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**The Quest for Self and Female  
Identity in Lee Smith's *The  
Last Girls***

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Requirements for the Master Degree in Literature and  
Civilization.**

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## **Dedication**

*To my parents, who believed in me, encouraged me and supported me in all my journey.*

*I wouldn't be here without you.*

*- To the love of my life, my dear husband, thanks for having faith on me, at the time where I stopped believing in myself. Because of you, I didn't give up.*

*- To my Family and friends for their love and support in times.*

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## **Dedication**

*To the most patient and tender woman in the world, my mother  
Kaltoum, and the most generous man my father Moussa*

*To my dear supportive husband Ayoub and little angels*

*Meriem and Aridge*

*To my shiny sisters may Allah bless them for their efforts*

*Yousra and Ouissal*

*To my second half Nour El-houda*

***Manal.***

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discover the southern female identity, their history, minority traditions, culture and language (dialects), with a focused analysis of the novel *The Last Girls* by Lee Smith, who is considered an authentic Appalachian writer, as well as, a New York Times bestselling author. Her novel *The Last Girls* shifts from the south region for her powerful female characters, she tells a rich, imaginative story about the nature of romance, the relationship between life and fiction, the relevance of the part to the present, and the expected course of women's lives. By using a narrative strategy approach, multi layering voice and text analysis, this paper attempts to demonstrate that question of female identity and discourses about the selfhood. Such deconstructive experiences challenge reified perceptions of the self and self knowledge , also we deal with evaluation of female consciousness in Lee Smith's fiction. Our research aims to demonstrate how Lee Smith, a southern writer, and other writers used their literary works to tell stories about evil people trying to discover the truth about themselves and the world they live in through a variety of circumstances and cultures.

**Keywords:** Identity, Race, Gender, Feminist Theory. Self Quest.

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## Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the novel of *The Last Girls* by Lee Smith on southern people, history, literature and culture. It will attempt to argue the research question, why Lee Smith quest for self and female identity in her last novels? There are many reasons why we choose *The Last Girls* as our text to analyze how is a reason related to its era and setting, how is it strong this relation?

our research attempt to explore these aspects of selfhood and male/female of the Appalachian region in Smith's fiction and how she portrays these aspects in her novel which the reader discovers assuming the following hypotheses :

1- Lee Smith's *The Last Girls* appreciation of selfhood which reveals the disconnect between Southern and the main stream America.

2- Lee Smith represent female identity and gender crisis.

Author , educator, and storyteller, Lee Smith is considered as the pioneer of Appalachian literature and feminism criticism. Mrs. Lee Smith is writing from firsthand experience being a motive and educator of Appalachian minority and female identity in that region, so she gives a unique perspective into the world in *The Last Girls*, it was considered as direct tribute of Twain's as it fictionalize Smith's real life adventures down the Mississippi river.

The analysis of *The Last Girls* will take into consideration several aspects of the work such as history, setting, characters.

In *The Last Girls*, Lee Smith seeks to challenge the dominant American literary canon not only by presenting a female point of view but also by offering an alternative pattern for the notion of women's journey so she mainly alluded to stories whose female protagonists struggle to release their creative selves.

Lee Smith's tenth novel was published in 2003. *The Last Girls*, which became another bestseller and a nationwide success. It was inspired by a trip in 1966 which Lee Smith made with her college classmates to enjoy rafting down the Mississippi River.

The novel focuses on five women who where once undergraduate roommates at a southern women's college , the five young women joined with six others and sailed down the Mississippi River on a raft, earning some notoriety as local

newspapers photographed the spunky college girls and less adventurous, land bound house wives offered them picnic lunches along the river.

The analysis of *The Last Girls* will take into account several aspects of the work, structure, history, culture, setting and characters.

In the first chapter, titled Appalachia: Socio-historical Context, we will spot the light on the Appalachian region, and study the changes it faced since the arrival of the European immigrants, and how much they effected the area in different aspects, such as, culture, literature...etc. therefore, to understand the background and the historical aspects of Lee Smith's way of thinking, as she considered herself more an Appalachian rather than Southern women.

The second chapter, which titled, Theoretical Framework, we attempt to give a definition and an explanation of the concept of identity in literature, and feminism as a theory in literature as well, with its historical and waves, as an introduction to our study of Lee Smith's novel *The Last Girls*.

The third chapter, which titled, Self Realization and Identity Quest in Lee Smith's *The Last Girls*: corpus analysis, is analysis of the novel that will provide the necessary information for the commentary on critical interpretation.



# *chapter one:*

## *Appalachia: Socio-historical context*

## **Introduction**

The Appalachian region was a mysterious and undiscovered place, it was a wondrous beauty with endless majestic mountain ranges covered with dense forests of green and teeming with wildlife and flowing waters since its formation millions of years ago (Aimer,2015).

The Appalachian region was a home and hunting grounds for a various of Native American Tribes, such as, Cherokee and Shawnee who managed to live there, despite of the it's difficult nature, and succeed to build a strong oral history with mountain, which it was considered as a part of their history and religion, before the arrival of the Europeans immigrants to the region, which moved the events to a new era (ibid).

### **1.1. Historical and Cultural Aspects**

The Appalachian region stretches from southern New York to north Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. It covers 205,000 square miles and it is a home to 25 million residents, with 420 counties spread across 13 states. Appalachia has intrigued, mystified, and stolen the hearts of those who visit her since its first discovery. Much has been written about the region's great beauty and solitude, as well as its people, but there is also much that is mysterious and yet to be found.

(<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

Appalachian tradition is a way of life that goes back to the 1700s, when large numbers of Europeans started to immigrate to America. While it began in North Carolina and Virginia, the practice soon spread to other states after the Revolutionary War as immigrants sought to expand beyond the initial 13 colonies. Art and crafts, cuisine, myths and folklore, various cultural influences (including African, German, and Native American), and a slew of stereotypes make up Appalachia's history (ibid).

Native Americans first congregated in the Appalachian Mountains about 16,000 years ago. Cherokee Indians were the most populous Native American tribe in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, but there were also Iroquois, Powhatan, and Shawnee people. The arrival of enslaved Africans in the region in the 16th century had a significant impact on Appalachian history. The settlers requested land from the western coast into the Appalachian Mountains when European immigration began in the 1700s. Many of the refugees, who went far into the countryside of Appalachia, were Scottish-Irish and German. At the time there were more than 50 cities and

settlements in the region linked by a footpath grid, many of which were subsequently transformed into carriages designed by Cherokee companies. The growing need for land for settlers led to innumerable bloody wars and settlements with indigenous American tribes in the end. Unfortunately, these treaties forced almost all of the Cherokee and other native groups out of the area, forcing them to go west on the sad Trail of Tears (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

Appalachia's wilderness became a frontier for discovery and living. Daniel Boone, whose 1775 expedition across Virginia's Cumberland Gap into Kentucky formed a road for settlers heading west, became America's first folk hero. Differences also eventually increased between the wealthier aristocracy on the lowlands and the coast, and the agricultural background of the Appalachians. The cruelty of the Civil War further helped to deepen rural people's mistrust of government power and outsiders. Stereotypes of Appalachian people started to take hold in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. During this time, the mountainous area witnessed both a Northern economic boom and a rise in violence. The rapid expansion of the timber industry resulted in environmental destruction, prompting increased Appalachian conservation efforts. This resulted in the creation of several wilderness areas, including Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, as well as the George Washington and Jefferson, Chattahoochee-Oconee, and Pisgah National Forests. Since they had their own written and spoken language to encourage contact and commerce with other tribes in western America, the Native American Appalachian progressed and developed their oral history (ibid).

The Cherokee syllabary was invented by Chief Sequoyah, George Gist, and established between 1809 and 1824. He began by experimenting with a writing scheme based on logograms, but the Cherokees found it difficult. Later, he created a syllabary based on letters from the Latin alphabet and western numerals. Thousands of Cherokees had mastered the syllabary by 1820, and 90 percent were literate in their native tongue by 1830. Books, religious texts, almanacs and newspapers were all published using the Cherokee syllabary, and has been in use for over a century (ibid).

Since all members of the clan were important, if one of the tribe's members was killed, a war would ensue. And there was no other explanation for the war in the Appalachian valley than this. Only the strong would prosper in the Appalachian mountain country, which was isolated and harsh, but the Scots-Irish were well

prepared; they were the strongest and had the most impact on the region of all the other European refugees (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

Scots-Irish immigrants were known for being more free-spirited and fancy-free, as well as music lovers. The fiddle or violin, flutes, handhelds, and dulcimers were carried with the Scot Irish from Ireland and Scotland (ibid).

Music was significant because it provided hope, warmth, and preserved their memory, oral heritage, and customs. They were also a hot-tempered fighters, and strong fighters. They all called for the Scots-Irish because there was conflict with Native Americans and they were powerful and professional warriors. During times of calm, the Germans were content to be free of the Scot Irish. It was said at the time, “*when the English came to America they would build a church, Germans would build a barn, and the Scot Irish would build a Whiskey still*”(Folklore). They had strict guidelines in every area of life and were well-known for the high standard of their construction (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

Most of the knowledge that the new immigrants introduced from the old countries was the ability to make whiskey for both drink and medicine. They adopted the banjo from a few African slaves brought into the mountains by some immigrants, and it became popular because of its lively rhythm. Old fiddle tunes were cherished and handed down over the years (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

## **1.2. Appalachian Literature**

Storytelling is an important part of Appalachian culture, which was traditionally passed down orally. These oral traditions undoubtedly had an impact on subsequent writing. Early accounts of the region included remarks by prominent figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Davy Crockett. However, for many years, it was mostly outsiders who shared their thoughts on Appalachia's wildness. Then, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, an increasing number of Appalachian authors began to share their thoughts on their region and its cultural traditions. Famous works include James Still's *River of Earth*, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, James Agee's *A Death in the Family*, Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*, Fannie Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*, and Homer Hickam Jr.'s *Rocket Boys*. The Foxfire volumes, on the other hand, were undoubtedly the most significant works in terms of increasing American understanding of Appalachian culture and traditional way of life. These volumes, edited by Eliot Wigginton, have introduced millions of

people to the ancient knowledge of these mountains since the first volume was released in 1972. The books educate creative self-sufficiency and help preserve Southern Appalachian folklore, crafts, and customs through interviews with old-timers (including the world-famous Aunt Arie). (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

### **1.3. Stereotyping of Appalachian Region**

Preconceptions of Appalachian people as "poor white trash", Inbreds, yokels, hicks, and rednecks are just a handful of the popular insults that have been used during the previous century (though some country folk reclaimed the last one as a point of pride, seeing it as a reflection of their humble lifestyle and hard work ethic). These stereotypes are not only mostly false, but also profoundly hurtful to Appalachians. Especially since the region has always been a vibrant melting pot of nationalities and civilizations. (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

Although African-Americans and Latinos are the region's main minority groups, Appalachia's coal revolution in the twentieth century brought in many other cultures, adding to the region's diversity (ibid).

The fact is that Appalachia was isolated as the rest of the country modernized, effectively leaving them behind. As a result, they were less educated, less well-fed, and less rich than residents of big cities and their suburbs. Outsiders saw the inhabitants of Appalachia as filthy, hillbilly farmers because of their traditional way of life, which included living off the land. When, in fact, they were the kind of hardworking, down-to-earth folks that helped shape the United States into what it is today (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

Even currently, portions of Appalachia are plagued by literacy challenges, health difficulties, and other poverty-related challenges. There is still a significant income disparity between the tourists that visit the region and the people who live there (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

The Biltmore Estate is a great example of this, erected by the privileged Vanderbilts to pander to their upper-class friends while the rest of Appalachia struggled with poverty. Nonetheless, with the assistance of the ARC and the benefits of tourism money, the people of the region are finding ways to improve their situation by commoditizing the same characteristics that make Appalachian culture so distinctly American (<http://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com>).

## Conclusion

The word Appalachia is an old Indian word and it has a real definition – “endless mountain range.” (<https://awolnews.weebly.com/appalachian-way-of-life/appalachian>).

