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African-American Manhood: Obstacles, Reactions and Reconciliation in *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Dutchman* and *Blues for Mister Charlie*

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African-American Manhood: Obstacles, Reactions and Reconciliation in *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Dutchman* and *Blues for Mister Charlie*

By

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ABSTRACT

The present work intends to analyze the plays *A Raisin in the Sun*, by Lorraine Hansberry, *Dutchman*, by Amiri Baraka, and *Blues for Mister Charlie*, by James Baldwin, regarding the male protagonists' performance of the African-American masculinity. Written during the height of the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s in the United States, these plays carry a strong critique of mainstream American society, which permits a clearer perception of the obstacles, reactions, and healing processes involved in the African-American man's construction of his manhood.

To substantiate this research, it was first necessary to revisit Gender Studies to localize the problems of the construction of masculinity along with the issue of hegemonic masculinities. Subjugated masculinities, such as African American's, can be comprehended only after observing the patterns related to the shaping of white hegemonic masculinities in American society.

The construction of masculinity of what the characters: Walter Jr., Clay and Richard undergo exemplifies the theory used to observe and describe the obstacles and reactions African-American men face to reach their manhood. In their own way, each character confronts similar obstacles, as well as reacts to them likewise, displaying a pattern of African-American men's obstacles and reactions involved in the construction of black manhood. In all three plays, the process is painful to the characters in which the pain inflicted upon them is sometimes only extinguished by their death. However, it is in the healing process that the most paradoxical aspect of this construction is highlighted. It is through the mending and bonding support offered

by their women that black men are finally able to reach their maturity as men and overcome their problems.

RESUMO

Este trabalho pretende analisar as peças *A Raisin in the Sun*, de Lorraine Hansberry, *Dutchman*, de Amiri Baraka, e *Blues for Mister Charlie*, de James Baldwin, concernente a performance da masculinidade afro-americana de seus protagonistas homens. Escritas no ápice dos Movimentos dos Direitos Civis da década de sessenta nos Estados Unidos, estas peças carregam uma crítica forte sobre a sociedade americana em geral, o que permite uma percepção mais clara dos obstáculos, reações e conciliação envolvidos na construção da maturidade masculina do homem afro-americano.

Para fundamentar esta pesquisa foi necessário revisitar os estudos de gênero para localizar os problemas da construção de masculinidade referente à questão das masculinidades hegemônicas. Somente após a observação dos padrões relativos às delimitações das masculinidades hegemônicas dos brancos na sociedade americana é que as masculinidades subjugadas, assim como a dos afro-americanos, podem ser delimitadas e compreendidas.

A construção de masculinidades a que os personagens Walter Jr., Clay e Richard se submetem exemplificam a teoria usada na observação e descrição dos obstáculos e reações que os homens afro-americanos encaram para alcançar sua maturidade como homens. Cada personagem, a sua maneira, confronta obstáculos semelhantes, assim como reage a eles de forma similar, ilustrando um padrão para os obstáculos e reações dos homens afro-americanos na construção da masculinidade negra. Além disso, o processo é doloroso para os personagens nas três peças, e a dor causada, muitas vezes, só cessa com a morte. Não obstante, é no processo de cura das feridas que se evidencia o aspecto mais paradoxal, pois é justamente no suporte

oferecido pela figura feminina de suas mulheres, que eles finalmente alcançam sua maturidade como homens.

We Real Cool

The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool", 1960

INTRODUCTION

Africa and its population have played a fundamental role in the construction of contemporary Western society. The slave trade was responsible for entangling the triangle: Africa, Europe and the Americas¹, and its people, from slavery up to modern days. On the one hand, the European legacy cannot be denied in either the Americas or Africa in view of its imposing politics during colonialism and neocolonialism. On the other, Africa has also influenced Western society, for its heritage can be seen in culture, cuisine, religious beliefs, people's physical traits, among other aspects. In English speaking America, African heritage has also served as a way to distinguish those who descend from former slaves, and their culture, from mainstream white society, as exemplified by the Jim Crow politics of the “one-drop” rule.

