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The Framing of Black and White Masculinities in Toni Morrison's Beloved

Felesha Beckford

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Abstract

This study is an examination of white hegemonic masculinity and its effect on tyrannized black male figures in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. These disenfranchised figures suffered psychological trauma through the perpetuation of marginalized and subordinate masculinities within the "blues epistemological" apparatus by means of self-realization. Blues epistemology is a term that Clyde Woods describes as "a longstanding African American tradition of explaining reality and change. This form of explanation finds its origins in the processes of African American cultural construction within, and resistance to, the antebellum plantation regime" (25). *Beloved* serves as a form of historical text by means of giving voice to the otherwise disremembered; therefore, the use of the term blues epistemology is used in this essay to integrate the blues aesthetic to contextualize the marginalization of black males on the Sweet Home Plantation through a sociological investigative lens. Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* is a neo-slave narrative written in 1987. The novel was written during the post-colonial era, which gives readers a bird's eye view of the traumatic psychological effects of slavery. The narrative is set in Cincinnati, Ohio in the year 1873 after the Civil War. Morrison uses nonlinear narration and employs flashbacks to the Sweet Home plantation in Kentucky and to a prison camp in Alfred, Georgia during the colonial period. The underpinnings of class and race structures are evident in this cultural dynamic between the subordinate black male proletariat and the dominant (elite) bourgeois white male.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

The Framing of Black and White Masculinities in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

by

Felesha Beckford

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

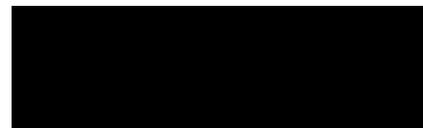
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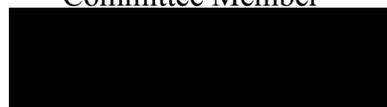
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Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

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Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Acknowledgments	4
Introduction	6
The Framing of the Emasculation and Distortion of Black Masculinities	7
Mr. Garner and schoolteacher as a Hegemonic Masculinity Figure	8
Paul D's Masculinity Decontextualized	15
Subversive Masculinities and the African Diaspora	21
Halle's Subversive Masculinity	24
Non-Hegemonic Masculinity	27
Re-imaging Black Male Masculinity	32
Conclusion	36
Works Cited	38

Introduction

The American novelist Toni Morrison sheds light on white hegemonic masculinities and their effect on tyrannized black male figures in her novel *Beloved*. The novel serves as a historical text under the scope of the sociopolitical divergence between black and white masculinities within colonial America in the late 1800s after the Civil War. The institution of slavery is represented as the nucleus of the distorted masculinities among blacks. Morrison's "neo-slave narrative" teases out white hegemonic masculinities and their brutal effect on tyrannized black male figures through the lens of the black gaze. The term "neo-slave narratives" was coined by Bernard W. Bell's 1989 study *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. Bell describes neo-slave narratives as "residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (286), although, as Valerie Smith notes, "over time that definition has expanded to include a more diverse set of texts than Bell's initial description could have anticipated" (168). In *Beloved*, Morrison tells the story of black men suffering psychological trauma through the perpetuation of emasculated masculinities by means of self-realization. The figures that I will primarily analyze in this study are Halle, Stamp Paid, and Paul D.

Morrison seeks to give voice to the black male figures who engage in performances that are indicative of subordinate and marginalized masculinities in order to appease the white audience. The salient hegemonic masculinity structure is designed to tyrannize, particularly through the emasculation and distortion of black male masculinities which is indicative of white supremacy. *Beloved* gives a bird's-eye-view of black figures living on the Sweet Home Plantation and documents the plethora of experiences that they face in resistance to the control of hegemonic structures.

The Framing of the Emasculation and Distortion of Black Masculinities

Beloved is set in Cincinnati, Ohio in the year 1873, but Morrison uses nonlinear flashbacks looping in and out of the Pre-Civil War and Civil War periods. Morrison employs flashbacks to the Sweet Home plantation in Kentucky and to the prison camp in Alfred, Georgia. The novel was published in 1987 long after the Civil War period but the story gives readers a glimpse of a historical period frozen in a time when white hegemonic masculinities used brute force to suppress black slaves. Times have changed and the hegemonic framework has shifted; however, this study examines black male masculinities as seen in *Beloved* in a time when slavery still existed and the mapping of its brutal effects even after slavery. They were being oppressed as a result of their race and social class. There is a correlation between class, gender, and race relations; therefore, the hegemonic framework can be applied to marginalized masculinities that are evident in Morrison's *Beloved*, since those black men do not conform to the standards of hegemonic masculinity. The hegemonic masculinity classification is built on a homogeneous structure that is based on the incitement of violence and power. Black men are classified as a minority and are not included in the hegemonic structure. *Beloved* frames the emasculation and distortion of black masculinities through the tyranny of hegemony.

Beloved is a historical text that exposes the truncation of black masculinities by means of white patriarchal control. The wretched plight of slavery which commodifies black bodies and legitimizes slave labor serves as the agency that desensitizes the disenfranchised black males. The effects of slavery and the giant capitalistic class structures also distort the identity of black men as human beings and as men. This emasculation is evident in three significant instances within the text: the slaves being depicted as marginalized and are viewed as boys rather than

men, the practice of bestiality which appropriates animals as sex objects, and the representation of the alpha-male figure suppressing his natural instinct to defend and protect.

The black figures' behaviors become performative for survival. There was a penal system in place which used lynching as a method to control the slaves. Morrison writes, "[e]ighteen seventy-four and whitefolks were still on the loose. Whole town wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults" (180). This evoked fear within blacks and incited mind control. The implication is that this extreme measure of lynching serves as a deterrent for blacks who tried to rebel against their masters. Black male slaves in turn performed subversive masculinities by means of survival.

Mr. Garner and schoolteacher as a Hegemonic Masculinity Figure

The male slaves living on the Sweet Home plantation subvert an androgynous dispensation in order to appease their masters. Schoolteacher, Mr. Garner's nephew, exerts power and control over the slaves by emasculating them. Mr. Garner, the slave owner, contends that all of his slaves are men and not mere boys. Halle bought his mother's freedom and later young Sethe replaced her. The text states that "[t]he five Sweet Home men looked at the new girl and decided to let her be. They were young and so sick with the absence of women they had taken to calves" (10). Ironically, the narrator contends that "the restraint they had exercised was possible only because they were Sweet Home men—the ones Mr. Garner bragged about while other farmers shook their heads in warning at the phrase" (10). The men's restraint is attributed to Mr. Garner's seeming impression of them rather than by the men's own act of self-control and endurance. His friends perceive their manhood as a farce and assert their objection to the notion

of slaves being wrongfully called “men.” The implication is that to be identified as a man is indicative of a sense of patriarchal power. The act of calling a slave “a man” inadvertently subverts the hegemonic structure. Mr. Garner perpetuates this hegemonic structure by calling his slaves men by means of conditioning. By calling the slaves men, he conditions them to think of themselves as men but they are prohibited to assert their masculinity. The masculine undertone is being thrust onto them but they themselves have to suppress their innate sense of masculinity. He still owns them and treats them as slaves, although, ironically, he appears to be a benevolent slave owner.