The Indians thought the Appalachian Mountains seemed to go on forever and ever and ever. Appalachian people are more diversified today than ever before, both rural and urban. Nonetheless, they share a sense of pride, shared ideals, and a common ancestry. This region's population have suffered as a result of businesses such as oil, coal, mining, lumber, and others. Many of the enterprises that plundered resources from this region and enjoyed many years of wealth have departed, leaving the environment damaged but beautiful, exploited but undeveloped. Despite this, you will discover a population that are proud of their strong family values, self-reliance, and pride (<https://awolnews.weebly.com/appalachian-way-of-life/appalachian>).

***Chapter Two:***  
***Theoretical Framework***

## **Introduction**

This chapter will explore the issue of identity in literature, it will examine how this concept is a major theme and one of the basic tenets that the feminist theory stands on. We will also study the characteristics of the Feminist theory, And how it affected the literary productions of the women and men who write about the women's experiences. The theoretical part of the this thesis will provide a basis on which the analysis put forward in the next chapter will be build. In this chapter we will discuss the history of feminism and its waves.

We also going to shed a light on the image of the southern woman in literary works, And it's role in making a difference.

### **2.1. Identity in Literature**

Despite the fact that there is no clear definition of identity since it is a dynamic topic that has been defined and evaluated from many angles associated to various contexts and civilizations, as Hall asserts “ Identity emerged as a kind of unsettled space or unsolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses”( 1989. Cited in Djaborebbi & Guendouz, 2020). Furthermore, Mercer (1990) proposed that it is impossible to come up with a suitable definition for the identity issue since it is not a stable notion. he argue that “Identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty”(43). Yet, some scholars come with a definition as Woodward (2003) declared that “identity is about the elements of choice that we might have when identifying with the world around”, in addition to the above definitions some dictionaries defines it as “the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known”(Thefreedictionary.com/Identity. Cited in Djaborebbi & Guendouz, 2020).

Since a result, identity is a notion that can be assessed by being unique, as it is the factor that defines society and people. Because of the diversity that the world has seen in recent years in terms of different races, hybrid nations caused by a large number of immigrants who brought with them their own traditions, beliefs, and cultures; the issue of identity has become a central concern as a result of these factors, and people in such cases find themselves torn between completely different beliefs, countries, and cultures (as the case of black Americans, Creoles). (Djaborebbi & Guendouz, 2020).



These circumstances will cause people to experience feelings of nostalgia, diaspora, and dilemmas, particularly those who are unable to adapt to the country that is hosting them, because they are surrounded by new culture, place, and society, which may lead to an identity crisis, particularly those who are still resisting and struggling for their threatened identity. Obviously, a person is useless and unknown without an identity because a person can only be identified or classed by being distinct or similar to others. While identity provides a person with a sense of confidence, pride, value, and even social rank, it can also be a source of shame and a method of treating others as inferiors based on their race, religion, gender, or ethnicity. (Djaborebbi & Guendouz, 2020).

According to what has been stated above, there has been a great deal of focus on identity and other terms related to it. Identity crisis and its causes and consequences have played a significant role because most literary works address this issue and how their characters experience these situations of being either exiled, immigrant, or hybrid, and how they face repeated questions about their identity... (ibid).

All of these things contribute to someone questioning his existence, his role, and his worth. This conflicting thoughts and ideas create a crisis within the person who is subjected to such pressures, therefore it is understandable that they will want to prove themselves by resisting or proving their existence, especially those who are considered minorities (such as the creoles whom they were in between the blacks and the whites conflicts, being outcasted by both sides led them to try to prove themselves in the society) (Djaborebbi & Guendouz, 2020).

The term of identity crisis have been defined as “A psychosocial state or condition of disorientation and role confusion occurring especially in adolescents as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures, and expectations and often producing acute anxiety.” (The Free Dictionary). Alternatively, it might be a source of pride, drive, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Whereas gender identity relates to one's inner experience of being female or male, gender is described as the culturally created behaviors, personality, and features. Concerning social class, it is said that it plays a key part in establishing one's identity in such a manner that he or she might belong to a specific group that has the same social standing, allowing him or her to be recognized differently in comparison to others. (Djaborebbi & Guendouz, 2020).

## 2.2. Feminism and Feminist Theory

Feminism defined as "a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes" (thefreedictionary.com /feminism).

Feminism had a significant influence on the progress of human freedom. Women have long been ignorant of their significance and group identity. The feminist viewpoint influenced how current intellectuals and authors, such as Beasley, understand societal and power relationships. Feminism believes that "the personal is political, so feminists feel that the academic tradition of establishing barriers between the personal and the professional should be abandoned." Self-consciousness is one of the pillars of modern literary criticism, and feminist literary criticism is built on it as well. (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

### 2.2.1. Critical History of Feminism

The history of feminism is more intricate than just tracing its origins. However, one may briefly discuss the early period when feminism first formed in France and then connect it to the present. Individual view has always triumphed both history and the roots of feminism, as all present feminist ideology fought throughout history to progressively come at certain or common interpretation of its campaigns, at least by academic researchers. Having said that, feminism is the result of a lengthy fight in history, and some critics, such as France in *Fin-de-Siecle* investigations, believe that the definitions of feminism and feminist emerged quite quickly (Offen,1988. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). Regardless of these historical snags, delving into history and the early manifestations of feminism is thus necessary to develop, if not completely, an overarching concept of feminism's purpose (ibid).

According to Marya Shéliga-Loevy in *Les hommes féministes, Revue Encyclopédique Larousse*, many scholars in the field of women studies agree that the term "feminism" was coined in France in 1837 by Charles Fourier, the French philosopher, socialist, and thinker in his book *Theorie des Quatre Mouvements et des destinées generals in 1837*. However, Karen Offen, in *Defining Feminism: a Comparative Historical Approach*, feels that this assertion was most likely based solely on secondary sources that argued for it without enough verification. Further reading of Fourier's work reveals no use of the word "feminism," despite the fact that

Fourier was qualified as a feminist ideologist by today's criteria. In the early 1890s, the term "feminist" was coined in France (Offen 1988. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). Since then, it has progressively begun to advocate for women's freedom. In 1882, the French Hubertine Auclert declared the use of the phrase to characterize her female acquaintances. Auclert advocated for women's suffrage, and therefore the name appeared in her weekly *La Citoyenne* (ibid). Auclert, according to L.Cosson, also spoke of "chauvinisme masculin" at the time (ibid).

The term Feminism became so popular in the French press that Eugenie Potonie-Pierre and her colleagues in the women's organization *Solidarité* adopted it in 1892. Soon after, the world contrasted feminism with masculism (Offen, 1988. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). As a result, the phrase rose to the political surface not only in France, but also in neighboring nations.

Prior to the turn of the century, the word Feminism was used in various European nations, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Russia. Potonie-Pierre applauded the emergence of the term "feminist" at a women's convention in Berlin in 1896, after her organization discovered and popularized it (ibid). Since then, the term Feminism has had several taxonomies that reflect feminism in some form. It spawned family feminism, integral feminism, Christian feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, male feminism, and other movements (ibid).

Both opponents and allies debated vehemently about who could legitimately be labeled a feminist. In today's world, these divergences of opinion swiftly sparked a debate over various feminism-related issues (ibid). These ongoing conflicts demonstrate that the term "feminist" cannot be characterized as a mainstream philosophy (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

Only in 1910 was the term "feminism" widely used in the United States by both supporters and opponents of women's liberation (Offen,1988. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). However, various political parties utilized the phrases in a contentious manner since not everyone used the term "feminist" to signify the same thing. Nonetheless, the popular usage signified women's rights rather than rights equal to those of males. Even back then, feminism connoted a wide range of sociopolitical critique in which women are the focal point of its ideology and women are victims of men's advantages (Offen,1988. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). In other words, the phrase went over time and place (before arriving in the United States),

advocating new ideas that may contribute to the denunciation of gender injustice. (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

### **2.2.2. Feminism in Literature**

Elaine Showalter argues that feminist critique refers to the reinterpretations and assessments that may be found in the content of novels in the sphere of literature. It is concerned not just with depictions of women and men in fiction, but also with their relationships, portrayals of the institutions that affect them, and the way society shapes them. To put it another way, Showalter claims that feminist criticism entails a critical examination of the world's superficial view, the people that populate it, and the kind of reality presented. The examined themes, in general, concern the reality of man control of female bodies, such as marriage and seduction; additionally, it tends to shed light on men's control of women's economic status and ideas such as women's poverty, women's fear of poverty, women's access to work, women's education, and other concerns (Talbot, 1995. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). It should be noted, however, that feminist critique is considered as a specific type of political discourse in which critical and theoretical efforts are dedicated to the fight against patriarchy and sexism (Toril, cited in Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). As a result, feminism (whether motivated by literary or political goals) is recognized as an ideology or movement that challenges gender inequality (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

The early critique of representations of women made some fairly dubious assumptions about works of fiction that reflected the reality of women. Assumptions collided with the quest for good female role models (Talbot, 1995. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). Despite the first criticism's narrowness, they were politically motivated and devoted to critical, opposing interpretation. In feminist philosophy, there are two schools of thought. The first is how male writers show women in literature, the language used to depict women, and women's role in society. Elaine Showalter used the term "Phallogenitism" to describe men's writings on women, whereas "Gynocriticism" is feminist criticism generated by women (Selden, 1988. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015).

Feminism established by women is known as gynocriticism (Selden, 1988. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). Showalter helped to separate the artificiality within literary analysis while dealing with feminism by challenging the criteria by which the novels were classified (Phallogenitism or Gynocriticism). (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

Kate Millett is an American feminist critic and a well-known figure from the second wave of feminism. Millet argues that feminists must be pluralists in order to avoid taking a radical stance. This implies they accept any ideas, even feminist ones, even if they have been "contaminated" by male-dominated ideology. Millet, for example, claims that some female feminists embraced male-produced ideas. Mary Wollstonecraft is one of these examples, who was affected by male-dominated beliefs of the French Revolution. As a result of this, feminists should not deny the fact that several men like John Stuart Mill had done efforts for understanding the women's position; simply, because those men were liberal. Therefore, the significance of feminist ideas does not lay on their origins, whether by men or women, rather they lay on their application and what sort of effects they hold. In short, Millet concludes, it does not matter if the given theory is formulated by man or woman, but "its effects can be characterized as sexist or feminist in a given situation" (Toril. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). As long as both (men and women) advocate equality and question sexism, the end is what matters regardless the nature of its means. (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

### **2.2.3. Waves of Feminism**

Feminist theorists and researchers divide feminism into three phases. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a feminist wave. The second occurred from the 1960s to the 1970s, and the third from the 1990s to the present (Krolokke, 2006. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). However, each of these eras has various goals, disputes, and political methods based on the shift that occurs once this movement comes to the political surface. During its early days, feminism was referred to be a women's movement for the promotion of women's interests and rights rather than an ideology for gender equality. Essentially, ideals like women's suffrage sprang from social gatherings. Women held those social clubs and groups in an attempt to flee the country. Nonetheless, society saw it as little more than philanthropic endeavors and friendly membership to break up the monotony of married life. As a result, in the second part of the nineteenth century, these clubs began to tamper with educational frameworks in order to boost their intellectual powers. (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

It is important noting that they were neither riotous or rebellious behaviors. Instead, the conceptual clubs were bestowed with a calm and gradual evolution. This

was owing to social norms about the image of women, which encouraged "real women" to be more subservient in order to be socially acceptable (Martin, 1987. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). Gradually, these groups provided women with the tools they needed to develop their intellectual thinking and, as a result, what they might achieve. As a result, rather than academic gatherings, these early women's socials were a venue of latent feminist groups, gatherings to encourage women, and gatherings that emphasized the oneness of female sex (Cott, 1987. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015).