The construction of African-American identity is a special object of study, since black² people face challenges that are not common to white Americans. The African-American man specially faces the construction of his manhood, which, more than his own masculinity, also includes a variety of concepts such as construction of his self-image, his social positioning, his achievements during adulthood, and his maturity as a man. The study in this area enhances the understanding of the African-American man in relation to American society as a whole, as well as in relation to their own African-American neighborhoods and households.

Rooted deep inside American society, the model of hegemonic masculinity is often seen as true manhood. Hegemony is the power that pressures society to affirm a

1 In this thesis, Americas, with an “s”, refers to the entire continent, meaning, North, Central, and South Americas. Whenever America is applied, it is used as a synonym of the United States of America.

2 In this thesis, the word “black” will be used interchangeably to “African American” without any difference or pejorative connotation.

certain imposed model (Bob Connell 61; McLeod 221-22). By presuming that there is just one type of masculinity, though, it is assumed “that American culture is universally lived and understood the same by all American inhabitants” (Jackson II 738), taking for granted several aspects involved in cultural construction including: social behavior, habits and institutions, religion, class, sexuality, and especially important here, race and ethnicity. Taking into account that African Americans have come from a distinct social context and have undergone different historical experiences in relation to an European-centered society, African-American men experience a different formation of their surrounding social structure and, consequently, of themselves, including their manhood. To understand the situation of the African-American individual within American society, and, for that matter, of African-American art and literature, the elucidation of some concepts dealing with diaspora are necessary.

Relying on its unique role in American society, a mix of mainstream white American assumptions and African traditions, African-American identity is a hybrid construct that is reflected in literature. Identity, understood in view of Stuart Hall's “Who Needs Identity?,” is centered in the opposition between power and exclusion. One only builds his/her identity by differing from the Other (4). Accordingly, the construction of identity given within the dual struggle between oppressors and oppressed happens toward “a vision of the world divided between the white man and the Other” (Boehmer 235). The Other, namely, the one who is oppressed, tries to cope with the standards imposed by the oppressor as a model to be followed. Consequently, middle-class white (European ancestry) heterosexual male is the model; identity is mainly constructed when subjects embody characteristics opposing the ones considered standard, taken for granted as characterizing “human being's” features. It is from this standpoint that African Americans

look for their identity, especially as a consequence of the slavery institution and racial segregation period, in which racial culture was highly emphasized.

Although African slaves did not come to the United States from the same religious/ethnic group, making it impossible to classify them as a unified group sharing the same cultural memory, African American are considered one of the biggest diasporic subjects, together with the Jewish Diaspora, for they have passed on their heritage and culture through generations, thereby keeping alive their own traditions (Chaliand xv). Indeed, two major points need to be elucidated regarding this matter. First, most African slaves came from Western Africa; so when an African background is called upon by African Americans, the reference mostly traces back to former Yoruba nations that correspond to contemporary countries such as Ghana and Nigeria (Majors and Billson 57). However, it is worthy noticing that African slaves do not exclusively descend from Yoruba peoples, they do actually also come from other ethnic groups, as for instance the Bantu. Secondly, even though not all slaves shared the same cultural traditions and background when in Africa, once they set foot in the United States they created their own communal cultural environment within plantations to fight and endure white subjugation, and to pass on their legacy to their descendants. This shared past of slavery and historical heritage are responsible for shaping African Americans as a diasporic group.

Furthermore, when I mention the construction of an African-American identity, I take into account the fact that the Middle Passage served as a tool to erase African slaves' identities so they could be easily controlled to fulfill the white man's intents toward them. The Africa which African-Americans look up to to construct their identity, apart from the traditions they indeed brought with them from different regions of the continent, is actually an Africa of the mind. It is an Africa created by their own imaginary that black

slaves, and modern African-Americans, believe to be their heritage and the place of their “true” ancestors. Therefore, it is difficult to trace a place in Africa where African-Americans belong, for their imaginary Africa exists only from their positioning as African diaspora. The African-American culture, as mentioned above, began with African slaves during slavery as consequence of its social segregation and ordeals, and developed and passed on to build what is African-American culture today. It is from this standpoint that I discuss the construction of the African-American manhood in the plays that compose the corpus of this research.