The white man’s conformity to a hegemonic structure that effeminates black figures is represented through Mr. Garner's figure. He is identified as the “benevolent” slave owner who seemingly deviates from the hegemonic model that is built on the construct of total power and control. Mr. Garner underplays the brutality and indignity of slavery. Ironically, the Sweet Home men were still slaves and were indebted to Mr. Garner through their infinite servitude to him. Mr. Garner is oblivious to the fact that his statement “‘[y]’all got boys,’ he told them. ‘Young boys, old boys, picky boys, stroppin boys. Now at Sweet Home, my niggers is men every one of em. Bought en thataway, raised en thataway. Men every one’ . . .” (10) is condescending. Ironically, he brags to the other farmers that the Sweet Home men are men but still treats them as boys by objectifying them. Mr. Garner gratifies himself as a slave owner by calling the slaves men because he actively participates in the capitalistic institution of slavery where the men labor without any monetary gain. Mr. Garner benefits from the labor of the slaves. Mr. Garner’s treatment of the slaves is calculating since by calling his slaves men might increase the slaves’ rate of productivity. The men who represent the collective, retort by stating “[b]eg to differ, Garner. Ain’t no nigger men” (10). The men are stigmatized as being mere boys

on the basis of race. They are marginalized under the scope of the proletariat and are subordinate to the slave owners. Mr. Garner represents the bourgeois capitalistic system though in a passive manner since he operates within the apparatus of the hegemonic structure.

Mr. Garner exerts power by simply calling the slaves men since he embodies the role of the signifier. The slaves are being objectified as subjects and he has total dominion over them. The naming performance is indicative of the hegemonic structure since the slaves are his subjects and their passive sense of manhood only lies within the confines of the Sweet Home plantation and not the larger society where their very existence would be frowned upon. Mr. Garner exerts his power of authority when he gives marginalized figures –the slaves, guns and calls them men and brags about it while schoolteacher exerts power through violence and his desire for control. Helene Moglen explains schoolteacher's motive and desire to defy Mr. Garner's authority and his drive to enact violence against the slaves as, "[i]n fixing the "other," one fixes oneself as the Other of the other. The fetishized object is shaped by fetishistic desire, and the need to objectify reproduces the fear of objectification which produces it" (24). Schoolteacher asserts a more salient type of fetishized masculinity by delegating to have Mr. and Mrs. Garner murdered because he has the impression that by calling the slaves men, Mr. Garner subverts the hegemonic structure, and only death could cause him, schoolteacher, to avert the correct order of the hegemonic structure. After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Garner, schoolteacher quickly becomes his successor, hence restoring the white hegemonic structure.

Being married as a slave is a privilege that also leads to dysfunction. The Sweet Home men were closed off from society and were only limited to the enclaves of the plantation. Therefore, the men had to either suppress their natural sexual urges or resort to bestiality practices. As Morrison describes, "[s]he waited a year. And the Sweet Home men waited with

her. She chose Halle . . .” (11). Although Halle had the privilege of marrying Sethe and developing a family unit, the others were not as privileged, since Sethe was the only female slave. This leads to both psychological and social dysfunction. Sethe approaches Mrs. Garner requesting her blessing to marry Halle. Mrs. Garner responded, “[h]e talked to Mr. Garner about it. Are you already expecting?” (26). Mrs. Garner is eager for the couple to marry and bear children in order to increase their assets. When Sethe responded that she isn’t pregnant, Mrs. Garner states, “[w]ell, you will be. You know that, don’t you?” (26) Sethe is seemingly oblivious to the fact that she was entering into a contract to give up her future children as slaves. Mogen explains the white fetishization and subjectification of black bodies, “[to] claim her, as Sethe is claimed, through a violent sexuality that reproduces while it denies her maternal connection, is to assert masculine and racial autonomy through incestuous transgression” (27). Sethe produces property and is denied any legal familial connection. Sethe is valued as a breeder. Morrison interrogates the accounts of the fetishization of the female anatomy by white supremacists under the veil of the benevolent other.

The mating between the couple is animalistic in nature rather than the delicate love of a traditional relationship. Halle took Sethe to the cornfield to consummate their marriage: “Halle wanted privacy but got public display . . . Paul D, Sixo, and both of the Pauls sat under Brother pouring water from a gourd over their heads, and . . . they watched . . . It had been hard, hard, hard sitting there erect as dogs, watching corn stalks dance at noon” (27). The nature images and the wildness of their lovemaking and the effect that it has on the men are primitive. The subtle mention of Brother pouring the water is representative of an overseer who violates the men’s manhood by using the couple’s private sexual experience and the men’s sexual nature (stirrings) as a spectacle. Mogen gives an account of a similar fetishistic act “when the chained male

slaves-Paul D among them- are forced as a group to perform fellatio on their guards. It is a ritual of white male bonding intended to humiliate its victims by feminizing them, parodying while rehearsing the primal act of nurturance” (27). These narcissistic acts were carried out by white men projecting their masculinity through acts of sexual violence. The black males inadvertently become subjects of desire to appease the white male audience.

Although the arrangement of marriage circumvents the practice of bestiality, it serves as an agency that commodifies black bodies. Moglen explains that “[t]he material project of slavery, as *Beloved* makes clear, is the commodification of the black body; the psychic result is that body's sexualization” (27). An example of this is evident when Sethe’s young children were separated from her. Schoolteacher represents a patriarchal figure who objectifies disenfranchised people of color. On the contrary, Paul D highlights his maternal instinct when he asserts that “[m]en don’t know nothing much,” said Paul D, . . . ‘but they do know a suckling can’t be away from its mother for long” (16). Paul D highlights the dehumanization of black figures.

