

**An Exploration of African-American Masculinity through *Beloved*,
The Color Purple and *Their Eyes Were Watching God***



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August 2016

**An Exploration of African-American Masculinity through *Beloved*,
The Color Purple and *Their Eyes Were Watching God***

A Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of English and Humanities

Of

BRAC University

By

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Student ID: 12103010

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts in English

August 2016

Acknowledgement

This dissertation represents the last walk of my undergraduate studies as a student of The Department of English and Humanities of BRAC University. I would like to begin by thanking my supervisor, Dr. Rifat Mahbub without whom it would have been impossible for me to complete my dissertation. You are the most helpful, patient, and persuasive guide that I could have possibly been blessed with. Your inspiration, enthusiasm and enormous knowledge motivate me to work on such a complex matter. I thank you for having confidence in me and direct me on when I felt stuck. It has been an absolute honor and delight working under your supervision. I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to Professor Firdous Azim, Rukhsana Rahim Chowdhury, Shenin Ziauddin, Mushira Habib, Sharlene Nisha Alam, Professor Afsan Chowdhury, Professor Dr. Samina Sultana, Thomas Newbold, Nawshaba Ahmed, Kazi Farzana Shoily and all other teachers in the department, who have helped me and motivated me to achieve my academic achievements.

I like to thank my family and friends for their support and inspiration. Abbu, ammu and my little brother thank you for loving me and always believing in me and also cheering me whenever I doubt myself. Moreover, it will be a dishonor if I do not express my gratitude to that one person who has always supported and encourage me – Ferdous Alam. Thank you so much sir for your advice and guidance. I cannot be grateful enough to the two most important persons of my life, who have always been there whenever I needed them —Maruf Rayhan and Shirin Shila. Maruf thank you so much for your suggestions and encouragement which helps me to get rid of the dilemma and Shila thank you for your trust and inspiration.

And lastly to Allah- without you everything is impossibility.

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Abstract

African-American identity is implanted in the history of slavery and their position as slaves in America. This history creates a complex identity for African-American men that need to be examined. There are diverse phases of masculinity from slavery to post-slavery. This slavery gives contradictory views around the meaning of African-American masculinity. There are two contrasting picture that exists regarding this issue; on one hand African-American men are being thought as violent and sexually promiscuous and on the other hand they are considered as irresponsible and incapable to be bread earner. This dissertation attempts to examine the representation of African-American men and their masculinity in the writing of, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Through this thesis, I want to move away from this stereotypical picture by taking the benefits of these three novels. In this paper, I am going to explore the meaning of this African-American masculinity during the time of slavery and post-slavery and it is also an attempt to show how these female authors have viewed and portrayed African men through their writings. These three novels together give a new and diverse picture of masculinity. The analysis of the arguments about African-American men and their relationship with women and with other men in family and community require the assistance of theories such as patriarchy, masculinity in general and African-American masculinity in particular. Apart from these texts as primary sources, journals, articles and other reference books are going to be used as secondary sources.

Introduction

Epoch-making African-American women writing Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston have primarily explored the lives of black women in America through their novels. Therefore, most critics read their works as mainly woman-centered, examining the intersectionality of gender, race, class, histories of slavery and its aftermath in understanding the position of characters such as Sethe (*Beloved*), Celie (*The Color Purple*), Janie (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*). The male characters of the novels have been seen as an aid to understand the women characters. Departing away from this tradition of examining women's lives, in this thesis paper I want to examine the representation of male characters and masculinity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and I will use these characters as windows to understand black masculinity and its manifestation in slavery and post-slavery period in America. I have chosen to study this representation of masculinity by using particular theories such as the theories of patriarchy, masculinity in general and African-American masculinity in particular.

To situate the novels in their appropriate chronology, I will start my thesis by analyzing Toni Morrison first and then I will move on to Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a late twentieth century novel that re-writes the history of slave narrative, set in the era after the Civil War (1861-1865) in Cincinnati. Its story is told from the perspective of former slaves, in particular through Sethe, a slave mother who kills her daughter to save her from being another slave. In this novel Morrison has uniquely looked in the experiences of black slaves. Through her male characters' Morrison demonstrates the oppression and denial of selfhood they experience during slavery, which complicates the image of black masculinity both

as bearer and perpetrator of violence. Additionally, the stories of the women characters in *Beloved* are unfinished without those of the men's.

The Color Purple is an epistolary novel, where letters work as a narrative agent. Here a reader perceives the narrative of a person who tells her story in letters to someone else. About epistolary novel Maria Berg Jørgensen has said, "While most people understand 'Epistolary novel' as a novel made up of letters, the term is often used as somewhat of an umbrella term for a variety of different narratives like letters and diary entries, or rarer forms like newspaper clippings, blog entries and forum posts" (9). *The Color Purple* is a novel in which the language of the letters resembles African-American oral narration. This particular style gives the readers a feeling that they are hearing the voice of the narrator, rather than reading the writing. The novel consists of letters written by Celie and Nettie, two sisters living in the rural Georgia. Alice Walker has also explored different kinds of masculinity here. On one hand, she shows the cycle of patriarchal violence but on the other hand she also examines the loving and caring side of man. The male characters play significant role in developing the main female character Celie's personality. Like *Beloved* in this novel female characters are incomplete without the males.

Zora Neale Hurston, the precursor of both Morrison and Walker has explored generational changes of masculinity in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In the novel the protagonist Janie has three important male relationships through which she grows up as an (in)dependent woman. Through the main male characters Logan, Joe, Tea Cake and also other characters, Hurston shows the various range of masculinity and all these men represent different stages and kinds of manhood.

African-American identity is embedded in the particular history of slavery and their position as slaves in America. African-American literature explores this un/spoken histories to

voice out the complex nature of African-American lives. I will use these three classic novels to interrogate African-American masculinity, since those novels move away from stereotyping black men. Rather, they demonstrate the different aspects of black masculinity. Masculinity even within the African-American system has never been a static or changeless expression. From slavery to post-slavery there are different types of masculinity. Though some of them are abusive but that is only one picture and I want to go beyond that stereotype of masculinity and examine them. About this Tim Edwards has argued that “it is important to recognise that perception of violence changes over time and vary from one culture to another” (45). One of the interesting points of this thesis is that I have chosen these three female authors and their writing to look into the masculinity because there is also this feminine understanding and feminist interrogation of masculinity. Many feminists argue that without understanding masculinity properly and without including the man into the discussion it is not possible to have feminism altogether. African-American feminist bell hooks argues that

It is a fiction of false feminism that we women can find our power in a world without men, in a world where we deny our connections to men. We claim our power fully only when we can speak the truth that we need men in our lives, that men are in our lives whether we want them to be or not, that we need men to challenge patriarchy, that we need men to change...patriarchy has maintained its power over men and their lives, I urge us to reclaim feminist for men (xvi-xvii).