As mentioned previously, identity is the result of differing oneself, or a communal identity, from the hegemonic pattern. Thus, it is tendentious to assert that one is African American for not embodying white American characteristics. This is actually controversial to assert in light of the fact that one is neither just African nor just American, but African American, the hybrid of both identities, the “in-between” figure. According to Homi Bhabha, the hybrid subject is not a third subject resulting from the encounter of two cultures and identities, but it is in fact the presence of the dominant culture “tainted” by the oppressed one. The hybrid identity is constructed, therefore, as a result of the influence and resistance of an oppressed culture from its hegemonic counterpart (86-9).

The function of perpetuating cultural knowledge plays an important role in the construction of African Americans' hybrid subject, since this traditional awareness is the African part of their African-American persona. This African part lives side by side with the American share of black identity, indeed affirming one position as not entirely American. It is not only in one's color that identity and difference exist, but in the cultural duality this person stands on (Martins 26). Consequently, being African American is

above all being American, but pursuing identity in differentiation, in their own peculiarities.

The struggle an African American subject lives, I would say, results from the positioning of oneself “in-between” cultures, similarly to Silviano Santiago understanding of the Latin American discourse. According to him, the “in-between” discourse happens when the oppressed are able to write and place themselves in a position of submission but at the same time of insurrection and rebellion (26).

Along similar lines, the concept of signifying, in Henry Gates Jr.'s words, plays the double meaning game in everyday African-American discourse (*The Blackness* 903). Signifying helps African Americans to cope with reality by creating several layers of meaning within their discourse. Still according to Gates Jr., signifying, being brought from African traditions of storytelling, is based on the idea of tricksters, normally represented by the symbol of a monkey, who, in order to fulfill its desires, tricks the other animals in the jungle (*The Blackness* 904). The image of the monkey is often a portrait of the mystical being *Esu*, who is recurrently “translated” in the African American imaginary across the three Americas – especially in the Caribbean, South America, and Louisiana – as the image of “*Exu* in Brazil, *Echu-Elegua* in Cuba, *Papa Legba* in the pantheon of the *loa* of *Vaudou* in Haiti, and *Papa La Bas* in the *loa* of *Hoodoo* the United States” (*The Blackness* 904). This mythological god is the African counterpart of the Greek god Hermes, who connects the world of the gods to the human world. Similarly, *Esu*, as a connection between worlds and the figure of the trickster, plays with the double-consciousness of the African discourse (*The Blackness* 905). Brought from the Yoruba traditions of storytelling and transplanted to the United States, this discourse, filled with double meanings and with the presence of the character of the trickster, can be

seen, nowadays, in African-American street culture, such as the oral games of *playing the dozen*; musical culture, such as rap; and, previously, especially in plantation oral tradition, such as the *spirituals*, which were sang in order to mask hidden messages to trick white slave owners (Martins 61; Gates Jr., *Figures in Black* 236).

Apart from the African traditional strategies exemplified above which embodied the doubleness of the African-American persona, it is drama that carries mostly the several levels of cognition within the black discourse (Martins 61). Its performance and theatricality are fundamental aspects of black tradition and culture (Martins 53).