Although Sethe and Halle had the right to procreate by their seemingly benevolent owner,--Mr. Garner, that is another example of the perpetuation of the hegemonic structure that emasculates black men by taking their own bodies and even their children into slavery. Baby Suggs described this wittingly: “the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children” (23). The institution of slavery destroys the family structure of marginalized black people including children. This practice keeps the slave industry going at the cost of the black man’s seed. The black man again loses his sense of manhood since he has no control over his children or his own body. Baby Suggs contends that “two girls, neither of each had their adult teeth, were sold and gone and she had not been able to wave goodbye” (23). Their family unit serves the slave owner as a

commodity in the sense that the children are essentially born into slavery. Eventually, Halle, Sethe, and the other men plan to run away from the plantation in order to gain autonomy over their own bodies but are caught. The desire of the men to seek freedom suggests that they are aware of their state of blithe objectification.

The reconceptualization of what it means to be a man is indicative in Baby Suggs's statement that "a man ain't nothing but a man, . . . but a son? Well, now, that's *somebody*" (23). Baby Suggs's definition of what makes a man a man is influenced by the hegemonic structure of the society which rules by power, control, and violence in contrast to the actions of her son Halle, "[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). *Beloved* seeks to conjure the shameful history of slavery in America by deconstructing systematic racism and its brutal effects on the emasculation of black male figures. Mr. Garner's performance as the benevolent slave owner figure is ironic as Baby Suggs states, "[y]ou renting him to pay for me way after I'm gone to Glory" (147). Halle bought his mother-- Baby Suggs's freedom. He worked tirelessly to buy his mother's freedom but he himself was not freed. While Baby Suggs is aware of Mr. Garner's benevolence, she is aware that Halle's sacrifice represents the iron fist of white supremacy under the scope of the giant hegemonic structure. Ironically, Mr. Garner "deferring to his slaves' opinions did not deprive him of authority or power. It was schoolteacher who taught them otherwise" (125). The disposition of the kind slave owner is destigmatized while the egotistic overseer is stigmatized as a result of the practices of the period.

The traumatization of being oppressed propels Baby Suggs into activism. Baby Suggs encouraged the people within the Clearing to reclaim their own bodies. Baby Suggs' restorative performances in the Clearing disrupts the hegemonic order which demoralizes black bodies.

Baby Suggs claims that “whitefolks’ are the root cause of the black community’s suffering: Those white things have taken all I had or dreamed, [. . .] and broke my heartstrings too. There is no bad luck in the world but whitefolks” (104). Baby Suggs uses romanticized language to help the community to decontextualize their own identities. Schoolteacher operates as a tyrant when he ignores the fugitive bill and approaches Baby Suggs in her yard without warning with the intention to reclaim his property. His rootless actions show his desire for power and control even over the law. Jonquil Bailey explains the community’s underlying motive for their reaction to the invasion of schoolteacher:

[t]he community's total abandonment and Beloved’s murder make the Misery exceptional in its extremity, but the incident is nevertheless the product of the same racial system that enslaved baby Suggs and her family, paid for her freedom with the blood and sweat of her son, and jailed Sethe. White supremacy has infected the relationships within the community (33)

Baby Suggs’s actions represent her resistance against patriarchy and schoolteacher’s machismo in a post-colonial world.

Mr. Garner’s masculinity is foiled by schoolteacher’s acts of violence toward the slaves. Mr. Garner’s comrades put up a resistance against calling his slaves men; subsequently, schoolteacher represents a more dominant masculine figure that constitutes manliness with control and power as the signifiers. Baby Suggs contests Sethe’s motive for the infanticide and states, “you can’t just mishandle creatures and expect success” (150). Schoolteacher is responsible for the ill-treatment of the slaves, hence their rebellion. Incidentally, although Halle possesses the virtues of a *somebody*, his limitations as a slave, in the end, prevent him from exerting his manhood: “he too, as it turned out, was nothing but a man” when schoolteacher’s

nephew stole his wife Sethe's milk" (23). The idea of "a man ain't nothing but a man" deconceptualizes what it truly means to be a man. Halle witnesses the assault, but he can not go to her defense. Halle then experiences psychological trauma as a result of the incident since he is found sitting by the churn slathering butter all over his body and then begins wandering aimlessly. He ostracizes himself from the Sweet Home men and consequently loses his sanity. The emasculation leads to his psychological trauma and ultimately, his demise.

Paul D's Masculinity Decontextualized

The setting of *Beloved* is significant to the contextual application of R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinities. Although freedom of speech (the first amendment) was a federal law, slaves had no constitutional rights. They were counted as second-rate citizens and were denied these rights because they were deemed "human property." Paul D has an iron bit placed in his mouth. The slave owner performs this action to exert power and control over his disenfranchised black body. In his book *Masculinities*, Connell asserts that "[h]egemonic masculinity among whites sustains the institutional oppression and physical terror that have framed the making of masculinities in black communities" (80). The slave master represents the dangers of patriarchy and the inherent subordination of enslaved black men. This form of hegemonic masculinity primarily exists in relation to the construct of non-hegemonic forms—subordinated forms of masculinity. Black men in turn develop a disposition of subordinate masculinities in order to appease the hegemonic figures. Sethe is aware of Halle's imminent danger and asks, "Did you speak to him? Didn't you say anything to him? Something!" (69) Paul D responds, "I couldn't, Sethe, I just . . . couldn't. . . . "I had a bit in my mouth" (69). Here the implication is that Halle has lost his sanity. This is evident of the physiological trauma

that he had to endure because his masculinity was marginalized. Halle is mentally silenced while Paul D is silenced both mentally and physically since he had an iron bit in his mouth which restricted his speech. Paul D manages to run away from the Sweet Home plantation with great fortitude in civil disobedience to a free state in Cincinnati, Ohio to gain some sense of humanity.

Morrison's male figures forge divergent male masculinities despite the iron fist of hegemonic masculinity structures in order to have a sense of control over their lives and to assert their identities as black "men." Paul D asserts, "one crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me" (72). Paul D laments over the last of the Sweet Home "men": Sixo, Paul A, Paul D, Paul F, and Halle. These black male figures represent the variants of black masculinities which are depicted through divergent or otherwise subversive performances. In *Beloved*, the black man is deemed subordinate to the white male on the basis of class and race.

