

Female Subjectivity in William Faulkner's Light in August

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Abstract : Introduction: In the work of William Faulkner, characters often evade the boundaries and categories of patriarchal standards of order. Female characters like Lena Grove and Joanna Burden cross thresholds in attempts to gain liberation, while others fail to do so. They stand as non-conformists and refuse established patterns of feminine behavior, such as marriage and motherhood after. They refute submissiveness, domesticity and abstinence to reshape their own identities. The presence of independent and creative women represents new, unconventional images of female subjectivity. This paper will examine the structures of submission and oppression faced by Lena and Joanna, and will show how, in the end, they reshape themselves and their identities, and disrupt or even destroy patriarchal structures. Objectives: Participants will understand through the examples of Lena Grove and Joanna Burden that female subjectivities are constructions, and are constantly subject to change. Approaches: Two approaches will be used in the analysis of the subjectivity formation of Lena Grove and Joanna Burden. Following the arguments propounded by Judith Butler, We explore the ways in which Lena Grove maneuvers around the restrictions and the limitations imposed on her without any physical or psychological violence. She does this by properly performing the roles prescribed to her gendered body. Her repetitious performances of these roles are both the ones that are constructed to confine women and the vehicle for her travel. Her performance parodies the prescriptive roles and thereby reveals that they are cultural constructions. Second, We will explore the argument propounded by Kristeva that subjectivity is always in a state of development because we are always changing in context with changing circumstances. For example, in Light in August, Lena Grove changes the way she defines herself in light of the events of the novel. Also, Kristeva talks about stages of development: the semiotic stage and the symbolic stage. In Light in August, Joanna shows different levels of subjectivity as time passes. Early in the novel, Joanna is very connected to her upbringing. This suggests Kristeva's concept of the semiotic, in which the daughter identifies closely to her parents. Kristeva relates the semiotic to a strong daughter/mother connection, but in the novel it is strong daughter/father/grandfather identification instead. Then as Joanna becomes sexually involved with Joe, she breaks off, and seems to go into an identity crisis. To me, this represents Kristeva's move from the semiotic to the symbolic. When Joanna returns to a religious fanaticism, she is returning to a semiotic state. Detailed outline: At the outset of this paper, We will investigate the subjugation of women: social constraints, and the formation of the feminine identity in Light in August. Then, through the examples of Lena Grove's attempt to cross the boundaries of community moralities and Joanna Burden's refusal to submit to the standards of submissiveness, domesticity, and obstinance, We will reveal the tension between progressive conceptions of individual freedom and social constraints that limit this freedom. In the second part of the paper, We will underscore the rhetoric of femininity in Light in August: subjugation through naming. The implications of both female's names offer a powerful contrast between the two different forms of subjectivity. Conclusion: Through Faulkner's novel, We demonstrate that female subjectivity is an open-ended issue. The spiral shaping of its form maintains its characteristics as a process changing according to different circumstances.

Keywords : female subjectivity, Faulkner's light August, gender, sexuality, diversity

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