To this matter, literature has always played a strong role in African-American cultural identity, both as a weapon against oppressive society, and as a tool for raising awareness about the problems within African-American communities. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, in their *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, describe the curious and distinguished origins of African-American literature in relation to the African diaspora and the Western world:

In the history of the world's great literatures, few traditions have origins as curious as that created by African slaves and ex-slaves writing in the English language in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. In the stubbornly durable history of human slavery, it was only the black slaves in England and in the United States who created a genre of literature that, at once, testified against their captors and bore witness to the urge to be free and literate, to embrace the European Enlightenment's dream of reason and the American Enlightenment's dream of civil liberty, wedded together glorious in a great republic of letters. (xxxvii)

Therefore, African-American literature has been special in the sense that it keeps the tradition of African art and denounces the problems mainstream society brings to black people through oppression. However, it also embraces the language of the oppressor, and thus their aims of freedom and literacy. This mix of goals creates the unique characteristics of the African-American Literature, which is distinguished from other literary traditions. Moreover, for African Americans, literature has been used as a means of black affirmation and resistance (Martins 48). It was used to prove to mainstream society their level of reasoning, and create a new stand within literature which voiced their unique concerns, and distinguished them from other Western literatures (Gates Jr., "Introduction" 12).

Throughout history, African-American literature has always served as criticism to African-American people's problems and reality, and as a mechanism for reflexion regarding these issues (Gates Jr., and McKay 49). Especially in the Civil Rights Movements, during the 1960s, black people urged for a change on how African Americans were treated and seen. Therefore, the literature in this period played a key role in denouncing their major issues (Gates Jr., and McKay 1837).

Among African-American men's major issues, their construction of manhood has always been a fundamental problem. The duality in the construction of African-American identity can be seen in many of its areas, but most of them are not as complex as masculinity. Black masculinity is not only constructed in view of white American models, but it also respects African distinctiveness. To pursue the analysis of the construction of African-American masculine identity, it is vital to first understand the concept of masculinity and manhood in a universal level. Yet, there is no more viable

tool to exemplify and mirror social patterns and behaviors than literature, especially drama; that is why its role is crucial in African-American culture.

For that matter, drama is a decisive part of Yoruba civilization and culture, from which most African-Americans descend (Majors and Billson 57). Yoruba tradition in drama is the result of religious beliefs and practices interwoven with everyday oral tradition (Reis 200). Therefore, African slaves, with Yoruba background, brought to the United States these traditions and incorporated/hybridized them with European ones, creating what is nowadays African-American drama.

Leda M. Martins affirms that black culture is in itself theatrical (51; 53). African Americans have in their essence a signifying strategy that is due to their enslavement and subjugation (53). Moreover, African Americans were also able to appropriate from white traditions and use them in order to mock and confront their oppressors (63). Plays were used to reflect reality and criticize it at the same time, even though a white audience would not understand its critique (65). Through their use of metaphors and double meaning, plays could pass a hidden message to black communities, while also avoiding being censured by the white masses. Comprehending black drama is understanding the roots of theatricality in African traditions, and its interrelation constructed through the association of audience and performance, which creates a collective catharsis and reflection, raising awareness of communal problems and issues (65). The connection and interaction between audience and play enlightens both communal problems and identity through mirroring, which allows the black community to understand better their problems and fight back oppression (Martins 86). Moreover, drama is especially crucial for debating black people's problems because it shows more than a portrait of the issues

addressed, but also their metapicture, that is, plays “reflect the face of black male identity not so much *as it is*, but *as it is prejudicially seen*” (Wallace 21).

Under the slavery institution and its legacy, black people were often denied any artistic and literary expression in the United States. Although drama is perceived as a traditional part of African culture, it was a recurrently weak genre in African-American culture until the 1960s (Gates Jr., and McKay 960). Up until then, black people were represented by white people wearing black makeup on stage (commonly coal), and therefore often ridiculed and stereotyped (Martins 45; 63). Historically, mainstream plays represented black people according to stereotypes – such as Uncle Toms and Mommies, or as violent sexual beasts. It aimed in making comedy of black people to the amusement of the white audiences (Harris xi). Black drama came specially at this point to create a reverse criticism, for its caricatures of black people, painted in black faces, served as a way to counter-criticize the way white society portrayed them (Martins 63). It was only with the performance of the milestone play *A Raisin in the Sun* that African-American drama took a more prominent political role in American society (Gates Jr., and McKay 1365).

