ABSTRACT

MIRANDA LOIS LANGSTON. Lesbianism in Southern Women’s Writings: Rubyfruit Jungle and The Revolution of Little Girls. (Under the direction of Professor Barbara Bennett.)

Traditionally, women in the South were “. . . neat, graceful, passive beauties with purity of thought and devotion to home, family, and loved ones,” but this definition is not inclusive to all Southern women (Southern Mothers 2). Southern women writers have exposed the fallacy of the above statement, especially Southern lesbian writers Rita Mae Brown and Blanch McCrary Boyd. Both Brown and Boyd are different Southern women because of their sexuality. Rubyfruit Jungle is the lesbian coming-of-age story of a Southern girl in which Brown details events from her youth and her emergence as a lesbian author. Brown’s novel establishes a different set of rules for life in opposition to those of the traditional Southern Belle. As Brown’s novel forges a way for lesbian writers, Boyd’s novel, The Revolution of Little Girls, portrays the self-destruction one will face when trying to fit into constructed binaries that one cannot possible fit into.

Both Brown and Boyd establish different rules for Southern women within their writings in contrast to rules determined by Southern society. Although the novels’ protagonists constantly fight against Southern society’s prejudices, both emerge as individuals and are triumphant in the end. Neither Brown nor Boyd is a traditional Southern woman as they defy the expectation to marry and become mothers, choosing rather to pursue a career and make their own path. Rubyfruit Jungle and The Revolution of Little Girls challenge the traditional Southern Belle stereotype and what it means to be a Southern woman.