I want to see how women writers have portrayed different kinds of men in their writing. Before going into the analysis of the texts, I will briefly discuss the theoretical issues necessary for my analysis. I will start with masculinity and will move forward to talk about patriarchy, African-American masculinity in particular and will conclude by giving the structure of this thesis.

Historically, the meaning of masculinity has changed with the passage of time and with context. According to *Oxford Dictionary* masculinity means “having masculine qualities” (720). This means having the qualities or appearance which is considered to be typical or appropriate for a male sex. All men are influenced by this view of masculinity. The typical qualities of men involve being active, dominating, power-holder and the decision maker. Masculinity reinforces the view that men are supreme; they are strong and they represent reason. This concept of masculinity is the cause and effect of patriarchy. According to *Oxford Dictionary* patriarchy means “control or governed by men” (849). Patriarchy gives the permission to execute conventional qualities of masculinity. Patriarchy creates the domain through which masculinity can be performed and continued. Within western white feminism the idea of patriarchy has been explored in particular during the second wave feminism. Kate Millett for example pointed out that “What goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged (yet is institutionalised nonetheless) in our social order, is the birthright priority whereby males rule females” (3)¹. She gives a general understanding of patriarchy and according to her, men will dominate women and this notion is straightforwardly being accepted by our society. African-American feminist has also given the definition of Patriarchy specific to the African-American context and bell hooks in her book wrote:

Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (18).

¹ See *Sexual Politics* Chapter 2-“ Theory of Sexual Politics” by Kate Millett

According to her, the use of violence to maintain male power, not expressing feelings, use of rage these are some certain features that African-American males must possess to fit in the structure of black masculinity (19). Masculinity exists only in the structure of gender relation. Masculinity is dynamic and it is changing constantly. The performance of masculinity is complex, and it is transformed through gender relations. Although, it has been argued that despite being a complex matter, black masculinity is under researched and under theorized. Studies of race and ethnicity have dominantly explored theories of colonialism, imperialism and racial discrimination in societies. Such studies emphasize issues such as social construction, deviance, identity and otherness (Edwards 65). To understand and explore higher degree on racial issues Alice Walker has coined the term “womanist”. Walker writes: “The wife has never considered herself feminist-though she is, of course, a “womanist”. A “womanist” is a feminist, only more common” (Phillips xix). It aims to eliminate oppression in order to unify all people. Unlike feminists, the womanists want equality in society to be divided among races and sexes. To do that, it is essential for the womanist to empower and believe in the black man even though she may be oppressed by him. The African-American men do not have much liberty when it comes to how he is represented or treated. Because we do not have direct access to reality, we only have to rely on the representation. Edward W. Said has talked about this representation and for him “the strategy of representation is a key feature of a text’s worldliness: repetition imposes certain constrains upon the interpretation of the text, it historicises the text as something which originates in the world” (Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia 6). So, in terms of masculinity African-American men’s representation is very significant. Historically, the black man, like the black woman, has been oppressed and made powerless by slavery but gradually black masculinity has been shown through the act of rebellion, which was a sign of masculine liberation (Banjoko

137). Hunter and Davis in their article argue “The historical record indicates that even in the worst of times through slavery, economic deprivation, and urbanization Black men managed to develop a sense of dignity and self worth, were reconnected to their families, and provided for them as best they could” (21). This argument means that there cannot be any room to develop a one-sided representation of black men. Rather their position needs to be understood in their immediate and wider contexts. Navid Salehi Babamiri, Naser Dashtpeyma and Leily Jamali argues that “this was also the time when the politicization of race and ethnicity became an effect of the increased political consciousness and activism of those who found themselves marginalized and discriminated against based on their race, gender and ethnicity” (18). Idea of patriarchal structures is constructed by society and these gender roles are assigned and reinforced through every social institution. In this regard Judith Butler a gender theorist, argues in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* that

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one (6).

So, according to her both sex and gender are culturally constructed. Societal norms dominate how men should behave, what they are expected to do. A man should be strong, courageous, and helpful and be able to provide for his family. A man who cries and shows fear is not masculine. He must feel pain and has to restrain his feelings (Hooks 22). Allan G. Johnson has also used the concept of patriarchy in his book *Gender Knot* and explains that it as a society that is “male dominated, male identified, and male centered” (5). By this he argues that men and women are considered to possess different qualities and men are dominating important positions in areas

such as economy, education, politics and religion. This class, gender and race together can make people suffer from multiple oppressions and it is also one dimension of masculinity. Through my thesis I will look into the representation of the male characters by utilizing these theories of masculinity, African-American patriarchy to analyze the novels.

The first chapter of this thesis is going to look into the relationship and treatment of men towards men and their role within community. I will also examine the characters, their behavior and expression through the idea of manhood. In *Beloved* I will look into the characters like Sixo, Halle, Paul D and Stamp Paid to find out how slavery has affect and change their life and despite of this how they have performed masculinity. Through *The Color Purple* I will search for the different aspects of masculinity and also will try to discover, if there is any cycle of violence that exists by observing Mr. _____, Harpo and Alphonso's character. At last, through *Their Eyes Were Watching* I will explore the generational changes and will examine Logan, Joe and Tea Cake to see how they have carried out their masculinity.

In the second chapter I will examine the representation of black men through their relationship with the women characters. Through the novel *Beloved* I will examine Paul D and Sethe's experiences of slavery and will try to see how these traumatic and suppressed memories have created a special bond between these ex-slaves. I will look into the details how Paul D came out from the trauma of slavery and his influence on Sethe's life. Through Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* I will look into the character of Alphonso, Mr. _____ and Samuel and will try to find out how they are different in terms of treating women. At last trough Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching* I will look into the character of Logan Killicks, Joe Starks and Tea Cake through their relationship with Janie and will try to justify them. At the end, the conclusion of the paper will light upon on all the discussed issues together.

Chapter One: Men-Men Relationship and Masculinity

This chapter will examine the relationship and treatment of men towards men and their roles within their families and communities. It will further explore the idea of the manhood of the characters as depicted in the novels. There is a lack of understanding about black men and masculinity. On one hand black men are thought to be less of men, because of their experience of dehumanization. On the other hand they are thought to be sexually dangerous, reckless and capable of doing harms to both black and white women (Andrea G. Hunter and James Earl Davis 21). One of the most important parts for an Africa-American society is their community. About community Bryant Keith Alexander has avowed that “the notion of the ‘Black community seemed to further politicized an aggregate of individuals around issues of history, oppression, struggle, and upliftment” (44). About slavery and black people, Toni Morrison in her book *What Moves at the Margin* has said that “We felt that no one was talking us seriously enough, and seriousness was what we were about in the late fifties and early sixties. In trying to cure the cancer of slavery and its consequences, some healthy as well as malignant cells were destroyed” (41). Morrison wants to articulate that at the time of slavery black people are used to have a communal bond; the slaves have their own culture and friendship which was unbreakable but through the passage of time this bond is somewhere lost. These novels show that even in brutal context like slavery black men manages to develop a sense of self-consciousness and they were connected with their family and community.