Stamp Paid informs Paul D that Sethe was guilty of infanticide and attempted to take the lives of her other children. Paul D, who is determined to protect his heart from glowing red, dismisses the accusation. Stamp Paid insists that his claim is true and provides the document as evidence. Being illiterate, Paul D examines the photo in the document and claims that there is a resemblance but the lips are not Sethe's. Stamp Paid reads the document for Paul D. Paul D is greatly saddened by the realization that Sethe had indeed committed a crime. Stamp Paid and the rest of the community criticize Sethe for her actions. Like the figure Hester Prynne, in the novel *Scarlet Letter*, Sethe is exiled. For Sethe, being exiled is both an alienating and enriching experience. Paul D states, "[y]ou got four feet, Sethe, not four, . . . and right then a forest sprang up between them; trackles and quiet" (165). Paul D compares Sethe to an animal when he reminds her that she has two legs, not four. This reveals Paul D's awareness concerning

the human condition but ironically, he is not able to see his own animalistic nature within himself. Tadd Ruetenik explains:

[w]hat Sethe finds unforgivable is that Paul D would liken her to an animal for an action she considered her defining moment as a free human being. Her lover implicitly concurs, and wonders whether he said what he did because of his own shame at engaging in bestiality with calves when he was a sexually frustrated young slave. Yet a less personal concern is also a factor: Sethe's decision seems to deny her rationality, and thus her status as a responsible moral agent. (320)

Stamp Paid's brainwashing concerning Sethe's tragedy influenced Paul D's attitude toward Sethe. The effects of slavery greatly impact Paul D and he struggles to operate in the real world. Sethe and Paul D experience the brutal effects of slavery. Both were subjected to animalistic behaviors as a result of brutal effects of patriarchy. Ruetenik claims that "Paul D's experience is filled with animal degradation. He was forced to wear a bit in his mouth, one that caused "a wildness that shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back." The suffering involved is noteworthy—"how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it" (71)—but not the worse part of the experience. For Paul D, the worse part of the experience is his experience with Mister, the livestock rooster" (321). Paul D is aware of his marginalized masculinity and tries to lock his traumatic memories away in order to forge a new identity. Paul D's forged identity is evidence of his exploited experiences from the antebellum south.

Paul D does not immediately acknowledge that Sethe committed the act in order to protect her children from what she herself ran away from the horror of being enslaved. Paul D states, "[y]our love is too thick" and Sethe retorts, "[l]ove is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at

all” (164). This reveals the psychological trauma that Paul D endured as a slave. This is a true reflection of Paul D operating as a marginalized figure. He conditions his mind to love small by means of subsistence. Paul D states,

[m]en who knew their manhood lay in their guns and were not embarrassed by the knowledge that without gunshot fox would laugh at them. And these “men” who made even vixen laugh could, if you let them, stop you from hearing doves or loving moonlight. So you protected yourself and loved small. (162)

Morrison employs nature images with a primitive undertone. The reference to the proverbial fox shows a certain degree of Paul D’s self-awareness. The implication is clear that white men use guns to assert their manhood and power and are aware that without them, black men would no longer cower under their prowess.

The allegorical walking suggests Paul D’s flight from his past into a future that he believes is promising, as long as he tucks away the history of his past. Paul D has been walking for years since he ran away from Sweet Home plantation perhaps to regain his sense of self. The narrator gives the reader insight into Paul D’s life as he navigates his way through passages of time. In “Conversations with Toni Morrison,” Gail Caldwell states, “Paul D, the former slave from Sethe’s past, has his own way of saying where he’s been, a poetry of lament that seems written from the inside looking out” (242). Destiny leads him to Sethe. They both have been burdened and scared by the history of their past. Sethe serves as Paul D’s redemption. Sethe explains, “[a] woman, a child, a brother-- a big love like that would split you wide open in Alfred, Georgia. He knows exactly what she meant: to get to a place where you could love anything you chose--not to need permission for desire--well now, that was freedom” (162). Paul

D's intimate connection with Sethe validates his sense of manhood. It also represents his freedom.

Paul D manifests what it means to be a man when he returns to 124 to console Sethe after the spiritualists within the community have performed an exorcism rite and cast out Beloved from the home. Sethe was distraught because she had promised never to leave Beloved. Sethe passionately proclaims "[s]he was my best thing" (272). Sethe is seemingly inconsolable because she carries the heaviness of the psychological trauma that she has to endure. Paul D becomes this christlike savior who redeems her from the heaviness. He replies, "[y]ou are your best thing, Sethe. You are" (273). Here he appeals to her subconscious, cajoling self-love--her redemption. She opens up her heart, her soul and welcomed it. This is evident when she responds, "Me? Me?" (273). At that moment Paul D's manhood is realized. He inherently closes his own tobacco tin box as he tucks away the traumas of his past by claiming a new path for his future. "Sethe," he says, "me and you, we got more yesterday than any-body. We need some kind of tomorrow" (273). Although he is conflicted about her tragic heroism, he is aware of the brutal effects of slavery. Paul D's freedom revived his sense of manhood. He is optimistic about the future. Through self-realization, Paul D reaffirms in several ways that you cannot escape the memories of the past and it helps to shape who you are but one should never allow oneself to be controlled by the past. Paul D appeals to Sethe's consciousness by stating that: "[s]aying more might push them both to a place they couldn't get back from. He would keep the rest where it belonged: in that tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be. . . . [a]nd it would hurt her to know that there was no red heart as bright as Mister's comb beating in him" (86). The color red serves as a trope throughout the text that signifies various degrees of drama. Florian Bast states, "Again and again the novel mentions Paul D's red heart kept in a box

as the trope for the memory of an event that is not accessible, because it was never experienced, only registered” (1078). Paul D constantly unpacks and repacks the memories of his past by means of catharsis. Bast further explains: “In fact, the novel, once more, is rather explicit in transferring the outer physical appearance of red into an inner presence” (1078). The othering of black masculinity as subordinate to their white counterpart impells Paul D to suppress his emotions. Morrison’s use of the color red evokes images of bloodiness, struggle, and corruption. Bast concludes that: “The two red symbols, the rooster and the heart, are distinctly linked when Paul D tells Sethe about his experience with Mister. This represents yet another example of a lack of the power to completely verbalize his own emotions” (1078). Paul D seeks to emancipate himself from the stigma of deviant masculinity and to reinvent himself as a man who is free and self-assured.

Hegemonic masculinity is normative practice in Western societies although not all men conform to such salient patriarchal structure. Connell contends in his journal article that “[i]t embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (832). The Sweet Home plantation in Morrison's *Beloved* serves as the epitome of hegemonic structure. The Sweet Home “men” consequently performed subordinated, or otherwise divergent masculinities by means of autonomy. The black men on the Sweet Home plantation are marginalized by the standards of the hegemonic model. As a result, the men perform subordinated masculinities by means of subsistence. The blacks suppress their innate masculinity in various ways which I will describe as marginalized and subordinated. The hegemonic structure is grouped homogeneously. The foundation is built on white masculinities while black masculinities are emasculated by total control. From a sociological perspective, this

homogenous grouping is problematic, since such a society has little diversity; white male figures serve as the nucleus of the hegemonic structure.

