times, but many thought he was a misogynist. It is a common belief among critics that he “negatively represents women who move outside their proper roles” (Peek and Hamblin 218). He believed that women have specific duties and any deterrence from them was worthy, not only of mention, but also of punishment. Leslie Fielder says that “[Faulkner is] not content with merely projecting images of the anti-virgin....No anti-feminism is too banal for him to use. [He seeks to show that] women use their sexuality with cold calculation to achieve their inscrutable ends” (120). This is evident in his constant negative portrayal of women in his novels. He portrayed the women as using their sexuality as a way to seduce men, rather than for its natural use—to bear children—which was a complete upset for the people in that society.

The mother in *As I Lay Dying*, Addie Bundren, is a perfect example of the aforementioned idea. Faulkner used her character to express the idea of using sexuality as a means to gain something that they desired, which in her case was the title of motherhood. She was deceased through the majority of the story, but there is a section where she speaks, and when she does, her words are venomous and her attitude towards children is unusual, especially coming from someone who has given birth to children. This showed her true sentiments about having children. She wanted to have the title because it was something honorable to have, but she did not want to adhere to all of the other responsibilities that came with it. She was living in the home until her death, but she was far from being a good example of purity and adherence to Southern cultural values. She had an affair while she was married and, as a result, she became pregnant and raised a child who grew up completely unaware of who the father was. It was not until after she died that her husband found out, and she was not even capable of telling him the truth; she left that responsibility to the man with whom she cheated.

While there is a very small chance that this was a direct influence on her children because it was never told whether or not any of them knew about her infidelity, there were noticeable effects of it in each of them. Her ability to cheat on her husband and never confess, even in her last days, was testament to the fact that she was a dishonest person. Her only daughter Dewey Dell was not a very complex character, but she was essential to the story. She was not a recipient of motherly attention and her sexual decisions were evidence of this. I am not referring to the sexual act alone, but also to her method of deciding to go through with it. Her decision, unlike Caddy's, did not seem to have a great effect on her brothers' lives.

Addie is the central character of the story and her death is what the entire story

revolves around. Her family members have no idea the kind of person that she really is. She is quiet during most of the story, but when she speaks, it makes the rest of the story understandable. Constance Pierce attributed her behavior to the fact that she was trying to attain a freedom of which she had been deprived (297). Addie felt that she was confined and her sexuality was the one thing that she had control over. This was a possible cause for the affair. She felt that, by marrying, she had given that control to her husband. There was a sense of obligation to him. She wanted to gain control over her womb that had been "often violated" (Pierce 297). She felt indebted to have children because her husband Anse wanted them and the perceived role of the woman was to grant her husband's desires. Additionally, she was possibly raised to believe that bearing children was the ultimate goal for a woman. So, she could have easily only married because she knew that she was expected to. This was perhaps a major cause for her bitterness. Contrary to the story in *The Sound and the Fury*, she was more of the influence for the family rather than the daughter. Everyone's actions and life decisions were an effect of her absence and her dishonesty.

Beyond the apparent and often emphasized actions of Dewey Dell, the sons were equally warped, if not more so. Vardaman was similar to Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury* in his honest, raw, child-like portrayals. The only difference is that Vardaman was an actual child, where Benjy was not. Dewey Dell was not an influential character through the entire story, but she was responsible for Darl, her brother, being sent to the mental institution. She was aware that he was knowledgeable of the fact that she had lost her innocence and purity, and she was afraid of him telling the other family members. Even scarier was the fact that he knew that she was pregnant, so, unwilling to take the risk, she disclosed information of his burning the barn as a way to get even and ensure her safety from his disclosing the information. She reveals, "And so it was because I could not help it. It was then I saw Darl and he knew" (15).

Addie's behavior was completely opposite to the ideas of Southern motherhood, which was something on which a lot of emphasis was placed. The mothers then, much like today, were expected to be the glue and the common ground of the families. Blaine Roberts, in his article "Born Southern: Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the Old South," argued that women, especially "elite white women," were seen "as paragons of virtue and domesticity," [and they] were [expected] to find their calling as mothers" (92). They lived up to this expectation for the most part, and in the rare case that they failed, everything around them obliterated into chaos. This failure in the aspect of motherhood and its responsibilities according to Southern ideals was a major contribution to the inability of young women to remain true to the societal expectations concerning females.

Addie viewed motherhood as being a confinement and bondage. She felt that it was something that had been taken from her. She felt obligated to have all of the children that her husband desired, even though she had no desire to be a mother and have all of the responsibility. This was a major cause of her discontentment, and, as an effect, she only did the minimum when it came to her family. This was similar to the behavior of Caroline Compson. She, too, was obsessed with the social expectations of a lady. This obsession led to her failing in the aspect of motherhood and ultimately in being a true lady.