In the patriarchal society there is an existence of cycle of violence and masculinity. Hook has stated that “Indoctrination into the mind-set begun in childhood includes a psychological initiation that requires boys to accept that their willingness to do violent acts makes them patriarchal men” (59). This is the thought process that permits them to do violence. Tim Edwards

has pointed out that “a more external or structurally overt position of oppression or powerlessness often links strongly with a more initial or covert expression of helplessness” (46). Through this chapter I am going to explore these concepts and will try to understand the position of male characters and their expression of masculinity.

In *Beloved* the male characters live through slavery and its immediate absolutions. The five male characters Paul A, Paul D, Paul F, Sixo and Halle, who are absent/present throughout the text, are portrayed with humane touch. Through her male characters’ lives in *Beloved*, Toni Morrison demonstrates the complexities, inconsistencies, oppressions and denial of selfhood they experience in a slave owning era. Morrison also explores the constructions of masculinities which becomes complex by race and history in her works.

She thus tells the stories of black male characters and empowers them with voice and visibility. Sixo is an essential character through whom Morrison portrays tragic African-American based masculinity. Sixo is one of five male slaves on the Sweet Home plantation in Kentucky, who is described as a confident person. He is “Indigo with a flame-red tongue” (Morrison 21) and this indicates his unmixed African heritage. His slave circumstances illustrate his ability to practice a dominant masculinity. Sixo’s manhood is evident in his knowledge and farsightedness. He is very observant; he is the one who says that their owner, Mr. Garner’s death is a murder. Paul D recalls the memory by saying “Sixo had a knowing tale about everything. Including Mr. Garner's stroke, which he said was a shot in his ear put there by a jealous neighbor” (219). He alone notices the bullet-hole in Garner’s head. Again, he tells the Sweet Home slave men that Mrs. Garner “need[s] another white on the place” (220) and that is why schoolteacher who is the brother-in-law of Mr. Garner, came to the plantation because Mrs. Garner thought that it is not a good idea to be a single white woman living on a plantation

surrounded by black slaves. This particular thought shows the conventional idea of black being sexually dangerous.

Things start to fall apart after Sweet Home plantation is taken over by the schoolteacher. He used to ask questions to the slaves and write down their experiences. Morrison represents the schoolteacher as a knowledge producer and for him these slaves are only a product for experiment; Sixo understands this and it has “Tore him up for all time” (37). Sethe the protagonist of the novel recalls an incident where Sixo kills a shoat because they are now underfed and he is interrogated like a criminal by the schoolteacher, but he faces him without fear. His intellectual mind, and irreverence for the trappings of white masculinity are seen when he replies that his act means, “improving your property” (190). The dialogues between Schoolteacher and Sixo shows two sets of values and which are opposite. Even though Sixo wins the argument with him but the Schoolteacher “beats him anyway to show that definitions belong to the definers—not the defined” (190). This is an act of power to teach him and the other that the black men are the subject position for Whites. Sixo’s desire for freedom is strong and he begins to plan his escape while realizing the fact that if they are caught, they might die. Unfortunately, Sixo’s escape plan is detected and then he and the other men are punished. Although he is recaptured but he does not go without a fight; even with his hands tied, he wrestles the gun out of the white men’s hands and manages to crack one person’s ribs. Morrison sketches Sixo on a mythical level, especially in his warrior-like abilities. As he burns, Sixo begins to laugh “a rippling sound like Sethe’s sons make when they tumble in hay or splash in rainwater” (226). As an African man and warrior, Sixo displays an endurance and courage in the face of extreme torture and death.

Halle is also positively portrayed in *Beloved*. He actually could have been the main focus of the book because he is Sethe's husband but he is characterized through people's memory. Halle is very hard working, mild, and the most pleasant of the Sweet Home men. He is seen as the best man, because he freed his mother from slavery. Sethe describes it as, "A twenty-year-old man so in love with his mother he gave up five years of Sabbaths just to see her sit down for a change was a serious recommendation" (11). He keeps his mother safe and free from slavery and because of this unselfish act, Sethe chooses Halle to be her husband out of all other slaves. For his mother Baby Suggs, he is really special. She used to say "A man ain't nothing but a man," ... "But a son? Well now, that's somebody" (23). Halle could read and write and his intelligence is proven by the fact that he is Garner's bookkeeper. He is loyal and a strong man, to the Garners and other Sweet Home men. He is also portrayed as a sympathetic man. Denver says about him that "My daddy was an angel man. He could tell where you hurt and he could fix it too" (208). Dana Heller argued that "While the reconstruction of family relations remains a central focus of *Beloved*, there is also significant stress placed on the need to dismantle the boundaries that separate family from community, private from public concerns" (106).

Halle and Sethe's relationship was a special one and they were very much in love. He treasures Sethe and treats her as an equal. They had an unbreakable trust, which was broken the day when Halle did not come to the place where he and Sethe were supposed to meet so that they could run away with their children. This particular incident was retold by Paul D to Sethe – Halle witnesses that Sethe was being ravished by the School teacher's nephews. Hearing this Sethe gets a huge shock that being her husband Halle did not do anything to protect her. She took it as a betrayal of his masculinity and in that context Paul D said, "A man ain't a goddamn ax. Chopping, hacking, busting every goddamn minute of the day. Things get to him. Things he

can't chop down because they're inside" (69). This particular quotation told by a man very powerfully shows that there is an attempt to disassociate men from violent masculinity. Black men have always been associated with violence but this incident shows that black slave men had no power; their masters could rape their sisters and mothers, and they could do nothing to protect them, which could be imagined to be intolerable for a human being to endure. After this incident Halle was seen sitting by a butter churn covering his face with butter. It is the time when his masculinity was totally disrupted because he could not save his wife. According to Paul D this incident "broke him" (69) and it leads him in a state of psychosis. A man who cannot protect his loved ones fails as a man. Within slavery African-America masculinity is assaulted and Halle is an example of distorted masculinity. Morrison shows different aspects masculinity, which are never been talked about before and she shows the disrupted side of masculinity and this entire novel's plot stands on his humiliation.

The different notion of masculinity is further examined by the contrasting character of Halle and Paul D. Unlike Halle, whom we do not see after the emancipation of slavery, Paul D turns into the central main character of the novel. He is the male narrator of the text. So, the internalities of men's thought and dilemmas are presented by him. Paul D goes through several phases in his lifetime; most importantly he was a slave who becomes a free man. He also has dreadful experiences but it seems like all that experiences gave him his manhood, which he was searching for. He was forced to wear bit in his mouth; he was sold by schoolteacher to another slave owner; he was send to prison, where his cell was no bigger than a box. According to him they were "Two feet of it over his head; three feet of open trench in front of him with anything that crawled or scurried welcome to share that grave calling itself quarters" (106) and he has to endure sexual assault but all this could not break him. He develops as a free man, and his life

journey has healed him, as well as others. In the beginning of the novel, he is very unsure of himself as a person and his manhood. He felt that the other men on the farm were manlier than he would ever be but being the “last of the Sweet Home men” (6), he seizes the chance to reclaim his manhood. All this shows that there are male characters who could not recover from the violence like Halle and at the same time there are male characters who recover like Paul D.