Needless to say, the clubs were seen not only as an educational haven, but also as a watershed moment in women's progress toward more individuality in the long run (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

Many women reformers in the nineteenth century, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Margaret Fuller, Sojourner Truth, and Emma Willard, not only inspired ideas of equality consciousness and self-development, but also spurred their sisters' individuality (Martin, 1987. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). The start of the century also saw a shift as feminism became more popular. Those campaigners' perspectives quickly moved from their original goal of women's suffrage to more developed philosophy. More crucially, the new vocabulary of feminism emerged to put a stop to the movement's old worldview (ibid). As a result, the new goal was accompanied by a new modern agenda. Mary Wollstonecraft's essays were perhaps the most influential of the early feminists. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is not only an essential early movement text, but it is also regarded as a philosophically influential idea of women's enlightenment. However, following the turn of the nineteenth century, another powerful voice emerged. Virginia Woolf, a British writer admired by feminists, was the source of this voice. She argued that because women had no history, their history was based on what males wrote about them in order to pass it on to other men: "these colorful constructive events of their male history through a male lineage," yet women are passive from their part because they submit to that fact (Spender, 1983. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, was a fundamental canon of feminism that provided the framework for radical second wave feminism, alongside Mary Wollstonecraft's and Virginia Woolf's expressions of liberal first wave feminism (Krolokke, 2006. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015).

Only in the 1960s movements did the notion or notion of feminism have implications to some type of extreme resistance, heralding the start of the second

wave. The freedom movements were the second movement's spirit. Women's demonstrations, such as photos of Gloria Steinem and others calling for women's freedom, typified the movement; they were seen pouring out to the streets noisily demanding equal pay and equal rights under the banner of women power. The wave is distinguished by the ideas and activities performed by women, as well as, most notably, by its radicalism. It was rapidly dubbed "the women's liberation movement" (Krolokke, 2006. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). It began in the early 1960s and continued until the late 1980s. (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

The second movement's goal was to improve women's legal and social positions; nonetheless, the movement began with radicalism. Feminist activists demanded radical social, cultural, and political demands throughout this time period (Krolokke, 2006. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). One of these feminist groups, for example, is the New York Radical Feminists, who campaigned against patriarchal cultures' iconic portrayals of women in 1969. According to the demonstrators, women were viewed as livestock, and their looks was more important than what they would do, what they could think, or even whether they could think at all. Carrying placards and slogans that read, "Cattle parades are humiliating to humans, "Feminists delivered their point loud and clear." Women were victims of patriarchal pressures, and "the beauty culture" marketed and oppressed them (ibid). Feminists may pass on the spirit of emancipation to future generations through these protests. The identity of second wave feminism was characterized by the growth of other subsidiary criticisms such as those from black feminism, social feminism, and lesbian feminism, as presented by daring works such as Bell Hooks' *Ain't I A Woman? Black Woman and Feminism* (1981) and Trinh T. Minh-Woman, *ha's Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (2001). (1989). They questioned the white, middle-class, and heterosexual agendas, as well as gender, class, racism, ethnicity, and sexuality concerns. (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

It was also a time when new terms for the feminist job emerged, such as "gynocriticism," coined by Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), or "womenism." In *Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983) by Alice Walker (Krolokke, 2006. Cited in Ben Hmeida, 2015). Second-wave feminisms, which emerged in the 1970s, have resulted in a massive quantity of study and teaching on women's concerns.

In the early 1990s, the Third Wave of Feminism emerged. First, it is renowned for the women's movement's clearly identifiable goals, and second, it was a response to "the failures" that second wave feminism failed to solve. Lipstick feminism, girly feminism, "riot grrrl feminism," "cybergirl feminism," "transfeminism," or simply girl feminism are examples of criticisms that were created with the rights that first and second wave feminists battled for. The phrase "Grrl" refers to a young lady who is considered independent, powerful, or aggressive. It was created in the 1990s to portray the sound of an animal howling and hence human rage. Finally, Third Wave feminists identify as "competent, powerful, and aggressive social agents" (ibid). Furthermore, they are more concerned with the necessity to construct a feminist theory and its political inclination, which is also an attempt to fill the gaps created by the disagreement in opinion. (Ben Hmeida, 2015).

#### **2.2.4. Identity in Feminism**

The dispute over the significance of identity, both personal and collective, is important to current feminist philosophy. Allison Weir's *Sacrificial Logics: Feminist Theory and the Critique of Identity* and Morwenna Griffiths' *Feminisms and the Self: The Web of Identity* are two noteworthy contributions to this topic. Weir and Griffiths are both interested in the connections between individual and collective identities, as well as the ramifications of that relationship for feminist politics. And everyone, in their own way, advances the argument concerning feminist theory and identity. Weir's *Sacrificial Logics* navigates the terrains of French feminist, postmodern feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and object-relations theory with deftness. She claims that the concept of identity as negative—as repression, exclusion, or dominance—runs rampant throughout contemporary philosophy, from Simone de Beauvoir to Jacques Derrida. She convincingly argues that many feminists face a conundrum when attempting to resist this logic of identification as negative. She refers to this negative logic of identification as sacrificial since it is based on the exclusion and sacrifice of diversity. Feminists propose a relational identity in order to remove the overemphasis on separation that is considered as the normative ideal for (male) identity. By doing so, however, they implicitly embrace the idea that isolation equals domination. Weir concludes that a feminist model of self-identity must incorporate difference, connection, and variety, and she encourages feminists not to abandon abstraction, and hence the potential for critique, so readily. Griffiths situates her *Feminisms and the*



Self within the analytic philosophical tradition, however she also leans on continental philosophy, highlighting some overlap between these two approaches. She constructs an identity theory as a web, suggesting that conventional philosophy frequently has a restricted masculinist bias that favors specific conceptualizations of autonomy, selfhood, emotions, reason, and politics. *Feminisms and the Self* is a very accessible book that should appeal to a wide variety of readers. Griffiths describes her intended audience as feminists, philosophers, social scientists, or any combination of these, as well as academics and non-academics. Her concern for the audience reflects the process-oriented approach that defines so much of the greatest feminist work. From her rigorous analysis of experience as a kind of knowledge to her conclusion on the significance of collective action in social transformation, this feminist bent throughout the book. . She employs tales of her own and others' experiences to explain how identities are produced within, but not dictated by, social context and membership in social groupings such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. She contends that appealing to lived experience may address mainstream Western philosophy's overemphasis on theory and abstraction. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>). The first section of *Feminisms and the Self* advocates for an epistemic framework based on experience. Griffiths identifies three commonalities across feminist epistemologies. First, feminist epistemologies are concerned with subjective self-consciousness. Second, feminist epistemologies are a moral and political response to the devaluation and oppression of women and girls. Finally, feminist epistemologies accept the significance of theory. She adds the "continuous spiralling" of feminist knowledge to these three commonalities, recognizing that "there is no prospect of the acquisition or construction of fixed unchanging knowledge" (Griffiths, 1996. Cited in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>).

Griffiths develops four methodological principles that make experience fundamental to the development of knowledge from these epistemological commonalities: (M1) Knowledge can only be gained through a method that allows for reflection on experience, (M2) through theory, and (M3) through a variety of different group/political perspectives that will call that experience into question; all of which (M4) indicates a never-ending process of returning to old knowledge with new perceptions and then using the result to re-work the new perceptions. (ibid) She uses what she calls critical autobiography to exemplify these methodological ideas, which is autobiography that reflects real events while also including politics and philosophy.

Griffiths hopes to move away from the false universalization in mainstream philosophy's understanding of self-identity as a web that is constituted in part by material circumstances and grows out of our interactions with others by starting from the concrete perspective of women reflecting on their own situation as women. Griffiths contends that self-identity has an inherent social and political dimension. Furthermore, she contends that emotions, reason, and autonomy must be viewed as social and political constructs. She illustrates how we develop our identities by using the concept of belonging and the associated sentiments of resistance, love, rejection, and acceptance. Griffiths' account of the self deviates most drastically from the mainstream Western philosophical tradition (which she both critiques and leans on) in her thorough treatment of emotions. She contends that sentiments and emotions are politically created because we learn not only how to behave, but also how to feel, in social circumstances that are dominated by politics. Furthermore, she contends that rationality is political in the sense that both judgements about who is reasonable and judgments about what qualifies as rationality in a specific instance are dependent on validation communities, which are susceptible to social and political norms. Griffiths broadens this theory of emotions to include two self-centered feelings, self-esteem and self-creation. She attacks conventional explanations of self-creation, particularly those of Richard Rorty and G.W.F. Hegel, as masculinist in this section: It is notable that in mainstream theories of self-construction, greater emphasis is placed on another set of emotions: cruelty, humiliation, dominance, pride, and shame.... A link was drawn between autonomy, as in self-creation, and the feelings of domination and cruelty, which, as I pointed out, are male rather than feminine. (1996) Unlike Weir, Griffiths recognizes the association of separation and autonomy with dominance and rejects both as symptoms of a restricted masculinist philosophical bent. To be fair, she does highlight the necessity to rethink autonomy. She believes that autonomy should be redefined as self-creation. This notion of self-creation emphasizes both the necessity of self-determination and the realization that a meaningful existence entails connections. Griffiths comes to the conclusion that change is not only feasible, but also unavoidable on both a personal and social level. She proposes a novel metaphor of a patchwork self as a means of comprehending the process of self-creation. Weir's *Sacrificial Logics* investigates how identity has been conceptualized in the works of several important feminist theorists, including Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Nancy Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin, Jacqueline Rose, Luce Irigaray, and Julia

Kristeva. The notion of identity is essential to each of these feminist philosophers. Indeed, Weir contends that if feminism is to fulfill its aim of social transformation, a number of identity-related concerns must be addressed. She focuses on individual self-identification while realizing that debating collective identity, social identity, and the identity of meaning in language would ultimately lead to discussions of collective identity, social identity, and the identity of meaning in language (Weir, 1996. Cited in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>). Weir contends that feminist theorists have incorrectly linked identification with repression, and that this conception of identity as repression has led feminist theory to a dead end. Weir demonstrates how prevalent this idea of identity is; each chapter of her book examines how identity operates in the work of a certain thinker. She divides the wide array of feminist thinkers she covers into two approaches: psychoanalytic object-relations feminists and poststructuralist feminists. While there is considerable overlap between both views, psychoanalytic object-relations feminists see identity as largely constituted by relationships with others, whilst poststructuralist feminists see identity as largely constituted by language and culture. Both the feminist psychoanalytic object-relations approach and the feminist poststructuralist approach, according to Weir, wrongly embrace the premise that self-identity is predicated on a battle for dominance between Self and Other. She attributes this misunderstanding to de Beauvoir's reading of Hegel. As long as feminists believe that identification implies dominance and exclusion, feminist theorists will be driven to reject identity as a good ideal for women. Weir shows that this is true for both psychoanalytic object-relations feminists and poststructuralist feminists. Separation of the self from others and abstraction of the self from its embeddedness in a community are both rejected by object-relations theorists such as Chodorow. Instead, they prefer an intersubjective and relational view of the self (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>).

According to Weir, the psychoanalytic object-relations approach conflates separation with domination and hence denies separation. This denial of separation, however, creates a difficulty since the self is insufficiently distinguished from others. Butler and other poststructuralist feminists see the ego as being formed through symbolic systems of culture and language. Weir contends that the poststructuralist concept that identity is formed via language and that language is inherently limited and repressive (controlled by the rule of the father) leads Butler and other poststructuralist feminists to reject identification altogether. Feminists lack a

foundation for solidarity and political activity when they reject their identity or submerge it into the identity of others. Recognizing that Kristeva's work is marked by a series of ambivalences between, on the one hand, an identity founded on a logic of exclusion and, on the other, an identity that encompasses diversity and heterogeneity, Weir offers a reading of Kristeva that emphasizes this second part of her perspective. Kristeva, like other poststructuralist feminists, believes that the subject is discursively formed; nonetheless, she sees language as a dialectical interplay between practice and structure. Language allows subjects to create and uncreate themselves (Weir,1996. Cited in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>). This perspective on language as a behavior, rather than just a structure, adds a social dimension to subjectivity. Kristeva's theory provides a better model of identity for women because she avoids linking identification with repression and exclusion by integrating language development with sociality. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>).

Identity is formed through a child's capacity to express herself through language and her affiliation with her mother. Because Kristeva acknowledges the social component of language learning and usage, sociality becomes a goal of self-identity rather than an adversary to it. . Weir argues that Kristeva's theory does not result in a sacrificial logic of identity, but rather allows for a more nuanced model of self-identification that encompasses heterogeneity and diversity, focusing on her articles on women's identity and motherhood. Kristeva's identity model generates a new sort of subjectivity, a "subject-in-process" (Weir, 1996. Cited in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>). The concept of a topic in progress reconciles the necessity for both unity and diversity. The kid acquires self-identity through identifying with the mother, who participates in the socio-symbolic language system. This identification process avoids the problems of, on the one hand, rejecting the mother entirely, thus rejecting connection and sociality, and, on the other hand, identifying so fully with the mother that there is no separation, but rather the identities mix together.( <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>).