Subversive Masculinities and the African Diaspora

The extended metaphor of the Veil is a recurring motif throughout W. E. B Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*, symbolizing his ideology on civil rights—the equal opportunity for all regardless of race, class, or gender. The breaking of the Veil is essential for the debunking of social injustice that stultifies the onset of equality among all mankind where all can eat at the table of brotherhood. Both Du Bois and Booker T. Washington are renowned black figures who fought for the inclusion of black and white masculinities under the scope of hegemony, though not only limited to black men but black people in general. Jerold Savory states,

[o]nly if Blacks could break through the top of the Veil where they could influence the political, economic, and educational policies that affect the lives and shape the destinies of all Americans, . . . in which its citizens, regardless of race, would have the freedom to decide whether they would cultivate the soil or cultivate their minds. (336)

Here Savory suggests that in order for black men to have a sense of agency to obtain any semblance of autonomy, they would have to “break through the top of the Veil,” so that they too can have access to power and can sit at the hegemonic table of economic and social mobility.

The “breaking of the Veil” metaphor also serves as an apparatus that rallies black men to rise to the occasion. Du Bois's concept of the “talented tenth” circumvents Washington's ideology regarding blacks as second-class citizens. Savory asserts that:

[b]oth Du Bois and Booker Washington knew the ominous presence of the shadow of the Veil of racism. They differed primarily over how it might be removed. . . . Washington

advocated rendering the Veil from the bottom by giving young Blacks the kind of technical training that would enable them to earn some of the White man's wealth, while Du Bois advocated rendering the Veil from the top by giving Black students the kind of education that would equip them to fight for positions of decision-making power along with the Whites. (336)

Popular culture epitomizes white supremacy which is problematic. The conception and inception of Du Bois's ideology of the Veil are based on the premise of the exclusion of black masculinities within the hegemonic framework. The inscription of the breaking of the Veil is a call for the deconstruction of white hegemonic masculinity as the pinnacle of the economic and social chain. Du Bois contends that the inversion of black masculinity within the existing hegemonic framework is essential for social change—to move America forward. In essence, this notion would shatter the glass ceiling regarding race relations, unifying black and white masculinities—crossing the race barrier. Savory highlights that “he [Du Bois] is clear in the *Souls of Black Folk* about how his vision of social change must be realized if it is ever to come about in America. It is not enough for those who live “in the shadow of the Veil” to dream of life “above the Veil” (336). White masculinity is dominant within the hegemonic framework while black masculinity is centered around a more prescribed subordinating or otherwise marginalized framework. The ideology of the Veil is essentially a type of apparatus that Du Bois theorizes by means of obliterating hegemonic constructs that are signified through male dominion by the exercising of power over not only women but over other men under the iron fist of oppression, discrimination, social injustice, prejudice, biases, and other barriers on the basis of race.

By exposing himself to the literature of canonical authors, Du Bois contends that language and literature can be used as the vehicle that gives blacks—especially black men, a

certain degree of agency in their lives and bodies. Savory states, “[a]t one point, Du Bois, the cultured scholar, tells of how the enlightenment of great literature and philosophy have permitted him to move across the color line to ‘sit with Shakespeare,’ to move arm with Balzac and Dumas, and to ‘summon Aristotle and Aurelius’ . . . ‘I dwell above the Veil’” (88-89). This performance is indicative of subversive masculinities. In *Beloved*, the text states, “Even the educated colored: the long-school people, the doctors, the teachers, the paper-writers and businessmen had a hard row to hoe” (198). Du Bois's ideology of the breaking of the Veil is predominantly focused on black men seeking to be equal to the same social, economic, and class status as white men. Du Bois states, “[t]he history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost” (9). The slave men of the Sweet Home plantation exemplify this “double self” because they fought to be identified as human and as men.

Morrison sheds light on the collective and the lens through which people of color are viewed. Here both male and female genders are unified; she highlights the nuances of the heaviness that the whole black race has to carry. In *Beloved*, the text states, “[i]n addition to having to use their head, they had the weight of the whole race sitting there. You needed two heads for that. White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle” (198). The notion of the “two heads” is an appropriation of the “dual consciousness” that Du Bois speaks of in his essay *The Souls of Black Folk*. The hegemonic structure is primarily based on class differences. Nancy Kang asserts that: “In effect, this is an articulation of the familiar poststructural understanding evinced by Foucault that currents of power are imminently unstable and often contain within them the mechanisms of their own subversion”

(838). The inclusion of the subordinate and marginal blacks brings birth to subversive masculinity behaviors in a patriarchal Western society.

Halle's Subversive Masculinity

One central plot point in Morrison's *Beloved* is that Halle (Sethe's husband) allegedly goes mad after witnessing the schoolteacher's nephew violate her (his wife). He wasn't able to stop the abuse in order to preserve his own life. Halle's state of oppression ultimately led to his meltdown. Being a slave, he was unable to assert his manhood and therefore, had to suppress his sense of masculinity which ultimately cost him his sanity. This shows the inciting psychological trauma of black male masculinities which is depicted through the lens of the "hegemonic masculinity" framework. The concept of hegemonic masculinity serves as a framework for a patriarchal model which constitutes the power struggle between white male colonizers and disenfranchised black men. Patriarchy in this context focuses on the subordination of black slave men to white men who serve as their oppressors. Paul D explains what happened to Halle to Sethe: "[t]he day I came in here. You said they stole your milk. I never knew what it was that messed him up. That was it, I guess. All I knew was that something broke him. Not one of the years of Saturdays, Sundays and nighttime extra never touched him. But whatever he saw going on in that barn that day broke him like a twig" (Morrison 68). The subsequent loss of Halle's sanity strips him of his manhood and robs him of his role as a father and husband. The complication of Halle's self-realization as Other is indicative of the ultimate variance of hegemonic masculinities between social classes and race relations.