Baby Suggs plays a prominent role in the novel. She is not only an ex-slave or Halle’s mother or Sethe’s mother-in-law but she has also works as a spiritual guardian of the community. Like her we have Stamp Paid, an old man who is a male guardian of the community. He used to help the runaway black slave to come to Cincinnati. This shows men’s responsibility and relation with the community.

It is clear that black masculine ideals are associated with the attainment of their personal freedom; freedom is a measure of autonomy for the black male characters. All this male characters represent the slave community and their experiences are brutal and through them Toni Morrison shows that they are all same in term of sharing experience but different in terms of getting out from its trauma and in gaining manhood. Taking the reference of men in the slavery time, if we look into Alice Walker *The Color Purple* we will find men who are different from Morrison’s portrayal of men. However, the novel is center around the protagonist Celie’s finding her own identity but Walker has molded this quest through her male characters. Unlike Morrison, Alice Walker in her *The Color Purple* shows the exercise of power of African-American men within the African-American tradition. Candice M. Jenkins states that

...the space of the “private” or the domestic is a space in which men wield power over women might in the case of *The Color Purple* also be understood to imply

two other potential objects of privatized masculine control: children and less powerful males (977).

This means 'private' space in a legal sense, represents the space of the household or the domestic, since this space is traditionally assumed to lie within the area of the private. Within this space the power and the order is expressed over women, children and less powerful males.

Through her text Walker shows that not only women but also men are dominated. In the novel, men who are dominated by their own fathers are determined to dominate their sons in equal measure within their own private realms. It is a kind of cycle of violence and about this cycle and power structure Kate Millett assess that "half of the populace which is female is controlled by the half which is male, the principle of patriarchy appear to be two fold: male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger" (4).

This phenomenon is made clear by, Mr. _____'s inferior relationship to his own father and his dominant relationship to his own son Harpo. Mr. _____ \Albert is Celie's abusive husband.² When Mr. _____'s father comes to visit and criticized Shug by saying, "She is black as tar, she nappy headed. She got legs like baseball bats" (Walker 52), at that time "Mr. _____ don't say nothing. [He] Looked out cross the railing at the trees, over the top of the well" (52). This was the moment when Mr. _____ and Celie can relate with each other and she expresses it by saying "This is the closest us ever felt" (53); it is because they are all subject to the same hierarchical relationship. Navid Salehi Babamiri, Naser Dashtpeyma and Leily Jamali have argued that "Albert walked after his father's rules because his daddy was the boss. Walker sketches out how the ability of black men spoils where another patriarchal system presides over" (21). Consequently, Harpo's resultant efforts to dominate his own family can be interpreted as a gesture toward the same kind of defensive patriarchal control. Harpo's inability to challenge his

² Their relationship is going to be discussed in the next chapter.

father which Celie has pointed out by saying “Harpo no better at fighting his daddy back than me” (28), shows that a dominant male exercises power not only over the women who is in his control but also the male and children. In a racial hierarchy that place black women and children below black men, these men often exercise control over their subjects violently – just as their racist white counterparts use lynching in the Jim Crow South (LaGrone 132-133). Celie’s narrative of Harpo working for his father provides a clever evaluation between a subordinated male and a woman. Celie describes Harpo as “nearly as big as his daddy. He is strong in body but weak in will. He scared” (28); this statement proves that this domination does not depend on physical ability. Instead, it is controlled by fear of his father’s power. It is this terror that made Harpo’s eyes “sad and thoughtful” (28), and that leads Celie to describe his face “begin to look like a woman face” (28). This narrative is a juxtaposition of the inflexibility of conventional gender norms. It can be said clearly that it is unexpected for a man to show feelings or pain because when he exhibits them, he is immediately feminized. Though Harpo may be judged as a weak man because of his father’s control but he keeps a conventionally masculine determination to control the subjects of his own patriarchal domain (Candice M. Jenkins 979). Harpo tries to dominate his wife, Sofia but she is never submitted to her husband’s patriarchal authority, although he continually attempts to dominate her. About Sofia Navid Salehi Babamiri, Naser Dashtpeyma and Leily Jamali have said that,

She resists being dominated and she challenges both passivity and suppression.

She also modifies the necessity of marriage and child bearing and shies away at accepting this unfair social rule and downgrades ill-favored gender discriminations (21).

Sofia is totally opposite to Celie. Sofia demands to be treated as an equal by Harpo where on the other hand Celie endures the operation and show silent obedience to Mr. _____. It can be considered as a counter to gender expectation. So it is really necessary for the characters to behave in an appropriate manner and that is why Harpo was pressured by Mr._____ to reimpose the patriarchal order. He asks Harpo

You ever hit her? Mr._____ ast.

Harpo look down at his hands. Naw suh, he say low, embarrass.

Well how you spect to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating (35).

Harpo's embarrassment in terms of not hitting Sofia indicates not only simple discomfort because of his lack of power over his wife, it also shows his sense of shame at being exposed, in front of his own father as an inadequate patriarch. He fails to relate to his father and tries to live up to the patriarchal expectations but he cannot move beyond the system. He proves himself incapable of the requisite authority and that is why to prove his masculinity he beats Sofia. Tim Edwards said,

...physical violence in particular is predominantly more socially acceptable as a practice for men or boy rather than for women or girl while, conversely, men or boy are often acutely embarrassed if they become victims of violence and particularly if that violence comes from girls or women, whereas the fear of violence remains a dominant factor in many women's lives (45).

Although at the end of this novel the characters changed and Alice Walker shows that there is always possibility for people to change in a positive direction. In this novel Celie's father

Alphonso is the only stock character and he abuses all women. He uses his new wife as a tantalizing object, maid, and a caretaker. Although he is bad with his family but in the community he is the man one can look up to. After his death when Celie visited her house she saw a “skyscraper” (221) where it was written “Leading businessman and farmer. Upright husband and father. Kind to the poor and helpless” (221). Alphonso does not see the necessity of changing or reforming his violent behavior because he believes that it is his toxic masculinity that has made him a survivor of the white violence. It is a powerful example of the cycle of distorted masculinity. In the novel it seems like the male characters’ desire to control their own sake and want to make a statement about their own capacity to rule.