The idea of motherhood being the ultimate accomplishment of a woman was one that was prevalent everywhere during that time, but it was especially rampant in the South. Jonathan Sarnoff's review of the article "We Have Raised All of You: Motherhood in the South, 1750-1835" by Katy Simpson Smith emphasized how she [Smith] insisted that "despite obvious and important differences, Motherhood . . . provided a multifaceted identity that was a source of personal worth and communal consequence..." (253). Emphasis was also placed on her insistence that "it [motherhood] also was a source of power and agency in women's lives. In short, all...women found motherhood to be not only fulfilling and redeeming on a personal level but also a means of exercising authority within their families and larger communities" (253). Faulkner did not portray these sentiments in his writing. He represented his female characters in a different manner. The women in his novels seemed to resent the fact that they were mothers, at least, in the way that they shunned maternal responsibilities, especially when it came to teaching their daughters the values that were necessary. There was still the effect that the mothers had on their families, but it was done so in a negative manner.

Another commonality within all of the primary texts was the fact that all of the promiscuous and rebellious women in the novels were young. The way the novels are written makes it appear as though Faulkner expected young women to acquiesce to sexual promiscuity if they were not yet married or being pursued with the intention of marriage by a certain age. In his novels there were chiefly two different types of women: the young and promiscuous and the older and married. According to Leslie Fiedler, "throughout most of Faulkner's career, only older women, postmenopausal, are exempt from travesty and contempt" (321). This applied to nearly all of his female characters because being married was the norm during that time, unless they were old maids like Emily Grierson and Minnie Cooper, so the probability of them being promiscuous was considerably lower than the young women. Irving Howe similarly argued that ladies who were past the age of sexual distraction were recipients of admirable portrayal in the novels and "there is hardly a young [unmarried] woman in his books who does not provoke quantities of bitterness and bile" (97). This

is not to say that their youth was the sole cause of their gullibility, but it definitely supports the idea of there being the need for motherly guidance. This proved to be true with all of the characters, but it was especially evident with Temple Drake in *Sanctuary* (1931). Perhaps, this was caused by her not having a mother/motherly figure present, but, whatever the cause, she was definitely desperate in her search for attention.

In *Sanctuary*, the mother is completely absent from the story. Temple Drake is, to preserve her dignity, left to her own devices. She is always being flirtatious with guys, but she does not seem to have the intention of actually getting involved with sexual relations. This is evident by the fear and disbelief that she portrays when she is raped. This would scar anyone, but she was fearful of men even coming into her room. This was evident of the fact that she did not have the experience with men that she pretended to have. She was very attention hungry, but she was just ignorant of the real world and she had no idea what she wanted. She was trying to fill a void that, although created by her father, was a result of not having a mother.

If she had been able to learn the essentials from her mother, she would have been less likely to stand out in the streets flirting with guys. Her father probably did the best that he could, but he had to work, so he was not able to watch her constantly. It is evident that he was not a huge presence in her life because she was missing all of those days and he never worried. Her mother is never blatantly announced as being absent, but the complete lack of reference to her during the novel makes it clear. Of these three Faulkner women, Temple is the only character whose mother is completely absent; likewise, she is also the only one who did not get pregnant. There is the underlying message here of it sometimes being more beneficial to not have a mother at all, rather than to have one who is misleading.

The absence of motherly figures led to the girls seeking assurance from other people and things. Religion was always emphasized in the South, but because there was a deficiency of natural support and guidance, the reliance on it from a spiritual aspect was increased. The reliance was not necessarily spiritual in the sense in which it is normally considered, but it was more spiritual in the way that they sought guidance from things beyond the natural human aspect. One of the characters, Dewey Dell, was really desperate for a confirmation of what she should do concerning her pregnancy, so she concocted a way to decide. While it was not a reliable method, she did what she deemed to be best.

Dewey Dell made her decision to acquiesce to her sexual desires by relying on a natural occurrence to tell her whether she should do so or not. If she had been fortunate enough to have that guidance from her mother, she would not have had to resort to making such an important decision based on an event that

would have happened anyway simply because of the way that nature works. She did not have a mother who encouraged her to remain pure and to explain the positive aspect to it, so she based her decision on whether or not her sack was full with cotton by the time they reached the woods. On the other hand, if her sack was partly empty by the time they reached the woods, it was God's way of telling her that she wasn't supposed to have sex. (8). Her mother was not an example of purity, she could not have been expected to teach something which she did not adhere to.

Dewey Dell was not content with her decision and, in retrospect, she realized the ridiculousness of her methods, but it was far too late. She was the only daughter in her family and she was, while not given as much responsibility as Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury*, burdened with continuing the supposed legacy of remaining pure until marriage and then giving up the rights of her womb to her husband who was free to infiltrate her with offspring whenever he chose. She chose another option and after she was impregnated, she sought an abortion. She was scared of what her family would say and what society would think. The only woman she had known very well in the novel, her mother, was pure in her eyes and she regretted not living up to her standards. She wanted to create and produce life, but she was not ready, she was not married and she had a hard time accepting her consequences for her actions. She was willing to destroy a life rather than disappoint her family.