Weir contends that Kristeva's conception of self-identification avoids the "sacrificial logic" of identification seen in the other feminist thinkers she considers. Because this identity model requires neither exclusion of the Other nor absolute identification with the Other, it gives a means to construct identity that may include diversity. Furthermore, sociality is at the heart of this identity concept, which explains the ability to engage in, and so influence, the social environment. Weir closes her

book by urging feminists to embrace a self-model that incorporates diversity, connection, and variety. She proposes a model of self-identity that addresses the concerns of psychoanalytic object-relations feminists that most current models of self-identity are based on the denial of connection to others, as well as postmodern feminists' concerns that identity is produced within a symbolic system that excludes difference. Weir defines self-identity as "the ability to experience oneself as an engaged and somewhat coherent participant in the social environment" (1996). Reflexivity and intersubjectivity are two fundamental characteristics of such an identity. Reflexivity is crucial because it allows people to reflect on their decisions and identities (ibid).

Intersubjectivity is equally crucial since one's choices and identities are socially constructed, that is, they are the result of social interaction. Making meaning is a societal and individual process in both reflexivity and intersubjectivity. According to Weir, the endeavor to reconcile disparities and conflicts in one's own identity is necessary for self-identification. She acknowledges, however, that her efforts to comprehend and reconcile differences may not end in the extinction of such disparities. In this regard, she differs with postmodernist feminists who support for leaving inconsistencies and paradoxes unsolved. Instead, she contends that self-awareness, self-realization, and self-direction are critical to an individual's ability to define and problematize her own identity. The process of creating one's own identity is a social one that necessitates learning social and linguistic standards; nevertheless, acquiring these standards does not obligate one to embrace them. The ability to question societal norms is gained via socialization. Weir believes that sociality is a fundamental prerequisite for self-identity, but she cautions feminists not to regard abstraction as the enemy. Our socially trained ability for abstraction provides us with the resources to engage in social critique and political action. Individual identity is inextricably linked to the social, according to Weir's *Sacrificial Logics* and Griffiths' *Feminisms and the Self*. Both advocate for a view of identity as a social construct formed by resources such as language, institutions, and culture. The aim to offer an identity model that can account for both social critique and political activity is central to each argument. For feminists, this is a critical problem. Griffiths and Weir both make significant contributions to feminist philosophy and practice. Each adds to a better understanding of how contemporary identity conceptions stymie feminist goals of social critique and social transformation. And each gives a picture of the self that

emphasizes sociality while retaining the potential for social critique. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810628>).

### **2.3. The Image of Southern women in Literary Works**

The word "southern culture," as used in American literary criticism, refers to a collection of concepts that produce a distinct way of perceiving the world and oneself among southerners, establishing a concept of the distinctiveness and peculiarity of the southern character. (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

This phrase has grown in importance not only for the advancement of women's literary works, but also for the advancement of national identity in general. The study of this notion and its genre-forming role in women's creativity in the first half of the nineteenth century helps to elucidate the nature formed contemporary American social ethics and culture conceptions of "American family" and "US House," in many ways. as well as a fuller understanding of the crucial phenomena of national consciousness known as "American exclusivity." (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

The writings of E.G. Jones, K. Seidel, and M. Gwin, which cover a wide range of themes relating to the topic of the reflected image of the southern lady and her spheres of existence in literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are known to have appeared between 1880 and 1890 (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

E. Moss, in describing the work of American writers of the Old South in terms of their ideological orientation, notes that the emergence of enforcement trends in southern writers' novels contributed to the events of the first third of the nineteenth century, when, following a slave rebellion led by Nat Turner, the South went to great lengths to defend the legitimacy of slavery to the entire civilized world (ibid).

Following that, in the first part of the nineteenth century, with the publication of the novel H. Beecher Stowe's defensive stance in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has given way to aggressive assault on northern ideology and ethics. E. serves as research material. Moss selects the most important works of pre-war Southern authors - B. K. Henze, M. McIntosh, M. Garland, and E. Gilman Evans investigates not just the contents of their works, but also personal letters, magazine and newspaper pieces regarding the subject (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

The first half of the twentieth century is directly related to not only the general trends of becoming national American literature, but also the process of gaining social status, self-determination of women in American society, and the specific political

and ideological development of the United States throughout the period of registration of national consciousness, from colonial times to the present (ibid).

The phrase "southern culture," as used in American literary criticism, refers to a set of concepts that produce a unique way of seeing the world and oneself among southerners, producing the concept of the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the southern character. This phrase has grown in importance not only for the advancement of women's literary works, but also for the advancement of national identity in general (ibid).

The study of this concept and its genre-forming function in women's creativity during the first half of the nineteenth century aids in many ways in clarifying the nature shaped modern American social ethics and culture concepts of "American family" and "US House," as well as deeper insight into the important phenomenon of national consciousness known as "American exclusiveness." Mercy Otis Warren and Judith Sargent Murray, who invented the idea of women's extraordinary role in the formation of the new republic, also own the notion of women in many parts of the South (ibid).

They employed the form of works of art – drama and romance – to promote their ideals while expanding his views primarily in journalistic genres, thereby opening the way for the growth of national literature in general and women's creativity in particular (ibid).

The concept of "republican motherhood" has been expanded in the debate about the American family and the house as a stronghold of nation formation, where the stability of family relations is viewed more broadly as the stability of social relations as a whole, and where the family house acquired national dimensions, which belonged to the key role women (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

Sarah Hale and Catharine Beecher used the concept of "republican motherhood" to develop and widen these notions in response to public needs of the moment. They thought that the duty of women is to serve as an example of moral, especially Christian qualities, and maintained that the influence of women should not be restricted to his house, but should be directed and applied to a national home, and even go beyond it (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

In contrast, Beecher believed that the woman's primary domain should be her house and all within it, and that she should not be required to participate in political struggles.

It should be recalled that, for all southerners at the time, the matter of preserving their social institutions was inextricably linked to two national social trends: the struggle for women's rights and abolitionism (ibid).

For southerners, both social movements were viewed as a single indivisible whole and a plain social and moral evil, because they both promoted the notion of liberation, of course, associating the notion of liberation as an explicit danger to its social and political structures. Southerners have understood these notions not in terms of all citizens protected by the state of freedom's Constitution, but in terms of the destructive plea for the release of civic duty and duties. Thus was born the concept of a distinct southern civilization, as well as the role and worth of women in the South. The notion contributed to the South and women found a home in the journalistic works of Loise McCord, who examined the subject of men and women having distinct societal purposes, and presented the benefits of a patriarchal societal community. (ibid).

The authors R. Gilman, B. Hense, and M. McIntash worked hard to promote the best aspects of the South and its people, representing them as carriers of Christian principles and high moral standards in the civilized world. However, in this situation, it was not a matter of opposing the American North and South. (ibid).

The first generation of writers honestly thought that the North was simply unfamiliar with the customs and establishment of the South, therefore they attempted to connect to the successes of the northern resident of southern life in order to preserve national stability (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

K. Beecher places women at the center of the home, the South American home, and her devotion and loyalty to this house is dependent on the country's future stability, and in this sense, the house becomes a metaphor for the American state, and a woman is endowed with important social functions in accordance with this interpretation. The southern lady was given a unique role in the contradictory process of reconciliation between the American South and North. She was concerned with the success of your own house, your family, which the expansion was recognized as a southern community, while also laying the groundwork for stability and success in the common American household (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

Its social purpose was thought to be in women, focused on the establishment of a unique environment within the home, which would then extend to the whole



social body. As a result, the major values that had to protect the lady were, first and foremost, the Christian qualities of love, humility, and forgiveness (ibid).

The social condition in the South has shifted considerably since the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It has become evident that the deal with the North cannot be signed, and there is a growing consciousness of imminent national disaster. Without deviating from the primary tendencies of its predecessors in painting a favorable picture of the South, Meriot Garland and Augustus Evans opposed the concept of North-South reconciliation. They attempted to establish an image of the South as "country to country," claiming the South's significance as a national community and the only authentic ideals (ibid).

In this case, the lady was represented not just as a defender of the southern home, but also of constitutional rights, democratic institutions, and real Christian ethical norms. Kate Chopin, Glace King, and Ellen Glasgow took up the baton of the older generation and focused their attention on the tragic process of self-identification of the southern lady image of the conflict of values generally accepted norms and the realities of the southern community at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They did, however, meticulously retain the general framework of the motif of the uniqueness and beauty of the Old South's harmonic universe (ibid).

It goes without saying that the writers featured in subsequent literature - F. Connor and J. Welty, who were the glory of the southern Renaissance, also carried the heritage of the image of the South given by prewar women authors. Many scientists acknowledged the effect of these publications, such as J. Welty's "Conflagration" The death of two southern ladies is viewed as a metaphor for the awful fate of the American South in this story (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

The main feature of the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the United States was that the woman in the family sphere continued to be operated by an entity, and its involvement in professional work transformed the operation into a double, because the rules in force in the home and at work were based on the patriarchal model. The patriarchal orientation of the culture and its "power" were characterized broadly as the engagement of males in decision-making and its execution by "male-pattern." The concept of women's equality in the second half of the nineteenth century encompassed a broad range of American society and found expression in the feminist movement, which not only broke the "conspiracy of silence" about women's issues,

but also identified the social determinants associated with sex origin, men's and women's roles in the development and prosperity of society (ibid).

The problem of women's status in society, and especially the issue of their rights and freedoms, were admittedly plain in the literary and historical common language of the period, and a new notion of "The New Woman" was proposed.

L. Wittman characterized the notion as a woman with limitless options who is always on the lookout for and tends to reject any societal constraints (ibid).

According to American historian S. Evans, there were two new social categories of women at the time: the "new woman" of the middle class and the "girl-worker," the uniqueness of which has been a change from the culture of Victorian general hearth toward independence, amusement, and consumerism (ibid).

A substantial number of women's works created between 1870 and 1910 demonstrated that American writers felt the need to portray the process of becoming the "new woman," when the progress of her life comes to a halt (ibid).

They showed the way of life heroines at the end of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, concentrating on the changing roles and functions of women in American society, and at this era most clearly showed changes in different aspects of human civilization (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

L. Brown, A. Bebel, K. Lightfoot, and S. de Beauvoir should be named among foreign scientists whose work constituted a thorough and diverse examination of women's concerns. On the Russian side, the works of Bellskoy, O.A. Voronina, and N.A. Goltsev analyze the history of the women's movement in America (ibid).

Kerry, according to E. Morozkina, is governed by natural egoistic goals, but Jenny is a sign of genuine love and compassion. During this historical time, several works challenged the traditional perception of women and argued for their right to be regarded equal to men. In the works published between 1870 and 1910, authors attempted to fill the live image content shaped in the real world phenomena of the "new lady." The research was inspired by the work of James G. James, U. Howells, T. Dreiser, Garland X. Grane, E. Sinclair, and others. The birth of a new societal mindset (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

Many American writers have noted the creation of a new female identity, the creation of an identity and a new type of women as indicators of social liberation, according to E. Mor Rozkina (ibid).

The author finds that W. Howells' literary work includes the quest for and the challenge of the national feminine character. She concludes that J. London was always concerned with women's issues, and having access to them was not only a compliment to the literary trend of the day, but a "very significant, purposeful move" for authors of the day. The book concludes with a criticism of women's roles in nineteenth-century American literature. Writers have created a new heroine by connecting the destiny of women with the realities of class society and reflecting virtues such as self-esteem and independence (<http://www.cyberleninka.ru>).

## **Conclusion**

It was worthwhile to investigate the theme of identity because it has always been an interesting subject for writers in general, and female writers in particular, because the female will always fight to force her identity in a mannish society full of racism and patriarchy.