The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s was a turning point in the representation of black aesthetics; it presented mainstream society with a different view of African-American culture not biased by Euro-centered ideals. Due to the rupturing view of the arts in this decade, several playwrights influenced and changed completely how drama has been written and performed until the present days. Harris presents us with the name of major playwrights during the Civil Rights Movement and their legacy for art and the study of black culture:

Informed by black people's quest for freedom throughout their history in America, and specifically by Civil Rights activity of the mid-twentieth century, Hansberry, Childress, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Ntozake Shange, Pearl Cleage, August Wilson, George Wolfe, Suzan-Lori Parks, and others cracked the mirror of history to reveal black folks who were not always grinning the Sambo grin. They explore possibilities for black people to define themselves without assuming the stereotypical portrayals of history, but by transforming that history into meaningful fuel for forward progress. (xi)

For representing a special moment of change and revolution in the African-American conscience, I decided to analyze the plays *A Raisin in the Sun* written by Lorraine Hansberry; *Dutchman*, by Amiri Baraka; and *Blues for Mister Charlie*, by James Baldwin, in view of the way they deal and represent the black manhood. Also, for the authors' status and role among black activists and playwrights during the 1960s, and their resulting influence in today's African-American art, motivated this choice. Moreover, besides the groundbreaking significance of the plays to African-American literature, each play is set in a different background which provides this analysis with different locations in the United States of America. Two of the plays are set in the North, *A Raisin in the Sun*, in Southside Chicago, and *Dutchman*, in a New York subway; and one of them, *Blues for Mister Charlie*, is set in a small town in Mississippi, in the South.

*A Raisin in the Sun*³ produced in 1959, and debuting the revolutionary theater scenery of the 60s, was praised for its irreverence of portraying the American dream as also possible for African-American citizens (Martins 72). The play tells the story of a

3 From now on, to avoid long repetition, I will also refer to *A Raisin in the Sun* as just *A Raisin*.

poor to lower middle-class black family, the Youngers, composed by Lena (Mama), who is the head of household, Walter Lee Jr. (also called just Walter) and Beneatha, Lena's children, Ruth, Walter Jr.'s wife, and Travis, their son. Besides, there are the family's acquaintances Joseph Asagai and George Murchison, Beneatha's suitors, and Bobo and Willy, Walter's business partners and friends. The plot revolves around the arrival of Walter Lee Senior's insurance money, which is way overdue after his death, and the family's perspective toward the impact of such amount of money on their lives. Among the main issues discussed in the play, Walter's construction of his manhood and his constant craving for power within his household and for money to build his own business, a liquor store, are most highlighted. Moreover, the family's need of moving away from the apartment which symbolizes their lack of success in thriving in life is always in the background of every action taken during the play.

In the analysis of this play, I will attain myself to the issue of manhood construction specially based on the character of Walter Jr., but not exclusively. This play, written by a black female writer, was praised by black male writers such as Amiri Baraka, who, being a radical African-American civil activist, surprisingly saw in the play a good reflection of black American's issues in modern society (Luter 23).

The relevance of this play to African-American literary tradition, and renovation of this latter, is due to the fact that *A Raisin* had the longest run on Broadway among all the plays written by African-American playwrights up to that time (Gates Jr., and McKay 1365). It became the mark of African-American drama, like Shakespearean plays are to English language drama. The play was also a landmark to the upcoming Civil Rights Movement that changed African Americans' lives up to contemporaneity. The play represents all the dilemmas that were part of black communities at that time, such as the

return to African (Yoruba) cultures, cultural nationalism, a fresh look at religion, and the reflection upon African heritage, all of that specially linked to the international scenario of the Negritude Movement related to the end of neocolonialism (Gates Jr., and McKay 1366).

Moreover, the recent look at the integrationist reality at that time, and the critique upon it within the play, makes the historical relevance of *A Raisin* even stronger in the literary scene. Its way of bringing to surface this problem of integration makes other playwrights such as Amiri Baraka and James Baldwin also address this issue, triggering their own critique upon it (Gates Jr., and McKay 1366).

