

https://dspace.org/

The multiple formations of identity in selected texts by William Faulkner and Tennessee Williams

Malan, Morne

2009-09-18T11:56:26Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7295

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

THE MULTIPLE FORMATIONS OF IDENTITY IN SELECTED TEXTS BY WILLIAM FAULKNER AND TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Morné Malan

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg 2009

ABSTRACT

This project compares and contrasts the ways in which selected texts by William Faulkner and Tennessee Williams render their fictional figures as modern subjects engaged in the complex processes of identity-formation and transformation. These processes are deeply rooted within the context of the American South. The interrelatedness of identity and language is explored by investigating how these texts dramatize selfhood not as an essential or homogenous state, but as a perpetual process of self-fashioning and play amid multiple positionings. The central hypothesis is that identity manifests itself necessarily and continuously as a textual discourse in and through language, and that self-fashioning gives rise to ethical questions, because identity involves not only the subject's relation to the self, but also his or her relationships with others in closely interwoven personal, familial and communal-cultural bonds. This ethical dimension underscores the relational aspects of selfhood, that is, the notion that the individual is always situated inextricably within the social, and that the fashioning of the self is thus inconceivable without a consideration of the other. The following pairs of texts are compared: *As I Lay Dying* and *The Glass Menagerie*; *The Sound and the Fury* and *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*; *Light in August* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Keywords: identity, selfhood, subjectivity, ethics, self, other, self-fashioning, family, community, culture, William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, the South, Southern literature, American literature.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Morné Malan

_____ day of _____ 2009.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the following individuals and organizations:

My supervisor, Professor Merle Williams (Department of English, University of the Witwatersrand) who recognized the potential of this research project, and provided me with invaluable guidance, encouragement and expertise throughout the writing process.

Professor Michael Titlestad (Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Witwatersrand) and Dr Susan van Zyl (Graduate School for the Humanities for Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand) for reading an early draft of my MA dissertation and writing in support of its upgrade to a PhD.

The University of the Witwatersrand's Scholarships and Bursaries Office, and the Ernst and Ethel Ericsson Trust for their financial assistance. The opinions expressed in this thesis, and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not to be attributed to these funding bodies.

CONTENTS

Abstract ii

Declaration iii

Acknowledgements iv

Notes on Referencing and Table of Abbreviations vi

Chapter 1: Introduction **1**

Chapter 2: Self-fashioning through the subject's relation to, and dramatization of, the self in *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and *The Glass Menagerie* (1944). **34**

Chapter 3: Self-fashioning through the subject's relation to a sexual partner and/or the family in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). **76**

Chapter 4: Self-fashioning through the subject's relation to community and culture in *Light in August* (1932) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). **120**

Chapter 5: Conclusion **169**

Works Cited **182**

NOTES ON REFERENCING

When cited, the selected texts by William Faulkner and Tennessee Williams are referenced in parentheses according to the list of title abbreviations stipulated below. In the case of Williams' plays, each reference contains the title abbreviation, the act number (when applicable), the scene number (when applicable) and the relevant page number on which the quotation appears. All necessary publication details are to be found in the Works Cited list.

Citations from journal articles accessed electronically, of which the original pagination is not provided by the subscription services of the University of the Witwatersrand's library, are referenced in the text with the starting page number of the original article given in parenthesis.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

Texts by William Faulkner:

AILD – As I Lay Dying

SF – The Sound and the Fury

LA – Light in August

Texts by Tennessee Williams:

GM – The Glass Menagerie

CHTR – Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

SND – A Streetcar Named Desire