This was not a strange occurrence during that time. The procedure was risky and scary, but women were often willing to risk it rather than become a topic of unpleasant conversation and a shame to family. Sally Page, in her study *Faulkner's Women: Characterization and Meaning*, takes a look at the female characters in two categories: creative and destructive. She made her assumption based on whether or not the women fulfilled their proper roles. She believed that "deviation from this role...results in perversity, death, and decay" (93). She grouped all of the women together and gave them the common desire for love, marriage, and motherhood. There is the emphasis on family and how in light of its "decay, the only source of moral order and endurance is woman's ability to fulfill the creative and sustaining role of motherhood" (93). She believes that a woman is created to become a mother and the failure to follow through with this leads to an inability to accept reality. This is evident with Minnie Cooper in "Dry September" (1931) and Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily" (1930). They both are "prevented from achieving the normal fulfillment [of motherhood] so they "become engaged in a denial of reality, in which [they] cling to an illusory view of life in order to overcome [their] sense of inadequacy and abnormality of their real existence" (102).

It was evident that motherhood was an important aspect of the story because all of the men sought to downplay it. As with most necessary things, those who are incapable of producing it often find flaws or reasons for it not to flourish. The men in the novels did not necessarily clearly express their dislike of motherhood, but they viewed women as being incapable of being sexual beings. They wanted children, but they wanted to overlook the steps that lead to pregnancy. All of the men in Faulkner's writings are troubled and "resistant one way or another to the creative forces of life" (David Williams 243).

The women during that time were confined to being specific things---wives and mothers--- and the majority seemed to comply without complaint. The downside to this was the fact that these role limitations prohibited them from seeing the world for what it really was. The men had created a reality that was both limiting and unrealistic. As a testament to that confinement, the reality had been conformed to and was being passed from one generation of women to the next. The women were not questioning whether there was a possibility beyond the normal routines and this was the way that the men liked for it to be.

A.D. Mayo supports the aforementioned idea when he writes about how the woman was miseducated both literally and in the ways of the real world:

Trifled with at school [she] goes out into a hotbed of perilous flattery. From the hour when she receives her lying diploma, in a cloud of illusion...lifted on the tide of inflated masculine rhetoric...her life wavers in a mirage of self-delusion. Out of that realm of falsehood, she emerges, often too late, at thirty, with broken health, bowed under the cares of a family she is incompetent to rear... and the most melancholy feature of the case is that the girl is not to blame for all of this, but is the victim of a system of miseducation. (87)

He speaks of a system that forces a lot of responsibility on a young woman without adequately preparing her. Yet, when she fails or makes a bad decision, she is the recipient of all of the blame. She is given an inadequate education that only covers the basic information that one must know and then pressured to get married. As the young women matured and entered into motherhood, they often found out that they were discontent and that there was more to life, but by this time it was too late because they had responsibilities of a family.

Sarah Grimke writes that the "powers of [her] mind had never been allowed expansion; in childhood they were repressed by the false idea that a girl need not have the education I coveted" (88). This was an issue that led to the discontent. Many of the women desired to have families, but they wanted to receive a good education first. This was just not possible during that time and so the

women would acquiesce to the Southern ideals and marry and enter into docility to a husband and ultimately motherhood. Their discontent with where they were in personal lives is what prohibited the transfer of virtue and teachings to their children, specifically the daughters. Faulkner was somehow aware of the longing to be something other than a wife and mother, and he captured those sentiments in his writings. He never really expressed whether or not he agreed with either side, but it was evident that he was knowledgeable of both sides of the issue.

His portrayal of women has been interpreted in almost every possible way, yet there has been no concrete conclusions made on his personal view or opinion of the situation. Still, the assumption can be made that he, at least to some extent, shared the same beliefs as the majority of the society concerning women and their roles. Any deterrence that was made in his novels against the normal societal expectations resulted in detriment and shame. He made it very clear that the women in his novels knew what was expected of them. It was almost as if he wanted to portray an intentional rebellion.

The ultimate blame is placed on the mothers in each story. Both Addie and Caroline had their own issues going on that kept them from being as emotionally present as they could have and should have been. This is not saying that the young women were completely innocent because they knew they were wrong also, especially Dewey Dell. It was evident in the way that she was desperate to get rid of all evidence of her having lost her innocence. They were young and impressionable, but they were also of age to make their own decisions. This was an impossible task because they had not received the motherly advice and guidance that was necessary to make the right decision in a tough situation.

In *As I Lay Dying*, the impact that the mother has on the family is made evident through her death. Each family member ultimately discovers the true meaning for the journey for them personally. It is through the journey that Dewey Dell decides, more so by natural occurrences than by self-will, to keep her baby. She buries her mother, but the trip “ensures the survival of motherhood in her failure to abort her fetus” (Clarke 49). She discovers that it is “maternity that cannot be vanquished” (Clarke 49).

The female characters are given much attention through Faulkner’s writing, as both a way to entertain and to portray the devastation that ensues after there is a deterrence from the designated roles. It is challenging, yet interesting to speculate on his influence for the novels. At times, he seems to support the women in going against the perceived normality, yet he admonishes them by

showing the detriment of doing so. He seems to feel that all mothers have an influence on the success or failure of their families.

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