Baraka's *Dutchman*, written in 1964, and Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie*⁴, also written in the same year, bring, indeed, their share of contribution to the Civil Rights Movement. Written in the middle of its whirlwind, both plays reflect the basic problems imposed on African-American communities.

James Baldwin is known for his complex and paradoxical writing (Clark 30). For this reason, Baldwin's works, especially his plays, make a debatable frame of African-American dilemmas. Meredith M. Malburne, in "No Blues for Mister Henry", explains my choice for Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* to compose the corpus of this analysis. The construction of the character Richard, and his recurrent pursuit of his masculinity, makes this play as a unique example of the construction of manhood in African-American literature. Malburne also presents us with the fact that Richard and his complex identity formation have not been given the necessary attention in previous studies (39-40).

4 From now on, to avoid long repetition, I will also refer to *Blues for Mister Charlie* as just *Blues*.

The play tells the story of a recently killed Richard Henry, a young black man who runs away from his backward Southern small town, in search of his dreams, to a big city in the North, but returns to it as a consequence of his failures up North. The play takes place in this Southern small town. The plot revolves around the conflict within this segregated town, which is divided in Whitetown and Blacktown, especially as a consequence of Lyle Britten's trial for having killed Richard. Among the main issues approached by *Blues*, the construction of masculinity by both Richard and his father, Meridian Henry, as well as by the black male population in general, is central in regard of the way white citizens construct their masculinity and consequently psychologically emasculate black men in their construction. Among the key characters there are also Mother Henry, both Richard's grandmother and Meridian's mother, Juanita, both Richard's girlfriend and Meridian's love interest, Jo Britten, Lyle's wife, and Parnell James, both Lyle's and Meridian's white friend.

Blues brings to surface many contemporary problems black people face, and were especially facing in American society during the 1960s. First of all, black people were dealing with the assimilation and the migration to the North. Baldwin, as an activist, saw the matter of integration as death to the African-American culture (Gates Jr., and McKay 1366). He posits in his plays that both black and white Americans should live their lives and culture separately but bearing the same rights. Moreover, in *Blues*, he also presents the issue of the migration to North, and that it presents its own new challenges to the black young man (Coleman 92). Richard, the main character, represents this black young generation who migrates up North, gets frustrated and psychologically castrated while up there, and comes back to the South trying to re-adapt to its reality. Both he and his father, Meridian, will be the center of my analysis in *Blues*.

As a play that deals with African-American manhood, I want to examine what type of pressure the lead male character, Richard Henry, and his father, Meridian, undergo, how they perform masculinity in return to such pressure, and the implications their performances generate. My focus is also at establishing which role the “Cool Pose” and the culture of violence play in the mask Richard wears to perform his masculine role.

The selection of *Dutchman* is based on former studies which emphasize its importance to African-American culture and literature. According to Matthew Luter in “*Dutchman's* Signifyin(g) Subway: How Amiri Baraka Takes Ralph Ellison Underground,” African-American literary tradition often writes back and dialogs with previous literary texts written by the black community (23). By endorsing Henry Gates concept of signifying, Luter discusses the way Baraka's *Dutchman* dialogs with Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. However, it not only relates to the latter novel by appropriating the subway symbol, but *Dutchman* also re-signifies a series of concepts discussed by African-American literature preceding it. Luter also points that Baraka viewed Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* as an insubordinate depiction of the American dream appropriated by black society. Such comment was surprising, though, because being an activist from the Civil Rights of the 60s, Baraka was disputably able to understand the political stand of Hansberry's work despite the fact that the play was often perceived as assimilationist (23). Moreover, it is worthy noticing that by the time Hansberry wrote *A Raisin in the Sun*, other playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, for instance, had already shown that the American dream was an illusion.