*Chapter Three :*

*Self Realization and Identity Quest in*

*Lee Smith The Last Girls: Corpus*

*Analysis*

## **Introduction**

This chapter will explore the analytical approach in the issue of self and female identity in literature and in feminism literary theory, it will examine how this concept became a basic theme that the theory focus in. Identity lies at the center of feminism writers and specifically Appalachian writers stands on, due to the impacts of racism that have been experienced. First , we are going to analyze our sample novel through narrative analysis and feminism theory in order to narrow down to the scope of study since the novel could be approaches from varied points of view .Also, we used to shed light into the history, culture and setting of our studied novel , without forgetting to mention the quest for self in *The Last Girls* which helps us in analyzing the loss that she undergoes and resulted in this destruction.

We should be noted that the studied part doesn't exceed one third of the whole novel *The Last Girl* or little more due to a lack of time and novel's length. In this chapter we relied on the analytic approach in which we gathered data from varied sources. We conducted this work through focusing understanding and analyzing our novel. It was the main source which supported our analysis.

This chapter is composed of three main titles: Self Realization and Identity Quest in Lee Smith *The Last Girls: Corpus Analysis*. The subtitles, first, Narrative Analysis in which we discuss the theme of self and female identity, the second title is History, Culture And Setting in which we tackled the cerownded atmosphere,The last title is The Quest For Self in *The Last Girls*.

### **3.1 .Narrative Analysis of *The Last Girls***

Since the first publication of Lee Smith's *The Last Girls* (2003), the novel is become wonderful reading .It's also wonderfully revealing of women's lives-of the idea of romance , of the relevance of past to present ,of memory and desire , it is a verbal scrapbook portraying the lives of five women who attended an all-girl college, Mary Scott, in the mountains of southwest Virginia. We should be mention that we take the analysis third of Lee Smith's novel *The Last Girls* or little more.

Lee Smith turns the pages of this album as its subjects journey down the Mississippi River in a luxury riverboat. This voyage serves two purposes within the novel: it commemorates the women's original voyage made on a raft the summer after their freshman year and provides the funerary for a memorial service for Baby (Ballou), the most adventurous of the voyagers. Symbolically, these dual voyages

juxtapose the opulence and wisdom of maturity with the exuberance and adventurous spirit of youth and create the imagery of life flowing naturally from one stage to the next until claimed by death. Lee Smith is renowned for using the Blue Ridge Mountains as the setting for her stories about Appalachian women. Her success arises from the sympathetic, yet realistic, portrayal of women, and their families, who are often misrepresented and maligned by the media and popular culture. Novels such as *Oral History*, *Saving Grace*, *Fair and Tender Ladies*, and *Black Mountain Breakdown* use the fodder of stereotype in a manner that elucidates rather than demeans. Her skillful prose weaves an authentic tapestry of Appalachian life. Yet, her characters and their trials are so universal that her work transcends the limitations of regionalism.

Smith has developed a loyal following throughout the country, particularly in the culturally similar South on the roots of Feminism especially the third wave feminism, which is clearly represented in the novel, it usually incorporates elements of queer theory, anti-racism and women of color, as well as people of color, consciousness, womanism, girl power, post colonial( anti-Imperialism) theory.....the movement of third-wave feminism focused less on laws and the political processes and more on individual identity, the realization that women are of many colors, ethnicities, religion and cultural backgrounds .

According to a publicity release about the novel, *The Last Girls* was written in response to a fan's request that she writes about Southern women as well. Using the interconnections of character and place, she perceptively and shrewdly displays the similarities and distinctions that define both Southern and Appalachian cultures. Within this carefully constructed milieu, Smith informs readers of the forces that govern the courses of women's lives: gender roles, social stratification and the psychological implications of Appalachian identity.(McGrew,A,2003)

We quote:

“ The girls wore white T-shirts with yellow daisies painted on them and sang, Good-bye, Paducah', to the tune of Hollo, Dolly' as the unusual craft departed In fact, in Harriet's memory, they sang relentlessly, all the time, all the way down the Mississippi They song in spite of all their mishaps and travails: the tail of the hurricane that hit them before they even got to Cairo, a diet consisting mostly of tuna and doughnuts, mosquito bites beyond

belief, and rainstorms that soaked everything they owned. If anything really bad happened to them, they knew they could call up somebody's parents collect, and the parents would come and fix things. They expected to be taken care of nobody had yet suggested to them that they might ever have to make a living or that somebody wouldn't marry them and look after them for the rest of their lives. They all smoke cigarettes." (p23)

As the novel progresses, the sub regional distinctions blur as the story transcends boundaries and the universal roles of womanhood: daughter, sister, lover, wife, mother caregiver. The temporal progression of the novel mimics the cultural transformations of the regions depicted, gradually blending Appalachian and Southern cultures and eroding the ethnic identities of the characters. This progression could be interpreted as a social commentary on the erosion of cultural distinctiveness as mainstream American culture infiltrates both regions via popular culture and mass media. For the first time in years, Smith abandons the Appalachian Mountains as the dominant setting of her novel (ibid).

. We quote:

A scholarship student all through school, Harriet often identified more with the blacks she worked alongside in the college dining room than with some of her classmates who had never worked one day in their privileged lives. A black person will tell you the truth. As opposed to rich white Southerners who will tell you whatever they think you'd like to hear..." (p12)

Yet, the presence of the mountains infiltrates this novel in the form of the influence that the events and people at Mary Scott had on the lives of the women portrayed. Smith differentiates among the personalities of each woman by showing the readers how the girl she used to be reacted to them. The influence of the sexually exploitive, artistic English professor, Mr. Gaines, and her reaction provides some insight into her personality. The reclusive, naïve Harriet Holding continues to deify him as an inspirational force in her life though she never acts on the inspiration. Impetuous Baby Ballou has an illicit, and meaningless, encounter with him mere weeks before her marriage to her life mate. Anna, the self conscious West Virginia hillbilly, borrowed respectability and acceptance from her affair with him and returned it when she realized that she was nothing more than another student to him, then regained it on her own terms by finding financial success in conquering the

commercial world of the romance novel. Courtney, whose storybook life had no frame for a troubadour, and Catherine, whose talent emerged as a natural component of her life, thought of him as merely another teacher. The inclusion of episodes from their college days serves to demonstrate Smith's contention that women remain much the same throughout their lives. As mature, menopausal women, they respond to situations in the same manner that they responded to similar situations throughout the novel. The changes within the women themselves are primarily. Lee Smith relates the story of female college friends who, years later, recreate a Mississippi River voyage they had taken together. This time, however, they will scatter the ashes of their deceased friend, Margaret (Baby) Ballou. The women reflect on the bonds that joined them while in school and their different paths-both relating to their personal lives and their careers-in the intervening decades (<https://www.enotes.com>).

Friendship after Separation The primary theme that Smith considers is the meaning of friendship and whether it can endure time and separation. We quote:  
” The river...it all started with the river. How amazing that they ever did it, twelve girls, ever went down this river on that raft, how amazing that they ever thought of it in the first place.” (p18)

The six women who were close while students at a Southern women's college largely went their own ways after school, but some still believe in. The following quote:

”They expected to be taken care of. Nobody had yet suggested to them that they might ever have to make living or that somebody wouldn't marry them and look after them for the rest of their lives.”(p23)

Here the reader curious about the title *The Last Girls* needs only to look at this quote to understand what it means. The novel is about grown women, each having made her own way through life. However, they all came of age in the time when women were essentially expected to remain a “girl” all her life dependent on a man, defined by the relationships she cultivates and not by her accomplishments. College was just a step toward meeting higher-quality men to marry. This, then, was the girlhood that formed the characters themselves as (“capable, strong, and assertive social agents” ) (Krolokke, 2006).

Moreover, they are concerned more by the need to develop a feminist theory and its political tendency which is also an attempt to fill the gaps of the contradiction in opinion. As we quote:



("It's Girls A-Go-Go Down the Mississippi"). "We can't believe we're finally going to!) do it"... "WELL, THEY WERE YOUNG. Young enough to think why not when Baby said it, and then do it: just like that". (p8 )

The power of girls through feminist third waves appears clearly in the quote while society practices its force against female sex. Another quote:

"Son of a bitch!" Her ladies "oohed" and "ahhed" and "tsk-tsked", bringing casserole. "I'll tell you one thing, "she said to Harriet. "If a man leaves his wife for you, then he'll sure enough leave you for another woman. You can mark it down" ( p 33)

Lee Smith's tenth novel focuses on five women who were once undergraduate roommates at a Southern women's college. In 1965, revered for her female characters, here Lee Smith as a writer tells a brilliantly authoritative story how college pals who grew up in an era when they were still called girls have negotiated life as women. She inspired by a handsome young instructor's dramatic reading of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), the five young women joined with six others and sailed down the Mississippi River on a raft, earning some notoriety as local newspapers photographed the spunky college girls and less adventurous, land-bound housewives offered them picnic lunches along the river (ibid).

Thirty-five years later, **Harriet Holding, Catherine Wilson, Courtney Ralston, and Anna Todd** travel again down the Mississippi, retracing the route of their earlier trip-this time on the *Belle of Natchez*, a luxury cruise ship full of elderly tourists. When the *Belle* docks in New Orleans they will scatter the ashes of a fifth college roommate, Margaret "Baby" Ballou, who drove her car off a bridge-perhaps accidentally, perhaps not-on a beautiful clear day just before Christmas. According to Baby's husband, in the weeks before her death she spoke of reuniting with Harriet, Anna, Catherine, and Courtney to re- create their youthful trip downriver; now he has contacted each of the women and asked them to make this final voyage with Baby's remains (ibid).

Baby was a Southern belle, a promiscuous young woman from a wealthy family who could not help behaving badly, rather to Harriet Holding's vicarious delight. Shy Harriet was Baby's roommate in college; on the *Belle of Natchez* trip she brings along several pages of Baby's handwritten poetry from their college days, preserved by Harriet through all the ensuing years. The poems reveal Baby's

desperate grief for her deceased mother and younger brother. Baby's mother was apparently a lower-class woman who "drank gin like water/ all day long" and whom her father had forgotten in favor of Baby's more socially acceptable stepmother. Baby's poems also reveal an inner turmoil. A beautiful debutante, she meets social expectations but feels like a "bitch" trapped inside, "locked/ behind [a] chain-link fence/ where she paces/ back and forth."

At Mary Scott College Harriet introduced Baby to her childhood friend Jefferson Carr. It seemed briefly to Harriet that she and Jeff might have become a couple, but instead Jeff and Baby were drawn together and began a passionate romance. Jeff, solid and dependable, was a student at Shenandoah Military Institute and planned a career as an officer, but he jeopardized those plans when he broke several school rules in efforts to entertain Baby. When she broke up with the adoring Jeff ("if you could possibly/ Assist me off this pedestal please/ It's hurting my ass"), Jeff left school in despair, joined the Army, and was killed in a helicopter crash during basic training. Harriet's friendship with Baby did not survive Jefferson Carr's death, and Harriet actually has no idea how Baby spent the years since college graduation. Harriet felt partly responsible for Carr's death; shortly after Baby ended her relationship with Carr, Harriet went to see him, intending to try and reunite the doomed couple; instead she had sex with the grieving Jeff herself and left without mentioning Baby. Harriet has lived for years with the guilt of having (in her view) allowed the great true love between Baby Ballou and Jefferson Carr to perish; believing her intervention could have saved their romance and thus Jefferson's life, Harriet has never married or even seriously dated, never allowing herself to build the sort of domestic life she thinks Baby and Jeff might have had together. As we quote: "Harriet always thought she'd get her Ph.D. and publish papers in learned journals while writing brilliant novels on the side"... "The concept of Courtly Love in"... "Why she didn't ever marry?" (p15 )

Courtney Gray Ralston finds herself torn between Hawk Ralston, her philandering husband of thirty-five years, and Gene Minor, her long-time lover. After several years of clandestine meetings, Minor has suddenly demanded that Courtney leave her husband, although Hawk is becoming increasingly confused and forgetful and Courtney feels it would be inappropriate to desert him. Courtney has worked hard to maintain an image of Southern gentility in her marriage to the wealthy Hawk, even while he has been habitually unfaithful to her. Courtney

struggles to convince herself that Hawk is fine; during the cruise, however, a series of telephone calls to her daughter, her housekeeper, and her husband's secretary bring home the fact that Hawk's confusion is a serious problem. As Minor presses her to make a final decision between himself and Hawk, Courtney must choose between her personal happiness and the socially correct, conservative course of staying with her husband. Anna Todd has become a famous romance novelist, with thirty-two steamy novels to her credit.