Ironically, Sethe emphatically challenges Halle's manhood despite the alluded truncation of his masculinity at the blunt of his oppressors. Sethe exclaims, "[h]e saw them boys do that to me and let them keep breathing air? He saw? He saw? He saw?" (69). Here Sethe identifies

Halle's marginalized masculinity as a black man and it angered her. Halle's cowardice behavior impels Sethe, the oppressed, to inadvertently challenge her husband's normative portrayal of marginalized masculinity. Sethe expects Halle to exert his sense of masculinity by protecting her. Halle though exercises restraint because as a slave he has no control. The narrator states, "[i]nto the empty space of not knowing about Halle—a space sometimes colored with righteous resentment at what could have been his cowardice, or stupidity or bad luck . . ." (95). He cannot stand up to schoolteacher's nephew because as a slave he would be viewed as being rebellious. There would be consequences for such behavior. Halle's response then was calculating although he lost Sethe's respect. It is evident that Sethe does not regard the men who stole her milk as men. She explicitly refers to them as boys. This implies that Sethe rejects the white men's conformity to hegemonic class and racial structures. Paul D however, sympathizes with Halle and states, "“Hey! Hey! Listen up. Let me tell you something. 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). Paul D understands and relates to Halle's condition because he also has to suppress his manhood in order to survive in a world that demeans and undermines his existence as a black man. Nevertheless, he still identifies Halle as a man though in a non-standard sense. He simplifies what a man isn't. The metaphorical reference of a man being compared to an ax signifies the ways in which the collective view the black man as other. This subversion of non-white masculinity disrupts the patriarchal order; however, in Halle's sense, the subversion asserts his masculinity internally though in a distorted, non-conforming way. Similarly, Paul D's performance of conformity also perpetuates the black man's subversive masculinity by means of subsistence.

The effects of slavery emasculate black male figures and essentially cause them to appropriate subversive masculinities. Halle was neither physically nor mentally free. Paul D asserts that “[a] man ain’t a goddamn ax, choppin’ and hackin,’ bustin’ every minute of the day. Things get to him. Things he can’t chop down ‘cause they inside. Halle never just run off and leave you, Sethe, You see, you are the only one of us who made it out that night” (83). Paul D tries to comfort Sethe after she learns that Halle had witnessed her assault and had lost his mind. Paul D speaks of the inner turmoil that Halle had to endure. Perhaps Paul D was expressing his own inner turmoil as well. He describes the polarity of what it means to be a man and what being a man isn’t. The ax metaphor suggests that although a man is stereotypically known for being strong, not showing fear, and not crying. A man is a creature who also has sensibilities that are generally attributed to a woman. The inner things that he cannot cut down are those intangible things that he struggles with. The narrator states, “she [Sethe] had claimed herself. Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another” (95). Sethe reclaims herself as she revisits the memories of her past.

The male figure Halle is seemingly absent in the novel since the reader only hears his story which created a space or a blank slate. The reader gets to know Halle through his subversive performativity which compensates for his lack of dialogue. This duality of silence and performance is significant to the psychological trauma that was incited upon the “men” on the plantation. Halle could not articulate his manhood outwardly but inwardly, he serves as the underdog– the epitome of what it means to be a man. In “Conversations with Toni Morrison” Marsha Darling asserts that “Halle we know by his works, by his deeds, and yet he’s so important to these four children, to Sethe, to Baby Suggs. And we don’t meet him” (250). Morrison responds that “[t]he loss of that man to his mother, to his wife, to his children, to his

friends, is a serious loss and the reader has to feel it, you can't feel it if he's in there. He has to not be there" (Darling 250). Traumatized by the life of being a slave at the Sweet Home plantation, Sethe flees to a free territory— in Cincinnati, Ohio. She yearns for her husband but Halle's presence might not have made a difference because he would have been forced to suppress his innate masculinity as a man—a black man. When asked about Halle, Morrison states, "[y]ou couldn't ask for a stronger man. He sold his life so that the women and the children could be free" (Darling 250). He ultimately ostracizes himself in order to perpetuate a sense of (non-hegemonic) subverted masculinity as a black man.

Non-Hegemonic Masculinity

Paul D shares the anecdote of Mister, the rooster with Sethe as a testament to the loss of his identity, his manhood, and his dignity:

. . . [it] was me took him out the shell, you know. He'd a died if it hadn't been for me. The hen had walked on off with all the hatched peeps trailing behind her. There was this one open and here come Mister, bad feet and all. I watched that son a bitch grow up and whup everything in the yard. . . . Mister, he looked so . . . free. Better than me. Stronger, tougher. Son a bitch couldn't even get out the shell by hisself but he was still king and I was Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. Even if you cooked him you'd be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn't no way I'd ever be Paul D again, living or dead. Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub. (72)

The implication of Mister's divergent masculinity performance is evident and is deemed superior to that of the slave. Paul D claims that schoolteacher had changed him and contends that Mister

was freer than he was. Ironically, the rooster named Mister connotes some degree of masculinity. Paul D's resistance to the iron bit that was placed in his mouth and his later rebellion ultimately leads to his freedom.

This is synonymous with the quintessential Western heroic figure who fights vigilantly for his freedom at all costs. Paul D essentially represents a heroic figure because he fights against the very hegemonic structures that forged his identity of "Other." The fight against this othering also places him as the underdog. Morrison employs Joseph Campbell's hero's journey. Zachary Hamby explains, that "[y]ears of research lead Campbell to discover several basic stages that almost every hero-quest goes through (no matter what culture the myth is a part of). He calls this common structure "the monomyth" (1). Both Sixo and Paul D exemplify heroic qualities within the hero's journey framework although in a non-conforming context. For example, Sixo is criticized for his lack of remorse when Mr. Garner died. In fact, he is the first to insinuate that Mr. Garner did not die of natural causes but is rather murdered. The narrator states, "[a]fter Mr. Garner died with a hole in his ear that Mrs. Garner said was an exploded ear drum brought on by stroke and Sixo said was gunpowder, everything they touched was looked on as stealing" (190). Schoolteacher is pleased by Mrs. Garner's naiveté but becomes vindictive toward Sixo. Sixo's brilliance is also evident when he later informs Paul D that Mrs. Garner is poisoned.

Schoolteacher exerts his power as more masculine through his vindictive acts of violence. He took the guns away from the slaves since the gun is a symbol of power. In taking away the guns, schoolteacher thinks he can strip away their manhood and hence evoking an air of full dominion over them. This act is also a reminder to the slaves of their subservience and of their position in the hegemonic structure. Schoolteacher's alleged murder of Mr. and Mrs. Garner shows the power struggle within the white hegemonic structure. Mr. Garner signifies that the

slaves are men by simply calling them men and by giving them guns but ironically, they are not allowed to leave the confines of the Sweet Home plantation. Schoolteacher does not agree with Mr. Garner's treatment of the men because it challenges his manhood. In order to appease himself, he commits murder in order for him to align himself with the white hegemonic structure. The text states, "Schoolteacher took away the guns from the Sweet Home men . . ." (190). The gun is a phallic symbol. In taking the gun away, schoolteacher believes that he also takes away whatever power Mr. Garner bestowed upon them. For schoolteacher, it serves as a symbol of power which should only be attributed to white men.