In contrast to Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston has primarily examines the different power relation of men with in the black community. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* she shows dissimilar men, who are not related with each other but they show the multiple dimension in representing masculinity within the early 20th century black community. Logan Killicks is an example of traditional African-American man, whose source of procession is land and his only dream is to accumulate land. He is the first husband of the protagonist Janie. He is not very powerful but rather a simple man without high social position despite owning his own land. For him it is his property which matters the most, and Hurston does not give much information about his mingling with the community or him being a very social person. He is a stable man with “his often-mentioned sixty acres” (Hurston 21). However, it is his land which is giving him some power and position in the society comparing to others. According to Allan G. Johnson, patriarchy is all about power and those who are less powerful in this power structure can also sense this idea of domination and about this he writes that

Since patriarchy identifies power with man, the vast majority of men who aren't powerful but are instead dominated by other men can still feel some connection with the idea of male dominance and with men who are powerful (9).

Joe Starks represents the early 20th century bourgeoisie African-American and he is the second husband of Janie. He is very ambitious, and he embodies the American dream to re-create his own future, that every citizen should have an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through their work. He has the ability through which he persuades people to believe in his dreams and others accept his supervision and gives him loyalty. His larger than life black man image dominates other. He combines the conceptions of manhood with his right to power, wealth, and authority. In the middle of the plot when he runs away with Janie, his social position is not very high, but later when he becomes the first mayor in Eatonville and because of that his social position and social status increase. It is normal for Joe to become the highest leader since he has the required qualities. His main ideal work is to build a city which will be inhabited just by the colored people; this ideal desire reveals that Joe is fervently struggling to make black community aware of their identity. This noble wish is often over shadowed by his superiority complex. At first the town people has both positive and negative thoughts about him. Some believe in his potential and some denies it, for example, when Joe plans to build the post office Amos Hicks gets jealous and started to doubt about him. Hurston stated his thoughts as,

That irritated Hicks and he didn't know why. He was the average mortal. It troubled him to get used to the world one way and then suddenly have it turn different. He wasn't ready to think of colored people in post offices yet. He laughed boisterously (39).

On the other hand, Lee Coker who is Hicks's friend blames themselves because they underestimate themselves and according to him Joe is the capable leader of the community. He said, "He's liable tuh do it too, Hicks. Ah hope so anyhow. Us colored folks is too envious of one 'nother. Dat's how come us don't git no further than us do" (39). Joe is very traditional in the way that he wants to be in charge and he does not even want his wife to involve too much in the town's kinship. About this Maria J. Racine has argued that,

Starks is primarily interested in property, prestige, and security; these represent his idea of changing and controlling his life. He wants a wife who stays at home and helps him in his store, so Janie is kept on the fringes of Eatonville society-allowed only to associate and communicate with the community members at a superficial level (286).

Joe follows the white masculine structure of power where a man holds the power to rule. Therefore, when he was building of Eatonville there were no interferences of white folks and because of that it is possible for Joe's character to gain power. There are people who look up to him and they envy him but they know they are not equal and capable like him and this was a reason which created a frontier and segregation between him and others. The town people start to compare his achievements and his powers to those of the whites. For them he resembles as a white slave master. The town people "murmur hotly about slavery being over" (47), when Joe forces the people to dig drainage ditches to the street in front of his store. His two stories white make the "rest of the town looked like servants' quarters surrounding the 'big house'" (47). Hurston clearly considers the social system that Starks establishes as oppressive and economically unbalanced which can be related to the social structure imposed by the colonizers.

One important thing Hurston shows is the cycle of control, perpetuated by men. After Joe's death there are many people who wanted to marry Janie because she is beautiful and a wealthy widow. At that point Hezekiah, the store assistant and delivery boy starts to take the role of Janie's older brother and helps her to manage the store. He also starts to imitate Joe. About this imitation Janie said,

...Hezekiah who was the best imitation of Joe that his seventeen years could make. He had even taken to smoking, and smoking cigars, since Joe's death and tried to bite 'em tight in one side of his mouth like Joe. Every chance he got he was reared back in Joe's swivel chair trying to thrust out his lean belly into a paunch... Another time she overheard him using Joe's favorite expression for pointing out the differences between himself and the careless-living, mouthy town. 'Ah'm an educated man, Ah keep mah arrangements in mah hands (92).

Though Hezekiah is inferior to Janie in terms of social position and age, but because he is a man in the man-less house, his gender identity gives him the authority to act as a guardian. Hurston making a clear point that in power structure there is always someone who can replace the most powerful one and it also shows the existing inequality between man and woman in African American society.

Tea Cake is yet another generation of African American representative and he is Janie's third husband. Harlem Renaissance is the point of reference for Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Tea Cake is the prototype of that changed time. It was a cultural, social, and artistic explosion that gave Afro-American's a voice and this new perspective intended to articulate a new concept in literature. It was the moment in which scholars started to revive all the forgotten texts written by American Blacks, considering them within the frame of a literary

tradition rooted in the time of slavery. Harlem Renaissance represents visual art, dance, music, theater, literature, poetry, history, politics etc and through Tea Cake Hurston has portrayed it.

Tea Cake is a man who is full of life and who is not looking for a future like Logan and Joe.

He is the character who follows patriarchal structures the least. Allan G. Johnson continues by discussing that “The prominent place of misogyny in patriarchal culture, for example, doesn’t mean that every man and woman consciously hates all things female” (41). His point is that everyone in a patriarchal society is affected by it whether one notices it or not. This is relevant to Tea Cake because even though he does not follow patriarchal structures like Logan or Joe does but he is still subconsciously affected by it. Tea Cake’s social status and social class in Eatonville are considered low. The people in Eatonville believe that Tea Cake has nothing to offer since he does not have much money or power which is vital and they also think that, because of this he only wants to take advantage of Janie and will leave her once he has taken what he wants. Pheoby said to Janie that “...Tea Cake, whilst he ain’t no jail-bird, he ain’t got uh dime tuh cry. Ain’t you skeered he’s jes after yo’ money (112). He is just as independent as Joe Starks, but he does not seem attracted building towns, stores or acquiring possessions. Tea Cake’s pride comes from his self-confidence but unlike Joe, Tea Cake’s self-confidence is not combined with ambition. Nathalie Starke said that “He is a very charming man who represents freedom”. Music, play checkers, shooting, going to picnics, playing his guitar all this represents him and these are the qualities that represent Harlem Renaissance.

From the above discussions, it is clear that all these female authors have examined and explored man and masculinity from different aspects. Toni Morrison justifies her characters’ masculinity through the experiences of slavery. She shows that in terms of sharing experiences all the slaves are equal but for some slaves/males it is not always possible to live up to the

patriarchal expectation. Alice Walker shows how cycle of violence exists in the power structure and Zora Neale Hurston explores diverse forms of masculinity and the changes that man has gone through time and context.