Anna once wrote literary fiction, inspired by her childhood in the backwoods and hollers of Appalachia; when publishers rejected her Appalachian tales as too disturbing for a popular audience, Anna turned to romance. Anna married her college sweetheart, a scholarly graduate student who left her when she surpassed him professionally; realizing she was pregnant, she resolved to bear and raise their child alone, but her baby was stillborn. She then lived with a painter who helped her build a career around romance novels and endorsements, but he died unexpectedly while they were having sex. Anna has since remade herself into a flamboyant, aging diva swathed in layers of chiffon. Although she agrees to accompany the other women on Baby Ballou's final voyage,

Anna has worked hard to forget her voyage, Anna has worked hard to forget her past and hopes they will not remind her too much of the girl she was in college. She spends most of the cruise alone in her cabin, fantasizing about the cabin boy and writing her thirty-third novel, in which a Louisiana heiress stamps her tiny feet in fury at the swarthy Cajun who will obviously be sweeping her into his powerful arms by the story's end. We quote:

"Like what? Anna felt wild and strong, open to anything. She would have a girl."

"These words echoed in Anna's head all the way to south Carolina where she planned to live " in one of the barrier island s while she waited to have her baby"... (p127)

"These stories were seriously discussed in the workshop and then published in the college literary magazine. It was easy. Anna was amazed. Everybody thought she was tough, like her stories, but she wasn't. She didn't understand where these stories were

coming from but they poured out of her onto the page like milk  
from the pitcher. They scared her” (p 121)

Through this quote, human beings are often unaware of their own deepest traits and qualities. In this quote also, Anna is revealed as someone who does not truly understand herself. Her stories, dark and intense, reflect a part of her that is hidden. She does not even connect with them herself, yet somehow they come from her imagination, and she is frightened by her own creation. Success has its price, Catherine Wilson is accompanied on the Belle of Natchez by her third husband, Russell, who is getting on her nerves. Catherine is a successful artist who makes large lawn sculptures from scrap metal (ibid).

; we quote:

(“CATHERINE HAS BEEN MARRIED”).... (“She can’t remember a time when she wasn’t married, or at least when she wasn’t with a man... Men have simply occurred like images,”)... (“All her life, Catherine has been easily overtaken: by her husband, by her children, by her images and ideas, by life itself)...(p160 )

And we quote:

”She looks up from sleeping man beside her to watch the sun make its fiery trail across the water straight to their window, a shining path so wide and straight that she imagines stepping out onto it and walking across the water and into the trees on the other side. She imagines the mud and the vines and flowers, and the smell of honeysuckle and the rotting fish. She knows exactly how it would be there.” (p 281)

This passage paints a picture of the scenery outside: a heavy Southern atmosphere, humid from the water, rich with greenery, fragrant nature all around. Moreover, it suggests that Catherine is slipping into a daydream of escape. She easily imagines herself stepping out, away from her life and the man beside her, heading off alone onto Catherine Russell is having a midlife crisis. His comical idiosyncracies include his consuming fear that he will have a heart attack... (he actually witnesses another steamboat senger's death of a heart attack in the steamboat bar.) and his obsession with the women meteorologists on the Weather Channel we quote:

(”Sometimes we fall into situation we are made for, as was the case with Russel and law”)...(p 195)

In this single sentence, readers come to understand that Russel never had aspirations to become a lawyer. However, once he found himself in the profession, it was a perfect match. With the words "Sometimes we fall into situations we are made for," the writer portrays Russel's story as a common one for people, whether they have accidentally fallen into the perfect job, home, or relationship.

Death plays a greater part in these women's lives than marriages or the births of children; tragic events overtake the women's expectations. Baby Ballou deeply mourned the deaths of her mother and brother; Catherine and Harriet suffered the deaths of younger siblings when they were young; Anna's child was stillborn and her partner died while making love to her; Catherine's second husband was killed in a convenience store robbery (ibid).

As we quote:

"Hawk gave her this ring in August after the raft trip; they married in September, at Saint Matthews, of course, in a much smaller ceremony than they would have had if she had been somebody else, somebody more suitable," (p 237)

"It's true that when anyone dies, the other dead rise up and die all over again."

In contrast, births and marriages are barely mentioned -Courtney and Catherine's relationships with their grown children are not close- and seem not to have the same level of impact. These are women who became adults in the early 1960's, when marriages were made out of a sense of obligation and need for respectability, when feminism shifts as we quote:..."How ignorant they were? Means Girls" (p 24 )

The 1965 raft trip forms a disappointingly small part of Smith's story, although it was inspired by an actual raft trip Smith took with her friends in college. Just as Smith and her peers found the river more wild and difficult to travel than expected, the fictional Mary Scott College girls encounter torrential rain, merciless mosquitoes, and an endless diet of tuna sandwiches. The other six college students who traveled down the river on the raft are profiled briefly at the end of the book (ibid).

### **3.2. History, Culture and Setting in *The Last Girls***

*The Last Girls* is a departure for Smith, whose earlier works have told stories of Appalachian life. It covers the time span of about 35 years of historical and cultural aspects. Lee Smith as a narrative gives the reader a window into their

region's culture and history. Appalachia's culture is unique and it has a variety of aspects through its history. *The Last Girls* Challenged to write about women more like herself-educated, successful Southern women-Smith chose to focus on a group of women in their fifties and show that their lives did not follow stereotypical patterns but were rich with comedy, tragedy, and possibilities for change. Harriet, Courtney, Anna, and Catherine are strong characters whose lives embody myriad experiences and challenges met, but in college they were considered "girls" who would need husbands to care for them. The expectation that each would find true love, marry, and live happily ever after proved unrealistic-only Baby, the wild one, appears to have achieved it. Lee Smith has an extraordinary ability to entrance her listeners with her voice, and even more impressive capacity to transport the reader to unknown territory where the land and the people tell stories lyricism of mountain poet, she writes in the voice of mountain folk who tell stories of love, poverty, despair, religion beliefs....

In *The Last Girls* Smith tells a wealth of stories, not only those of the five college roommates, but those of other women and men in their lives. Smith also imbues her characters with their own ideas about, fascination with, and reliance on stories and storytelling. Each of the women protagonists took creative writing classes in college, and each is very creative in ways either directly or indirectly related to telling stories.

Anna writes predictable, comforting genre fiction, compensating for the tragedies she has suffered (Anna notes that romance novels must end just as the lovers unite, before anything can happen to them). Harriet has become a community college English teacher and specializes in helping women write personal stories about their own lives. At one point Anna and Harriet argue about what makes a story a story, Anna insisting that a satisfying, conventional ending is essential to real storytelling. On the Belle of Natchez Harriet begins a tentative romance with the ship's official historian, fascinated with his job as a professional storyteller. Even Courtney has created a story of sorts, an image of herself as the perfect Southern lady whose home is a showplace and whose shoes always perfectly match her dress-all carefully documented in voluminous scrapbooks she carries with her on the cruise (ibid).

The most poignant story is the one Baby Ballou's husband Charlie Mahan tells in a letter to Harriet. Questions remain about Baby's death. Her story has been

told largely through Harriet's memories, and Charlie has the last word as Harriet reads his letter aloud and Baby's ashes are scattered in the Mississippi. Charlie details the devotion Baby (whom he calls "Maggie") felt for her children and grandchildren, and the plans she was making for a traditional family Christmas when she accidentally drove her car off the side of a bridge. Charlie refers obliquely to an ongoing illness of Baby, assuming Harriet will understand, and Harriet, recalling Baby's self-destructive tendencies, believes Baby committed suicide. However, realizing that Baby's life went on after college, Harriet is able to resolve her guilt..

Lee Smith used a small mountain town as a setting, what she truly means by her "region" and her strong sense of place, the world of rural and isolated settings of the Appalachian mountains has been more powerfully portrayed in her works , in our chosen novel the writer moves down the Mississippi River .(Carmen,R.R 2009)

We as a readers remark that community remains one of the most durable themes for Southern in Southern literature, so; it is after all, the region's social worlds that inspire much of what is distinctive about the South and Southern texts. Southern contemporary writers who have enriched the region's literature by expanding the settings, culture, and perspectives included under the "Southern" literature. (Elizabeth Colley, 2002)

Much of the criticism on Lee Smith's fiction discusses the relationships of the individual to the nurturing and oppressive community, which is typically depicted as either in Appalachian or Southern in general. This study offers an examination of some of the social and cultural dynamics of settings in Smith's fictions, identifying the continuities and variations among her settings. Smith prominently foregrounds cultural and class differences, and her sophisticated depiction of social dynamics is one of her strengths as a writer, this dissertation has attempted to highlight the complexity of book that she was writing for larger audience (ibid).

### **3.3.The Quest for Self in *The Last Girls***

The concept of identity is regarded as one of the most important concepts in contemporary literature. Individuals and societies always search for an identity that gives meaning to their existence. The same is also true of southern American. This subject occupies a central place in modern African-American and Southern American fiction, a hotly debated subject not only by male playwrights but also by female playwrights. Female playwrights attempt to show the importance of returning

to roots as an outlet for the identity crisis they experience. Therefore, the present paper aims at giving an overall view of the subject of identity in Southern-American culture with particular focus on Southern Lee Smith explores the way her female characters embark on a journey of self-discovery to find their own voice, American women playwrights.. It has become quite obvious that the women playwrights aim at pushing the, especially the women, to feel proud of their quest for self, , and identity ..... (Carmen, 2009)

In her novels, one that is different from the language that has traditionally defined them and their experience. As they search for their identities, they confront the outer voices of male southern culture that have silenced them and gradually let their own inner voices emerge. Lee Smith's belief "that for southern women in particular it is very important to have resonates throughout her fiction. Indeed, the analysis of the novels discussed evidences Lee Smith's pervasive concern with the development of the female voice to give meaning and shape to her female characters identities and Seeking to create their own sense of self through language, her female characters Struggle with self-assertion as they try to find a language that can validate their own perception of themselves and of their surrounding world. "Finding such a language," Dorothy C. Hill pointed out, "is tantamount to finding the self. mouthing the words of others is "tantamount to losing the self". In other words, for the writer, the attainment of an integral self keeps pace with the achievement of one's own voice to create meaning. Though often trapped by the constraints of their culture, Smith's evolving females learn to overcome their initial silence by progressively finding ways to define themselves through their art.

Central to the fictional artistic quests that Smith narrates is the importance of oral language to speak of difference, as females and as Appalachians. Jill Terry has noted that "it is in women's writing concerned with representations of female identity in a historically patriarchal South that orality is especially prioritized," and she has presented Lee Smith as one of the authors who uses "techniques of literary orality" in order "To celebrate feminine creativity and women's voices." The forms of expression with which Smith's Appalachian females most authentically define themselves are oral. As if to contest the way they have traditionally been written upon and defined by both male culture and foreign visitors to the region, Smith has thought to give them the means to voice themselves differently, on their own terms. Her Appalachian female characters have found in orality the way to overcome their



sense of double otherness, both as women and as natives of a marginalized region. Whether in the primal spoken form of the Gospels, letters using the vernacular. Songs, or their ability to prophesy, the use of oral language provides these women with a more authentic understanding of themselves and of the culture that has shaped them. But at the same time, it can also account for an artistic form of expression that is not only different but distinctively Appalachian and genuinely female (ibid).