Sixo's portrayal of being astute appeals to Paul D's consciousness. Paul D reflects upon Sixo's ambitions after he was hung and somehow set out to emulate him. Morrison inverts the literary structure of what it means to be a slave and a man by ascribing qualities of the everyday man as heroic attributes. Augustina E. Dzregah asserts that "Sixo's courage even in the face of death is remarkable and makes us aware that a person can be heroic even in terrible circumstances. After his escape plan is detected, Sixo's song and fearless attitude indicate that he is a man that the slavers can never break" (495). Subsequently, the hegemonic structure is also configured through an inverted lens which positions white masculinities as vile, violent and governed by control and power while black masculinities exert their masculinities through self-assuredness. Examples of this is evident through Sixo's character who showed wit when he came and gave schoolteacher a rational answer as to why he stole the shoat. Sixo retorts: "Improving your property, sir" (190). This shows Sixo's intelligence and schoolteacher's superior disposition is threatened. The narrator states that schoolteacher exerts his power by "beat[ing] him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definer –not the defined" (190). Sixo also studies the train and contemplates the idea of fleeing the plantation. Sixo also

doesn't fully assimilate himself into the practices of the western culture. The supernatural aid stage of the hero's journey is evident when Sixo asks the wind to guide him to find the Thirty-Mile woman. Although Paul D is aware that he is a slave, he became complacent and accepts his fate as being subordinate to the whites. It wasn't until Sixo informs him of life beyond the confines of Sweet Home, that he forges his impending identity as a free man.

Sixo serves as Paul D's ally even in his death. Dzregah contends that "Sixo's life and the manner of his death also serve as a source of inspiration for Paul D as he attempts to forge a more viable manhood for himself" (495-496). Paul D escaped being hung based on the value that was placed upon him. He narrowly escapes from prison and overcomes many obstacles in his quest for freedom and to regain his manhood. Paul D's heroism is not prescribed as the quintessential heroic archetype but his sense of valor and self-assuredness is indicative of his subverted sense of manhood. *Beloved* engages in discourse from a psychological, historical, socio-political, and literary perspective which address what it means to be a slave and a man.

Paul D performs an alternative form of masculinity by means of survival. Paul D's desire to alienate his emotions and dark memories are derivative of the effects of his resistance against marginalization. The anecdote of the rooster is a testament to the idea that Paul D is hyper-aware of identity as-the other. This self-awareness is evident when he compares the freedom of the rooster to himself and views himself from the perspective of how schoolteacher sees him. However, Paul D wrestles with his own identity as a man. "Paul D reflects later that even though slave society denies a person power and authority, things that signify manhood in slave society, Sixo's African-inspired masculinity causes him to display resolve, courage and autonomy over his own life" (495). Paul D contends that in order to truly be a man, he had to be free. As a result, he never gave up the quest for freedom.

The slaves struggle to re-claim their masculinities as black men as they wrestle against the systematic structures of racism. Kang asserts that “Mister’s story anthropomorphizes the American dream, but with a gangland flavor. The Napoleonic leader of almost fifty hens, this diminutive creature morphs into a grotesquely endowed fighter able to ““whup everything in the yard”” (848). Mister is commodified as a (product) food source which is essential for man’s sustenance while Paul D’s labor is being commodified for capitalistic gain.

The male bird, rooster or the colloquial “cock,” contextually serves as a phallic symbol. Morrison employs anthropomorphism to tease out the disenfranchisement of black male figures. Paul D inverts the position of the rooster as subordinate to himself. The cock represents a symbolic figure of masculine power and vitality. Paul D does not equate himself with such a caliber of masculinity because he isn’t free physically or mentally. The struggle to emancipate himself from the metaphorical tight constraints of mental slavery is seemingly more detrimental than the physical state of slavery.

The rooster serves as a symbol of patriarchy although it does not operate within the hegemonic structure. The rooster then serves as a form of deviant masculinity that challenges Paul D’s manhood subconsciously. Nancy Kang asserts that “[w]hen Paul D imagines the mocking smile of Mister, the imperious and significantly colored rooster who has the leisure time to sunbathe while Paul labors, he directs a misandric impulse towards his own compromised position as a black male slave, subordinate even to an animal” (848). This mental conditioning of the mind is what Sixo tires so desperately to resist. However, Paul D appears to have a heightened sense of awareness about his own condition as a slave but he harnesses that self-awareness by comparing himself to an animal. This shows the psychological trauma that he had to endure. Consequently, he sees himself as subhuman.

It is ironic that when he learns about the infanticide, he accuses Sethe of acting like an animal and ostracizes her, “you got two feet, Sethe, not four” (165). Paul D describes Sethe’s behavior as animalistic which is similar to schoolteacher’s perpetuation of an inferiority complex toward the Sweet Home men— asserting his hegemonic masculinity. Schoolteacher manipulated Paul D’s intellect to the point that he felt inferior to even the rooster. Schoolteacher serves as the epitome of white supremacy— he only sees them as commodified properties of value. The narrator states:

[d]eferring to his slaves' opinions did not deprive him of authority or power. It was schoolteacher who taught them otherwise. A truth that waved like a scarecrow in rye: they were only Sweet Home men at Sweet Home. One step off that ground and they were trespassers among the human race. Watchdogs without teeth; steer bulls without horns; gelded workhorses whose neigh and whinny could not be translated into a language responsible humans spoke. (146)

Schoolteacher emasculates the men to the point that they were no better than animals despite Mr. Garner’s effort to have the slaves view themselves as men which in turn affords them a sense of masculinity although in a marginalized sense. Schoolteacher’s idea of “truth” is convoluted because ideally it is a deterrent for “runaways” which would ultimately improve his productivity. The men are being exploited for economical gain.

Re-imaging Black Male Masculinity

The practice of muting was used to “silence” male slaves that were deemed rebellious. Placing a bit on the mouth is an assault on the body. Utilizing language is an essential mode of communication. The taking away of the liberty of speaking is unconstitutional and subhuman.

The barring of Paul D's mouth with a bit drives him crazy for a "wildness . . . shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back. Days after it was taken out, goose fat was rubbed on corners of the mouth but nothing to soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of his eye" (84). This is an example of the emasculation of black men. This act is the taking away of the "voice" and ultimately mangling language since the bit impedes one's speech since the lips are being stretched and are being weighed down with a heavy object.