Chapter Two: Men, Women and Masculinity

This chapter looks into the representation of black men through their relationship with women in the novels. These three novels both individually and collectively, shed light in different aspects of men and masculinity. They show how on one hand men can be dominative, oppressive and on the other hand how they can be caring and loving. Tim Edwards has pointed out in his *Cultures of Masculinity*, that “masculinity has itself fragmented into multiple parts” (1) and they look dissimilar depending on the culture and the context. In this chapter my purpose is to look into this context of African-American masculinity starting from slavery to post-slavery and their relationship with women. There are social and cultural norms and in my opinion, unwritten rules that construct the image of men in general, black men in particular, even in the colonial African-American context that how he should behave and operate. Bell hooks particularly looks into the construction of men/masculinity and women/ femininity in the African-American context. She has pointed out how ‘violence’ has actually been associated with black males; although it is a natural endowment. According to her, our behaviors have to follow a predetermined gender script (19). Power and masculinity always go parallel; to establish masculinity man needs to feel the sense of power. It is expected that man can be violent and it is culturally accepted. Though it is not natural and this violation depends on culture and context. About this hooks argues that “the will to use violence is really not linked to biology but to a set of expectations about the nature of power in dominator culture (55). However, it is true that to be masculine, it does not mean that one has to hurt and torment another person. Causing pain does not define a man. So to change and dismantle the patriarchal culture where this power play exists, for that both men and women must work together; this system cannot be dismantled if there is a collective denial about its impact on our lives (hooks 24).

The history of slavery has a defining effect on how African-American masculinity is shaped. The black men were subjected during enslavement as powerless, to a degree where they got the same treatment as animals were given. Edward writes that masculinity is often forgotten while discussing slavery and that black masculinity in literature is often ignored (64). For understanding the position of black men as slaves I will start my analysis by examine the novel *Beloved*. Carmen Gillespie stated that “With *Beloved* Toni Morrison confronts what it means to be a mother and what it means to be a man, when the basic element of freedom is denied” (19).

In *Beloved* the character which gets much more prominent is Paul D. This novel starts almost after twenty years of the emancipation of slavery and breaking down of the slave community of which Paul D and Sethe was a part. Paul D and Sethe were former slaves in Sweet Home plantation. There is a gap in the text in terms of absence of men. Sethe’s two sons Howard and Buglar run away because they were terrified by the haunted house. So, Sethe’s house does not have any male body and Paul D comes to fill the gap. He is the one who brought social and cultural order in the house and restore the order.

Paul D is overburdened with the past; the past which he cannot come to term with. Paul D is not the only character that has to deal with suppressed memories of slavery; Sethe has to deal with them as well but being a man Paul D’s experience of slavery is different from Sethe’s experiences. Paul D does not have a place to call home. He shows up unexpectedly on 124 Bluestone Road and when he lays his eyes on Sethe. He remembers the bond between them that cannot be denied. Through Sethe, Morrison describes this moment

When the last of the chamomile was gone, she went around to the front of the house, collecting her shoes and stockings on the way. As if to punish her further

for her terrible memory, sitting on the porch not forty feet away was Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men (6).

Paul D's arrival gives Sethe a little hope for the future and because both of them have shared the brutal past of slavery together that is why they find themselves in the same ground in terms of traumatic memory. Overtly Paul D is a free man who could go in any direction he wanted but covertly it is a mere fact that he cannot be truly free until he releases his repressed memories out into the open. This process of healing begins when Paul D comes back to 124 and he sees Sethe. Paul D sees his heart alike to a "little tobacco tin" (113), where he keeps all of the horrors of the past. Morrison describes it

It was some time before he could put Alfred, Georgia, Sixo, schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, the taste of iron, the sight of butter, the smell of hickory, notebook paper, one by one, into the tobacco tin lodged in his chest. By the time he got to 124 nothing in this world could pry it open (113).

Paul D feels a sense of belonging when he arrives at Sethe's house, considering that he has Sethe all to himself. After Paul D's sexual encounter with Beloved, he is forced to face all the pain and haunting memories and it can be said that he started to remember everything. He started to shout "Red heart. Red heart. Red heart" (117). One of the reasons for Beloved's return is because she feels very threatened by all the changes that Paul D brought with him. So, she takes her revenge with Paul D by having sex with him. Paul D wants to establish the traditional masculine force within the house but having sex with Beloved shows the limitation of that masculinity.

Eventually Paul D understands that he cannot create a future by suppressing the past. Paul D leaves so that he can have the chance to face his repressed memories more directly and if

he has not left, he would have been as drained as Sethe. In the end, Sethe has to face Beloved to deal with her tragic past. When Beloved vanishes, he returns to support Sethe and tries to convince her of what he has learned, and he tells her that it is alright to let everything out. He says to Sethe “me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow” (Morrison 273). So at the end he recovers his manhood and chooses a new life for himself. Power for Paul D is to be an independent person and to have a sense of control over his own life. Paul D’s sense of power does not involve having control over another person; instead he just wants to have control over the things that are natural for a human being to have control over and he just wanted to be loved.

In *Beloved* Toni Morrison discusses the brutal memory of slavery that both men and women have experienced and this memory and past have created the bond between them. So, it can be said that the issue of African man being violent and dominant is less focused here. These are the ideas that Alice Walker took and explore. Walker focuses on the relationship of violence that black women suffer by black men in her novel *The Color Purple*. There are diverse forms of domination and oppression that exists and the question of domination and struggle has been one of the major problems in interpersonal relationships ever since. Society defines how an individual should interact with others and how girls and boys are taught to behave in masculine or feminine manners. About this learning hooks asserted that

Patriarchal thinking shapes the values of our culture. We are socialized into this system, female as well as males. Most of us learned patriarchal attitude in our family of origin, and they were usually taught to us by our mothers. These attitudes were reinforced in schools and religious institutions (23).

We can find lots of the issues of females being dominated by men and there are diverse forms of domination and oppression that take place in this power play. Ary Syamanad Tahir says in his article that “It has been analyzed that race decides the fate in Afro-American girls and ladies and how they were obliged to live a disastrous life. The inhuman treatment drives them to stride outside and violate the social and patriarchal rules” (1). So this particular novel looks into the gruesomeness of black men’s oppression over black women. While reading *The Color Purple* we should keep in mind that all characters and events are represented and told from Celie’s point of view while considering every single relationship. Through her letters that every event is informed and each person is characterized.

Alphonso was the second husband of Celie’s mother. Celie’s real father was a successful store owner but he was eventually murdered by white folks because he was he was their business rival. It was a racial clash. This incident can be considered in, as the main framework of the text because consequences took place after that. At first, Celie does not know the real truth. Alphonso whom Celie has considered being her real father lays his hands on his stepdaughter and rapes her. Similar kind of gruesome reality that father raping the daughter is depicted in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*.