Lee Smith's novels show a progression in the way she has approached the quest for female identity and language and has integrated her characters' identification with Appalachia, the place that limits yet empowers them and their voices. Smith has variously identified her female characters with the passivity of Snow White and Persephone, the inspirational nature of Christ, the sisterly autonomy of Artemis, the creativity of Aphrodite, the poetic qualities of the Sibyl, and the heroic adventures of Jason and the Argonauts. Yet parallel to the mythological recreation of her female characters is the way she addresses language and increasingly includes Appalachian voices. First, she examines the ways in which patriarchal language and the myths created by it have confined southern woman's understanding of themselves. Second, she purposely tries to subvert the dominant discourse of authorities external to the self, which excludes both female and Appalachian voices and experience, by appropriating its rhetoric and using it as a weapon to present what Nancy A. Walker calls "the relativity and mutability of truth and reality, even of the female self. Third, she seeks to give voice to Appalachian women to interpret experience and to provide: the means of connection with the self and with other women, through communication with sisters, "Oral Culture and Southern Fiction," S19: Jones. "The World of Lee Smith" 119. Walker, *Feminist Alternatives*, 186. sisters, other female members of the family, and the spirit of a lost mother or community. Not surprisingly, then, in three of her most recent Appalachian novels, we find the main female characters telling their stories and defining themselves anew with their own language. In a recent novel, Lee Smith has revised Joseph Campbell's *Monomyth* of the hero's journey. In this novel, the author explores the power of the stream of consciousness to allow her female characters to have a conversation with the self and analyze their lives, careers, dreams, and realities as they travel down the river of life (ibid).

*The Last Girls* is mainly a choral novel about women journeying, going down the river not once but twice. In her novel, Smith juxtaposes memories of the

first raft trip down the river that her characters made as "girls" It is 1965 with the present reality of their lives as middle- aged women taking the same trip on a steamboat , to disperse the ashes of a former friend and suitemate at Mary Scott College in Lexington, Virginia. Their memories of their raft trip as free-spirited girls full of dreams and hopes contrast with their steamboat trip as women in their 50s nurturing unfulfilled longings, leading façade lives, hiding personal tragedies and making frightening discoveries. In her interview with Terrell Tabbetts, Lee Smith acknowledge that in *The last Girls* was just thinking I wanted to do a parallel trip, a parallel to the earlier raft trip....( And) I tried to write about the relationship between our younger selves and who we l are when we're older, who we might become," Through these two trips and the thirty- five years that have passed between them, Lee Smith makes each of these thirty women confront the journey of their lives. The river allows her characters to symbolically plunge into memories, some pleasant, others deeply painful, through which the protagonists can explore dark water, muddy riverbanks, and all the secret meanderings of their lives in an attempt to understand how they came to be what they are and whether they should change the course of their lives (ibid).

The two trips these women undertake, beyond their desire to enact a literary adventure and their commitment to pay homage to one of the "girls," in fact represent a test for them and their capacity to evolve. Whereas the raft trip as girls represented their expectations in life, the steamboat trip many years later as middle-aged woman, with some of them now even going through the "change of life." means that the time has come to review the past and the present, in a process that brings together previous decisions and the different stages of life. For their women, who are each in the midst of a personal crisis, the steamboat trip becomes in fact an inner journey, or what one simply might call a process of life review, in which Lee Smith's protagonists are forced to confront not only whether they have truly fulfilled their youth desires or not but also whether they have adapted to the success and failures of living. As survivors of their own personal journeys, these, The Last women need to resolve the devastating consequences of guilt, falsehood, inner suffering and denial, or simply do their best to accept new challenges along the way. The steamboat trip reactivates previous traumas and also confronts them with some aspects of the usual aging process of many (southern) women such as loneliness, the preservation of status and tradition. the loss of loved ones, and even the possibility of impending death. As the novel progresses,

the reader hears the ever-flowing stories of Smith's female protagonists as multiple streams that emerge from their college days, sometimes intersect, and run-quite ironically in the author's hands-into each other towards the mouth of the river, where their own personal truths and decisions need to be spoken out loud or, at least, privately acknowledged. The end of this second trip in New Orleans represents not only death, and the last stage of human life, when the ashes of the dead "girl" are spread by her former suitemates, but also an old self that dies and the possibility of change for these women (ibid).

The novel presents four women, all from different corners of the Deep South. who meet again for a reunion voyage. Harriet Holding, from Virginia, is a spinster school teacher; Courtney Gray, from North Carolina, is a southern lady. Anna Todd, from the mountains of West Virginia, is a famous romance writer, and Catherine Wilson, from Alabama. is a clay artist who creates yard sculptures. These women, who have not seen each other for years, rather unwillingly reunite to go down the river again on a steamboat cruise to loss Baby Ballou's ashes and thus fulfill her widower's request. Baby Ballou is not just any "girl," for she is in fact the former Mary Scott wild and artistic "girl" who had the idea of traveling down the river again, they explore their inner lives and memories of the past, often in the solitude of their cabins, on the deck or just visiting old plantation houses along the way, From their recollections and thoughts, the reader learns that Harriet identifies with Huck's loneliness, never quite knowing how come she never married, had children, got her PhD, or wrote novels, Courtney has taken part on this trip only to have a stolen weekend in New Orleans with her lover, who unexpectedly wants her to leave her rich husband who has started to show symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Anna has come only to write a new book about a young Huckleberry and an older woman who drift down a river of love. And Catherine, the only one who travels with her death and Charlie's request to her college friends to arrange it, her ashes now travel down the river in-the ironically named steamboat \_"The Belle of Natchez" with the rest of the girls. However, the eves that took place after the raft trip also changed Harriet, Anna, Courtney and Catherine (ibid).

When Harriet learned that left had died a year later after that trip. she blamed herself for what happened to both Jeff and Baby. And she has been punishing herself for that ever since by denying herself her right to live fully as a quote:“It’s true that when anyone dies, the other dead rise up abd die over again”.

During the second trip, she will have to learn to get rid of her guilt and carry on with her life. Anna was already writing her first novel during the raft trip using Appalachian material, but this first novel, which won her a writing fellowship to continue her studies at Columbia University, would never be published because it was "too disturbing" (*The Last Girls*. 146). According to an agent. Besides, Anna did not continue her studies at Columbia because she married Kenneth Threthaway who was the scholar and the literary genius, not her. The breakup of her marriage led her to consider their need to move from dark Appalachian material to romance material. She continued writing successful romantic stories meant to comfort her and her readers, to picture love and life through rose-colored glasses, as it should be, by denying the expression of pain both to herself and her fiction. But during the second trip, she is forced to revisit the past and the unresolved pain, trauma and grief she has never confronted in her life, and therefore to find some kind of healing. The raft trip was for Courtney the only wild thing" (*The Last Girls*. 38) she has ever done in her life, apart from having an adulterous affair with Gene Minor, her Wednesday lover. After the raft trip, she left college to marry Hawk and never graduated nor did she ever care much about it, During this second trip down the river she is facing the possibility of divorcing him to have a hand, married Howie, her first husband, not right after the raft trip, but at the end of their senior year. Since then, she has simply lived and has experienced the loss of loved ones -like her brother Wesley who died of AIDS and her second husband, Dr. Rosenthal, who was killed in a robbery at a 7-Eleven. She has lived through tumultuous and difficult times, devastating events that might have traumatized her for the rest of her life. Yet Catherine's strong sense of self allows her to have faith and be resilient in the face of adversity because she is a survivor. Although she has this as a more authentic life with Gene. Catherine, on the other hand, carries her own wounds and burdens, she has learned how to heal them. And now life, during the steamboat trip, presents her with one more challenge in the form of a deadly disease that is threatening her (*ibid*).

The two river journeys Lee Smith's women undertake are not journeys into the wilderness, nor are they linear like the journeys of so many male characters in American literature. A quote about it:

("The river...it all started with the river. How amazing that they ever did it, twelve girls, went down this river on that raft, how amazing that they ever thought of it in the first place")

In *The WildernEAs Within: American Women Writers und Spiritual Qurat*, Kristine K. Grouver has pointed out the centrality of the notion of spiritual quest in American literature, which she defines "as the quintessential American experience." Grouver also states that "Throughout the American literary canon, heroine protagonists undertake physical journeys whole greater understanding of or a connection to the spiritual world." This quest tradition into the wilderness, however, is exclusively male and has been celebrated by American authors like Mark Twain, James Fenimore Cooper, and Walt Whitman, name a few, Yet as Grouver claims, women do not find meaning for their live or "a greater understanding" in the wilderness quest. In *The Last Girls* destination is a Lee Smith thus seeks to challenge the dominant American literary canon not only by presenting a female point of view hut by also offering an alternative pattern for the notion of women's journeys, more winding or circular than linear, more inner bound than experienced in the wilderness, more dependent on relationships than seeking isolation. Her own vision of storytelling, with stories of different women flowing like streams of words in the novel, and her use of the Mississippi a polyvalent metaphor highlight her transgressive exploration of women's journeys using both narrative strategies and the main artery of the American (literary) landscape as an allegory in the novel. If in their raft trip Smith's young girls embark on an adventure like Huck Finn and Jim, even to the point of having Baby and Harriet sneaking out to the woods with two young men they meet, fie their second trip Smith's middle-aged women undertake a journey of an inner nature and find-in Grouver's phrase-their wildness within. This time the river becomes a fluid minor that Smith's women look into, a repository of memories to he explored and revisited, even in their darkest and the most secretive places (ibid).

Watching the river flow evokes a very different response in mach of Lee Smith's main characters. For Harriet the river awakens painful memories as she feats that .....*"Everything Harriet has worked so hard to get away from comes flooding back"*..( *The Last Girls*, 2). But for her it is also a powerful metaphor of the passing of time, .....*"roaring like a furious current out of control"*..... ( *The Last Girls*, 6). Harriet even seems to hear the voice of the river itself. inviting her to dive into its depths, when she admits that, like Huck, ....*"she can feel its suck and pull and hear its whisper in her ear as she imagines herself floating farther and farther and farther from shore, borne out into the current on a rising tide of unopposed estrogen"*.....

(The Last Girls. 22), Likewise, her memories of Baby, their college days, and her own family in Staunton are reflected in the way Harriet refers to the river. For example, when..... "Harriet looks out at the dreamy, slow- flowing water" .....( The Last Girls. 95), she remembers her first days at Mary Scott, Other times. when.... "She leans forward to look at the river. Mist\_ or fog, which is it?- floats in patches on the surface".... (The Last Girls. 148), she is able to remember the confusing and tumultuous nature of Jeff and Baby's love story. For Anna, the river and the trip represent a threat to the persona of the successful writer that she has created because, in..... "smelling that old river smell which still threatens to send her right back-damn it Paducah"..... (The Last Girls, 68), she is afraid it might awaken painful memories. But Anna is full of secrets and this is an aspect of her personality that she projects onto one of the characters she has devised for her next novel, who..... "disappears forever into the secretive black water".....

(The Last Girls. 65). Anna's visit to..... "another dark bayou [...] like the dark bayous of the body" (The Last Girls, 263) and her remark to Courtney about the river, which "is narrower here" and whose ..... "banks on both sides are dark and mysterious".... (The Last Girls. 267), precedes the story of Piggot's Island, Georgia. Anna is then forced to revisit all the "Terrible thing" (The Last Girls. 268) that happened to her after the breakup of her marriage with Kenneth, how her baby died upon delivery and she spent time in a mental hospital therefore she recovered and met Lou. Unlike Harriet, Anna, and even Catherine, for whom the river has the power to evoke memories, for Courtney it simply represents the danger of personal wreckage in which she is afraid of being cast ashore. Courtney just.... "can't believe Gene Minor wants to wreck it now"... (The Last Girls, 54). As the trip progresses, she even views the river (quite literally!) as a stream of consciousness in which the water and the stones thrown into it represent her consciousness, the heavy words that remind her of her duty:.... "Each word sinks like a stone into Courtney's consciousness, She thinks of those boys she saw in the bank earlier this morning. throwing rocks into the river, each stone made a widening circle on the water".... (The Last Girls, 185), When Courtney visits the cemetery of St Franksville and suddenly wonders "adventure" when she gathered a group of college girls and decided they should build a ship called not Argo but "Daisy Pickett....."Unlike Constellation Puppies. which appeared among the stars when Argo was launched into the sea, the constellation that these girls followed and that "set a standard for the class".... (The Last Girls.

120) is the poem in the form of a myth explaining it that Anna wrote for their Creative Writing course, "Little Finger Bones," a dark mountain ballad of violence and jealousy.

