

ABSTRACT

EPICENITY AND IMPOTENCE IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *SOLDIERS' PAY*: MALE DISIMPOWERMENT THROUGH AMBIVALENT ANDROGYNOUS WOMEN

This thesis examines William Faulkner's first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, which evolved from his early poetry and graphic art that emulated the Symbolists, Decadents, and Modernists. This study explores Faulkner's affinity for epicene females with nymph-like qualities, often compared to slim, angular trees that when windblown, symbolize vacillating morals and mannerisms. An alluring, fatal temptress to males, the epicene woman's seduction is only temptation with no aspirations for physical or emotional contact; her game of chase is simply a means to selfish ends. Males smitten by her powerful enticement are drawn to her strangely erotic, androgynous body, but primarily captivated by her ambivalent inaccessibility. Her impenetrability is capable of emasculating men emotionally and physically, causing impotence in ways that render total ineffectiveness. Larger implications made through Faulkner's characterizations reflect the modern world's post WWI apathy and the spiritual, psychological, and sexual malaise of society after war's ruination.

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