Celie was an innocent young girl whose whole life was about to alter because of the abuse she has to endure. Alphonso threatens her and makes her submit to his will. Left with nobody to turn for direction and help but God, she starts writing down her incidents. About that Celie said “I don’t know no other man or what else to say” (Walker 4). For her that was the only way to let out her inner feelings and thoughts. It is noteworthy that in her letters to God she was not complaining but she found someone with whom she can talk. In other words Alphonso’s abuse leaves Celie completely puzzled and alone. Furthermore, she blames herself for what was

happening and in her first letter – by crossing out the words “I am” and rephrasing it into “I have always been a good girl” (Walker 3) we can see that. She makes it clear that she must have done something wrong to deserve the punishment of God. At the age of fourteen, Celie put an end to her innocent childhood and literally forced to become a woman because of the brutality of the man who is supposed to protect her. Soon she became pregnant and Alphonso puts an end to her access to education by saying “You too dumb to keep going to school” (11) and close all the doors that could lead her to an independent life. Moreover, he takes Celie’s children without saying anything to her. Navid Salehi Babamiri, Naser Dashtpeyma and Leily Jamali have pointed out that “In the family, Pa has the absolute power to control the family. It effectively gives him the exclusive license to flagrantly violate his women” (19). Alphonso’s image as a dominating and abusive stepfather does not change until his death. Nevertheless, Celie has not been able to stand up against Alphonso while he was alive. It can be said that the abuse and oppression has an influence on Celie’s future relationships towards men. She believes that all men are same and they are not going to change; she cannot expect anything from them rather than violence and disrespect. This shows how black young girls are taught to internalize the domination and violation by men.

This cycle of oppression continues through Celie’s marriage. Mr. _____ \Albert is not an easy character to understand. He was at first not given a name; he was addressed as Mr. _____ but gradually the readers get to know that his name is Albert. In the beginning, after he got married to Celie, the readers got an image of him being a violent and horrible husband but at the same time his adoration of Shug Avery humanizes him. The relationship between Celie and Albert is the most important representation of black-on-black violence in the novel.

He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don't never hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man (23).

This specific quotation represents the cruelty and brutal picture of African-Americans. Through the conversation between Mr. _____ and Alphonso represents that to Mr. _____ Celie is an object which he purchases in some kind of trade with Alphonso. He never wanted to marry her; she was only a substitute for his murdered wife who was supposed to take care his children and do the housework. He mistreated and abused her in the same way, as her stepfather did.

Although other women tell Celie that she has to fight in order to recover her situation and to make Mr. _____ realize that he cannot treat her that way but Celie wonders "I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (22). This emphasizes that he does not consider their marriage as a worthy relationship but rather sees his wife as his servant or even as his slave whose emotions can be neglected. This attitude of Mr. _____ represents the hegemonic ideology of the whites.

About this Ary Syamanad Tahir argues

The way the black men treat their wives, daughters and lovers in *The Color Purple* resembles the conduct of the white persecutors; in the traditional southern African American family, as well as in the houses of the slaveholders, the black woman is treated as an inanimate object, a status which allows for the claim of the husband's dominance. Black men inherited the same culture of their white masters (11).

Although when he is with Shug he explicitly shows his love for her. These are the reasons behind Celie's not having any self-esteem.

One can think Mr. _____ as a strong person but he is weak. He is not strong enough to let Celie know that Nettie her younger sister has refused his offer and fought off his sexual advances; instead, he hides Nettie's letters. This act defines him as a coward but if we look deep into his character we can see that the root of his evil nature comes from his not knowing himself. He is not given any space by his father to be an independent man who can take his own decisions. As I have in my previous chapter discussed that when he becomes a man, he uses his father as a role model and becomes an irrational and egotistical individual. However, his behavior significantly changes towards the end of the novel. Albert is completely reformed and the key to this transformation lies in the misery he experiences when both Shug and Celie leaves him. His guilt was killing him and he was turning mad but when he sent rest of the Nettie's letters to Celie, he started to improve. He clearly develops into a polite guy.

Walker has shows another contrasting side of men by portraying Samuel. He is the one who is from the beginning of the novel described as a totally different person. He is kind and a loving husband, who listens to his wife's needs and tries to satisfy those. He was married to Corrine. Corrine and Samuel do not have their own children but Samuel adopted a boy and a girl which later on found out to be Celie's children. He does not beat his family and tries to protect them. After his wife's death, he marries Nettie and takes care of her. Walker puts him against these men to show that in this society not all black men are domineering or abusive.

Unlike Morrison and Walker Zora Neale Hurston has explores different kinds of men in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The readers can perceive the intergenerational change of African man through the novel. This novel also represents a black woman going through different stages of relationship. Janie the protagonist of the novel is involved in four relationships. Her first sexual encounter with Johnny Taylor, her first marriage to Logan Killicks,

and her later marriages to Joe Starks and Vergible Woods who goes by the name “Tea Cake”, these are the relationships that help to develop the plot and also help to understand how one character is different from another. Janie is the privileged one in the community since she can pass down as a white. Her skin color is light because her father was a white schoolteacher. In two of her relationships Janie is passionately involved, one is her short-lived romance with Johnny Taylor and another is her marriage to Tea Cake; on the other hand in her other two relationships she is restricted and unhappy which are her marriages to Logan Killicks and Joe Starks. Donald R. Marks stated in his article that “Thus, Janie’s four loves fall into two categories: those of passion and those of control. Each category is characterized by particular tropes and sign structures” (152). Through Janie’s sorrowful comments, we learn that Logan Killicks is an old, unappealing man. To her, he “look like some old skullhead in de grave yard” (Hurston 13). He is old and unattractive which is clearly in contrast to Janie’s youthful beauty. She compares her marriage with him as “desecrating the pear tree” (14) which is a symbol of Janie’s association of true love, based on her experience underneath the blossoming pear tree. Yet, as far as Janie’s Nanny is concerned, he is a highly respectable man. Her grandmother talks about the time of slavery and the traumas she and her daughter have to face. So, she fears that it can happen to Janie also that is why she forced Janie to marry Logan. So, we can see that the things that Toni Morrison has taken as a key plot of *Beloved* has been presented in this as a passing incident.

Logan does not have a major part in Janie’s story and yet he is a significant person in the culture of the South. Her grandmother believes that this marriage is an opportunity for her to take an upward step on the local social ladder. She sees him as security for Janie. Killicks has his own 60 acres land and a comfy house. He is an acceptable husband not because Janie is in love with

him, but because he has properties and is financially sound and has begun to acquire wealth.

Nathalie Starke said in her paper that

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Logan is not very powerful but rather quite a simple man without high social standing despite owning his own land where he works all day. Even though he is quite insignificant in society he still has a higher social standing than Janie (8).