But in this novel, Smith's allusions to the well-known mythological voyage of the Argonauts are not merely limited to the raft trip but throughout the journey of these women's lives. The siren song that these girls recur as metaphors heard, and most could not resist, was the southern societal voice that told them ..."to graduate with an engagement ring as well as a diploma"..... (The Last Girls. 129), which was at the time the whole point of going to college. Courtney, for instance, was already wearing Hawk's engagement ring during the raft trip and married him right away, even at the expense of not getting her degree. Catherine and Baby married during senior year, and Anna married soon afterwards. Later, what Courtney really in her husband Hawk, who is ..."a man used to killing things-deer, birds, fish" and "A man who can stop a girl dead in her tracks"..... (The Last Girls, 48), is her own Harpy or winged death-spirit that has snatched her for good. Like Jason and Medea, Baby has an intense love affair with Jeff that ends in treachery and tragedy as the girl betrays him and sets off to find a new Delta prince, Charlie Mahan, more suited to her class and interests. Like Orpheus, the orphan, who descends to the Underworld and mourns the death of Eurydice, Harriet visits the underground room where her beloved Jeff lies and makes love to him in an attempt to rescue him from despair only to grieve later over his death for years. Like the divine hero Heracles who was renamed, suffered madness, went through many trials and the Twelve Labors, Anna has changed her identity several times, had a severe nervous breakdown, and gone through many hardships in life. Catherine, however, is the one who symbolically experiences the Clashing Rocks that close the sea passage for the Argonauts, image of a rock rolling down the hill to fall into the river is a beautiful and fitting metaphor for Catherine's discovery of a lump in her breast during the steamboat cruise (ibid).

Lee Smith obviously reconceptualizes and feminizes the traditional journey of the hero to show that male and female quests, like their narratives, are quite different. When Harriet complains that women's stories don't follow the pattern of..."conflict, complication and resolution"... (The Last Girls. 20). for that corresponds only to the male archetypal journey of the hero that Campbell described in his monomyth, she is in fact revealing Lee Smith's view of women's lives and journeys. Harriet is well aware that..... "such plots may have been suited to boys' hooks

anyway. Certainly these forms don't fit Harriet's life, or the lives of any women she knows, or the lives of any of the women she works within the COMEBACK! program"...(The Last Girls, 21) Through Harriet, Lee Smith stresses the importance of narrative fluidity and the way women tell the stories of their lives. In the heated conversation about storytelling between Anna and Harriet, Smith shows that these two characters represent two different ways of understanding storytelling and women's lives : huge plots versus anecdotes, More importantly, Lee Smith suggest that women's stories, usually containing more anecdotes than huge plots, reproduce the fluidity and lack linearity of their lives and their journeys reflect their perception of life as a process, rather than as a particular goal to be achieved. Whereas for Anna writing means only creating a story with a huge plot that sells and that somebody wants to read, for Harriet writing also means telling anecdotes and bits of everyday life, which is a form of writing for the self and therefore a therapeutic tool for empowerment (ibid).

Unlike Harriet, Anna, and Baby who wanted to be writers, Courtney never showed any desire to write at Mary Scott College or later. Harriet may not have written novels but is involved with women who tell the story of their lives using anecdotes, and her own experience with them has helped her understand that there are many ways to tell a woman's story. Perhaps not surprisingly, the ability of Pete Jones, the riverlorian, to tell the history of the river and the story of his own life has contributed to making Harriet fall under his spell. Anna has been writing romance novels, trying to comfort herself and her readers in a desperate attempt to find an alternative to real life in her own fiction. Her own experience has shown her that in real life... "every true story ends terribly"... (The Last Girls, 270). As Dana J. Nichols has observed. "Anna best represents Smith's assertion that stories provide escape" through "Perhaps the purest form of escapist literature, the romance novel. Baby's poetry allowed her to explore her inner life and to confront her own ambivalence towards Jeff, to speak about her mother's death, and to remember her brother. Courtney, instead, was never really interested in narrative, The surrounded by children and family members, making changes and accepting them where need be. Now she faces another, perhaps more deadly, challenge in the course of her life: the fight against a possible breast cancer (ibid)

Yet these women do not have the same capacity to be resilient, face adversity, and recover from negative events. In fact, Lee Smith presents Anna and



Catherine, the successful writer and the garden sculptress, as two contrasting figures. Whereas for Anna adversity has had a scarring effect on her personality, for Catherine has had a steeling or strengthening effect as she has more personal coping resources to face subsequent crises. For Lee Smith, Catherine, not Anna, is the true artistic figure in the novel because she is able to recreate herself time and again despite tragedy and pain. Anna has had to endure constant separation from family, one after the other. She cannot reconstruct her family or any of the families she has had as Annie Stokes, the daughter of a West Virginia freelance evangelist who left her when her mother died and he remarried; as Anna Todd, the protégé of an old missionary nurse who came to the mountains and took her under her wing; or as Anna Threthaway, the young woman who married a scholar jealous of her literary talents. Her exposure to repeated situations of abandonment in childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood has definitely wounded her personality, her badly prepared for the final traumas experienced in adulthood with the death of her baby and later of Lou Angelli. Losing Lou, the wanderer who enabled Anna to recover her voice to write stories and find the lust for life, is perhaps the worst tragedy in Anna's life. Anna feels that when she lost Lou, she lost part of her own, leaving soul. He is her soul mate, a true companion, and one of Lee Smith's marginal male figures who empower women by restoring their voices and sexuality. The prevalence of his linguistic over his sexual side, given his sexual dysfunction, suggests that Lee Smith imagined Lou as a much more empowering figure than previous marginal males in her fiction. Catherine, on the other hand, seems to be better prepared to meet new difficulties in life, having overcome several different tragedies already. She has shown a remarkable ability to cope with the different traumas and changes in her life. The change she has noticed in her body, the lump in her breast, is one more challenge in the difficult task of living. Despite the threat to her physical health, the danger of actually dying of it, Smith presents Catherine as a hopeful character who has a keen sense of positiveness for the future. (ibid)

Towards the end of the steamboat cruise, all of these women eventually realize that they are not the same girls who undertook the raft trip down the river earlier and that a change in the course of their lives is now due. When Harriet remembers what one of their college teachers told them about journeying, "According to the archetype, the traveler learns something about himself along the way." and wonders... "What did we learn?"...(The Last Girls. 21). She is implicitly

asking herself what they should learn in this second trip. In the end most of them will learn that life is a constant change, a fluid process of adaptation to new situations, a river that cannot stand still, and a form of renewal, as Lee Smith implies with the water metaphor in this novel. After knowing that Baby changed and became Margaret Mahan, a woman who lived happily on a farm, had five children and grandchildren and had a prominent role in the community, despite some bouts of depression years ago, these women travelers are forced to confront the need to make changes in their own or to accept them gracefully, even when they are unwanted. But the changes Lee Smith's female characters have to face are not of the same nature: Catherine has to face a physical change if her breast is removed, Harriet has to take a psychological change in her relationships with men, Anna has to confront an emotional change in the form of a release of her repressed pain, and Courtney has to face a social change if she is to leave a rich and unfaithful husband for the overweight florist who loves her. Although Russell Hurt is simply traveling with his wife Catherine and is in no way related to these women's college experiences, Lee Smith also allows this secondary character to have his own moments of inner introspection and to wonder about the nature of changes in life. Through Russell, his fascination with the Weather Channel and his ruminations on the butterfly effect. Lee Smith introduces the notion of personal change as in series of small events that can alter one's life dramatically. Russell is deeply aware that the weather cannot be truly predicted because it depends on the chaos theory, as MIT meteorologist Edward Lorenz demonstrated in the early 1960s when he developed the theory of the butterfly effect. This concept has become a catch phrase in popular culture. But Lee Smith uses it as an interesting metaphor for the existence of seemingly insignificant events that alter one's personal history and destiny. As the novel unfolds, Lee Smith hints at some unlikely connections between several seemingly unrelated characters. For example, Pete Jones son killed somebody in a robbery at a 7. Eleven, which is exactly how Catherine's second husband died (ibid).

## **Conclusion**

It was a great to examine the theme of self and female identity since this concepts are crucial by which it may lead us to sociability or loneliness. We discussed this cannon in the whole and from the feminist's view, how this themes

were and still a hallmarks in the feminism literary theory by being one of the major discussed themes due to the influence of female empower.

## **Conclusion**

In this case study of selfhood and female identity of southern women, our research has explored and revealed facts about the culture and history of the region.

To assist in our research, we chose the bestselling novel, *The Last Girls* by southern Appalachian writer Lee Smith. We chose the specific author and novel as the focus because they are regarded by many literary figures as symbols that clearly represent the cultural and historical aspects of Appalachian women in the south. Lee Smith, as a native author, is becoming an ultimate literary voice for her region and culture, who wants to show powerful female characters.

Mrs. Smith masterfully interwove the story with multilayer of voices and positions, creating a true picture of the region's culture and traditions in the minds of readers.

Through our research, along with the novel, *The Last Girls*, there are many points of importance were brought to shed light and to be noted. Stereotyping, the theme and dreams of a better life, a strong sense of place, the importance of self identity and relationship with community traditions, histories, and stories, all of these have contributed to forming a positive and accurate portrayal of their region's people and culture."I'm trying to examine the idea of romance, the relevance of the past," Smith says of *The Last Girls*.

This research sheds light on the truth about women and the female identity of a minority in the southern United States and southern experience, and it has an impact on southern literature.

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## Résumé

Le but de cette étude est de découvrir l'identité féminine du sud, leur histoire, leurs traditions minoritaires, leur culture et leur langue (dialectes), avec une analyse ciblée du roman *The Last Girls* de Lee Smith, qui est considéré comme un authentique écrivain des Appalaches, ainsi qu'un auteur à succès du *New York Times*. Son roman *The Last Girls* se déplace de la région du sud pour ses personnages féminins puissants, elle raconte une histoire riche et imaginative sur la nature de la romance, la relation entre la vie et la fiction, la pertinence de la pièce au présent et le cours attendu de la vie des femmes. En utilisant une approche de stratégie narrative, une analyse vocale et textuelle multicouche, cet article tente de recueillir cette question de l'identité féminine et des discours sur l'individualité. De telles expériences déconstructives remettant en cause les perceptions réifiées de soi et de la connaissance de soi, nous traitons également de l'évaluation de la conscience féminine dans la fiction de Lee Smith. Notre recherche vise à connaître le commentaire Lee Smith, un écrivain du Sud, et d'autres écrivains ont utilisé leurs œuvres littéraires pour raconter des histoires sur des personnes malisantes qui tentent de découvrir la sur elles-mêmes et sur le monde dans lesquelles elles vivent à travers une variété de circonstance et de cultures.

Mots-clés : Identite, Race, Genre, Theorie Feministe, Quete De Soi.



## الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لإكتشاف هوية المرأة الجنوبية وتاريخها وتقاليد الأقليات والثقافة واللغة (اللهجات) مع تحليل مركز لرواية " *The Last Girls* " التي كتبها ' لي سميث ' ، التي تعتبر كاتبّة ذات أصول أبالاشية وكاتبة مشهورة في نيويورك تايمز. تتحدث روايتها " *The Last Girls* " عن شخصية النساء القوية في المنطقة الجنوبية، حيث تحكي قصة ثرية وخيالية عن طبيعة الرومانسية والعلاقة بين الحياة والخيال وعلاقة الماضي بالحاضر والمسار المتوقع لحياة النساء. باستخدام نهج الإستراتيجية السردية ، وتحليل الصوت والنص متعدد الطبقات ، نحاول في ورقة البحث الإجابة عن ماهية الأنثى والخطابات حول الذات. تتحدى مثل هذه التجارب التفكيكية التصورات الموحدة عن الذات ومعرفة الذات ، كما أننا نتعامل مع تقييم الوعي الأنثوي في مخيلة ' لي سميث'. يهدف بحثنا إلى توضيح كيف استخدمت ' لي سميث ' ، وهي كاتبة جنوبية ، وكتاب آخرون أعمالهم الأدبية لإخبار قصص عن الأشرار الذين يحاولون اكتشاف الحقيقة عن أنفسهم والعالم الذي يعيشون فيه من خلال مجموعة متنوعة من الظروف والثقافات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية، العرق، الجنس، النظرية النسوية. السعي الذاتي