Halle suppresses his feelings internally and goes mad, while Paul D locks away his feelings in a tin tobacco box. Paul D describes his heart as a tin tobacco box. It is where he locks away his feelings and memories. He travels to 124 and learns that Baby Suggs has died and is intent on checking in on Sethe. He maintains a poised composure and assures her that he had been traveling for eighteen years. Paul D manages to alienate himself from his emotions in order to escape the psychological traumas that he had to endure. However, once he engages himself in the unconscionable act of having a sexual encounter with Beloved, the tin tobacco box is similar to the Pandora's box archetype which breaks open and his heart glows red. He was confident that he would lock away his dark memories and emotions but again he had to experience trauma.

The actual sequence of events in Morrison's narrative supports the ideology of the disenfranchised black men during a period of history to reconstruct African American history and to inform our present and future. Mae G. Henderson sees the novel as a historical site that attempts to "fill in the blanks that the slave narratives left" (81). Henderson challenges the authenticity of slave narratives primarily because the narratives were managed by white publishers. The memory of the "collective" – the slaves on the Sweet Home plantation, serves as a testament to the atrocities that were brought against blacks.

For instance, Caroline Rody notes that *Beloved* is “a historical novel; Morrison rewrites the life of the historical figure Margaret Garner” (93). Margaret Garner is a figure who is represented through Sethe’s character. The narrative brings to light not only the “othering” of blacks but the gender identity anomalies that come about as a result. The notion of Du Boisian double consciousness prescribed in *The Souls of Black Folk* mirrors the individual and collective memories that are represented in *Beloved* in the mapping of appropriation of white hegemonic masculinities by blacks in order to appease the masses. This sense of double consciousness among Sweet Home men is represented from a variety of perspectives throughout the narrative.

Sixo refuses to appropriate Western culture and suppress his African roots. First, he tries to appease his white audience namely, schoolteacher by accepting that he is a slave and responds to being called a nigger but inwardly, he resists being debased as subhuman. Internally, through the process of self-realization, he views himself as a man. This is revealed through his actions, the narrator reveals that “Sixo started watching the sky. He was the only one who crept at night and Halle said that’s how he learned about the train” (197). Sixo operates as a thinker and he is not complacent. He is strategic and plans his escape route from the Sweet Home plantation. He puts up resistance by using his intelligence as faculty by means of asserting his sense of masculinity and humanity. Another evidence of Sixo naturalistic intelligence is through a memory revealed by the narrator, “Sixo say freedom is that way. A whole train is going and if we can get there, don’t need to be no buy-out” (197). Morrison highlights various examples of Sixo’s manifestation of critical thinking and reason. Sixo’s intelligence is not inferior to the white man’s which schoolteacher tries to measure.

Sixo’s intellect predisposes him to propel into silent activism which ultimately led to being tied to the stakes. Sixo’s intelligence is realized and schoolteacher is angry that he defied

his authority. Sixo's self-assurance is evident when he remains to be unfettered by his impending death. The narrator describes the scene as: "his feet are cooking and the cloth of his trousers smokes. He laughs. Something is funny. Paul D guesses what it is when Sixo interrupts his laughter to call out, "Seven-O! Seven-O!" (226). Sixo called out Seven-O as he was being burnt alive because his secret woman –Thirty-Mile Woman is conceived with her son and she manages to escape. Even then, Sixo held on to every ounce of his masculinity—in civil disobedience.

The historic context of the novel *Beloved* gives an account of colonized blacks appropriating marginalized or otherwise subordinate masculinities as nominative performances while the white figures – Mr. Garner and schoolteacher execute hegemonic control. In the text *Playing in the Dark Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Morrison states, "[f]or excellent reasons of state— because European sources of cultural hegemony were dispersed but not yet valorized in the new country— the process of organizing American coherence through a distancing Africanism became the operative mode of a new cultural hegemony" (8). Morrison asserts that a new cultural hegemony is birthed through the unification of the black American and the African. Africanism is described as "distancing" with the implication the slave trade robbed blacks of their cultural heritage and they inherently assimilated themselves in the American culture.

The idea of "blackness" is conceptualized as either African American or African; however, African diasporic movements create a sense of duality which develops a sense of cultural hegemony. Morrison points out that " in the absence of real knowledge or open-minded inquiry about Africans and African Americans, under the pressures of ideological and imperialistic rationales for subjugation, an American brand of Africanism emerged . . ." (8). This

notion of the duality between the African and African American identities are indicative of Du Bois's idea of double consciousness. The "new cultural hegemony" that Morrison speaks of becomes performative in the absence of white hegemonic masculinities affording blacks a sense of autonomy over their own identities and culture. In *Beloved*, Paul D is marginalized as Other; however, he was conscious of his suppressed identity as a man. He has a heightened awareness of Mr. Garner's perspective of him since he represents a hegemonic structure that is depicted through his masculinity. Secondly, Mr. Garner allows Halle to work on weekends and buys his mother's freedom. He later prohibits Halle from doing any more work outside of Sweet Home which prevents him from purchasing the rest of his family's freedom. They then concoct a plan to escape which ultimately leads to their demise. Paul A is hanged and Sixo is burned to the stake. Mr. Garner has a desire to control through vicious means for economic gain and power. Mr. Garner's performance as the "benevolent" oppressor is represented by allowing his slaves to handle guns and calling them "men" in the midst of his colleagues. His colleagues contend that slaves will never be men. However, this shows a form of brainwashing that is perpetuated through seemingly amicable means.

Conclusion

In conclusion, blacks perpetuate marginalized and subordinate masculinities that are consistent outside of the hegemonic nucleus through a variety of performances. Morrison states, "[t]here are . . . powerful and persuasive attempts to analyze the origin and fabrication of racism itself, contesting the assumption that it is an inevitable, permanent, and eternal part of all social landscapes" (11). The implication is that hegemonic structures are based on the foundation of racism. From a socialistic standpoint, Du Bois theorizes methods by which black men can

reclaim their masculinity and argues that “the talented tenth” could bring about social change through subversive performances which include, but are not limited to the commodification of language. This ideology is a call for integration which would ultimately deconstruct the hegemonic structure. Marcus Garvey; however, suggests a more African diasporic “separate but equal” approach. He asserts that the deviation from salient hegemonic masculinities includes white men operating as colonizers. As a result, there would be a socio-political shift between the ruling class and the ruling culture—essentially bringing an end to patriarchal rule, which would ultimately give black masculinities a sense of autonomy. A homogenous hegemonic structure proposes a crisis of masculinity. The gender role expectations that were prescribed to the black male figures on the Sweet Home Plantation in Morrison’s *Beloved* are restrictive and as a result, promote dysfunctional behavior. Du Bois contends that these prescriptions under the scope of white hegemonic structures must be changed.

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