Logan is emotionally impoverished. It can be said that his marriage with Janie can also be seen as a replacement for his first wife. Janie is young and she can help him in his land and he needs more help from his bride with the outside work. Logan uses Janie as his plough which can be considered as an action of abuse. With his new, young wife back on the farm, he continues to follow the challenging farm routines. However, he does certain household chores because he considers them to be his responsibility and for him those are acts of love. For him, love is giving Janie a gentle mule so that she can help him plow the fields. He says to Janie,

Naw, Ah needs two mules dis yeah. Taters are goin' tuh be taters in de fall.

Bringin' big prices. Ah aims tuh run two plows, and dis man Ah'm talkin' 'bout is got uh mule all gentled up so even uh woman kin handle 'im (27).

He fails to understand Janie's feeling and considers her as a spoiled girl. He also feels unappreciated because Janie is not thankful towards him for making her the mistress of 60 acres of land. Though Logan believes that he has done a favor on Janie by improving her social and economic status, claiming that he has taken her from "de white folks back-yard" (30) and she should be grateful to have him. These actions make her feel isolated and restricted. For her, "It was a lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody had ever been (21-22). When Janie threatens to leave him he actually feels fear but he doesn't have the vocabulary

with which to respond. He cannot put his thoughts altogether in words. So, instead of directly addressing the issue Logan tries to brush off Janie's threat and disparage it and as a result, Janie feels that he is insensitive and doesn't value her. So, she leaves Logan and ran away with Joe Starks.

Joe Starks is full of confidence. He is an ambitious man. From the moment Joe meets Janie until his death he never doubts his ability to accomplish his goals. Joe gives the opportunity to Janie, to escape from Logan but his relationship with her is one of control rather than passion. Like Logan he also holds a position of power and respect in his community. No one else has thought about adding extra acre to the town, but Joe manages to get 200 acres deed from the white landowner. Having attracted attention, he calls a meeting and gets himself elected as mayor of Eatonville. He builds a crossroads store and established a post office in the town. He perfectly justified himself not only in building up the town but also deciding who can live there and whose opinion counts.

Joe's attitude towards Janie is also terrible. She is being kept under certain constraints. At first, Janie only knows that Joe values her but when she realizes that Joe values her as a possession rather than as a human being, she becomes emotionally isolated. With his power one sure object he controls is – Janie. He finds it simple to disparage her in front of the porch sitters because of her lack of skill at doing calculations in the store and post office. Moreover, she is not allowed to join the game of checkers because Joe has decided that she is not smart enough to play the game. She is being kept away from other women because she is Mayor's wife and "her place is in de home" (43). Though Janie in the beginning admires the attributes in Joe but quickly she finds that too much of this high-quality attributes can quickly become unbearable

and suffocated. For Joe, Janie is like a trophy rather than a wife. Through her physical beauty and ability he can make other men envy. Donald R. Marks has stated in his article that

Janie's relationships of control with Logan Killicks and Joe Starks require her to base her life on labor and material production rather than on play and sexuality. They force her to withdraw from the community in which she lives to a position of 'honor and respect.' This removal is, ultimately, a form of imprisonment which leads to her loneliness and desire to be free of the men with whom she is involved (153).

From the beginning, Joe desires to be "a big voice" (28) but Joe takes it too far after gaining his position of power and in Janie's eyes he becomes nothing but the big voice. Hurston clearly shows that this materialistic, capitalistic ideology which Starks represents is absolutely unwanted for life and love.

The man with whom Janie is passionately involved is Tea Cake. He does not have property or social power or any kind of ambition like Logan Killicks and Joe Starks. He wins Janie's heart with his fun loving and carefree nature. Her relationship with Tea Cake permits her the freedom to live meaningfully in a community. Tea Cake teaches her how to play checker and this delighted her that a man thinks it is natural for a woman to play as his equal. Moreover, he praises her and considers her intelligent enough to learn such a game by saying "you got good meat on yo' head. You'll learn" (96). When Tea Cake asks Janie to work alongside him in the Everglades fields we can see the sense of gender equality. Both of Janie's former husbands wanted her to work too. The difference is that Logan wanted her to do hard labor because he thought of her as an object. Joe wants her to work in the store, which she also dislikes because through forcing her to work, he mostly wants to publicly display her as his trophy more than a

wife. Tea Cake doesn't see Janie as an object, but as a partner and companion and his reasons for wanting her to work with him is that they can share more time and experiences together. Janie's first thought about Tea Cake is compared with the pear tree, which is a symbol for true love. She said,

He looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom-a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps. Crushing aromatic herbs with every step he took. Spices hung about him. He was a glance from God (106).

Tea Cake's behavior is opposite to Logan Killicks' and Joe Stark; he likes fighting, gaming, gambling, and celebrating. With him Janie can fully open up and enjoy herself. Despite her age difference she can connect more emotionally and passionately with him. About their relationship Donald R. Marks said in his article that,

Tea Cake's liberty allows Janie greater freedom to participate in her community than do her more rigid relationships with Killicks and Starks. Starks believes his people should spend less time on 'foolishness'. Tea Cake offers Janie the opportunity to be 'foolish' and to break the constraints which Starks and his position of authority impose upon her (155).

With Tea Cake, Janie discovers things about herself she never knew in her years with Nanny, Logan, or Joe. Another quality that distinguishes Tea Cake from Janie's prior husbands is his willingness to both talk and listen. The steady flow of communication between Tea Cake and Janie helps them to be able to talk out and resolve their problems. These are the most essential faults in Logan and Joe. Logan never expresses himself and Joe never listens to Janie. All this

qualities make Tea Cake different from others and Hurston represents him as a hero, with whom the reader sympathizes.

So, it is clear that all these authors have come out from stereotyping masculinity and shows the diversity in them. On one hand they represent man as submissive or dominating; on the other hand they also have tries to show the supportive and caring nature of then. Through their novels they put these men side by side, parallel to uphold the complete picture.

Conclusion

As an Undergraduate student, while taking my courses on Feminism and women's writing, I started to have an interest in understanding masculinity. To get the whole picture of how this society functions, it is very essential to know both these concepts of femininity and masculinity. I also live in a strong patriarchal society, where I have a father and a brother. I believe in order to recognize the condition of patriarchy of our society and how men and women operate, it is really important to understand masculinity first. Within a global perspective, understanding African-American masculinity is even more important at a time when we have news like a black man being shot by the police in the US, without having an interrogation and this reproduces and reinforces our belief that black men only commit violence. So, there is a necessity to get engaged with the understanding of African-American masculinity.

This thesis is an attempt to examine and understand this African-American masculinity through these novels. All the discussions have made it clear that the female authors have observed and explored man and masculinity from different aspects. Toni Morrison sees it from the perspective of slavery and understands her characters through the experiences of it. Alice Walker shows the constructing picture of men being loving and caring and at the same time she has also explored the vulnerable position of men in power structure. Zora Neale Hurston explores the generational changes that man has gone through time and context. These authors have successfully broken away from the stereotypical image of a black man and have showed that masculinity and male characters' in the novels are complex and are situated within the different framework of African-American patriarchy.

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