Amiri Baraka is considered one of the most revolutionary black writers in the 60s, predominantly related to the violent era of the Civil Rights Movement (Gates Jr., and McKay 1367). The Black Arts of the 60s, which claimed for a more “politically engaged

expression as a corollary to the new black spirit of the decade” (Gates Jr., and McKay 1837), for a return to African roots, and to an Africa of the mind, as a guide, inspiration, and sense of origins to the African-American persona to differ themselves from white Americans (Gates Jr., and McKay 1841-2), pulsed strongly in Baraka's work.

LeRoi Jones, later re-named Amiri Baraka, was the one who took the Revolutionary Theater of the 1960s to its core. He saw the potential in drama to change the *status quo* (Martins 75-6). The Revolutionary Theater of the 60s aimed at metaphorically and directly contesting mainstream ideals, and to raise a black conscience, a way of standing front society not unlike contemporary black drama (Martins 76). Baraka saw black theater as a “political theater,” exemplified through Clay's actions and lines in *Dutchman* (Martins 187). Therefore, the plays during the revolutionary period of the 60s were mainly tools of commitment and engaged actions (Martins 73).

Dutchman shows us the incidents in the last day of life of a young black man, Clay Williams, during his ride on a New York subway. While on the train, he meets Lula, an attractive white young lady, who insinuates herself to him throughout their whole conversation. She sexually instigates him, teases him, taunts him, and recurrently addresses the issues of his sexuality, masculinity, and assimilation, as well as his looking middle-class. Her frequently pressuring upon him brings to surface all of his restrained anger which results in his death by her hands.

This play was the new model for the Black Aesthetic of the decade (Gates Jr., and McKay 184). It embodied the principle of a simple language that could be spread within the black communities and have its message simply understood by the African-American population (Gates Jr., and McKay 1839-49). Baraka's characters propose a revolution in the way black people act and face the problems in the everyday United States (Gates Jr.,

and McKay 1842). Therefore, I aim at analyzing the way Clay, *Dutchman's* protagonist, goes through his own revolution, as a metaphor for an African-American revolution of thoughts, in order to pursue his manhood.

Therefore, this thesis will help to understand the struggles African-American men undergo to perform their masculinities and achieve manhood, and consequently to understand deeper the context and plot of the plays in its corpus. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that besides being an analysis of specific characters in literature, this representation is also connected to a specific moment in time, the Civil Right Movement during the 1960s.

In order to fulfill this research, first I will revisit the theory regarding gender and masculinity for the understanding of what masculinity and manhood are, and how they are shaped in mainstream American society. Thereafter, I will be able to shape and discuss the specific issues within the African-American community and persona regarding manhood construction. Chapter one will bear this theoretical review regarding gender construction.

The next chapter will analyze the specific African-American issues in pursuing manhood dealing with African-American men's obstacles and reactions in American society. This analysis will focus on the situations the black male characters in the plays undergo as a way to exemplify my statement.

The third chapter will use examples from the plays to provide possible venues in which their male characters can reconcile with themselves and their community in order to achieve their manhood. Moreover, the role of black women, to this matter, will be highlighted, as they are an important agent for reconciliation and male bonding.

I expect, by the end of this thesis, to be able to demonstrate that a certain pre-established share of obstacles and reactions are involved in the construction of African-American men's manhood. In addition, I want to present that black women have a vital role in healing the African-American man, as well as in providing possible solutions to the perception of African-American manhood. All of that guided by the principle that the plays from the 60s had a singular role in raising awareness within black communities regarding their own problems, and in fighting back white oppression in the United States of America.

CHAPTER ONE – DEFINING MASCULINITIES: A REVIEW OF THE
PLURALISTIC CONCEPT OF MASCULINITIES

The questions put to him! All right. Do you accept this answer? I am a man. A *man!* I tried to help my son become a man. But manhood is a dangerous pursuit, here. And that pursuit undid him because of *your* guns, *your* hoses, *your* dogs, *your* judges, *your* law-makers, *your* folly, *your* pride, *your* cruelty, *your* cowardice, *your* money, *your* chain gangs, and *your* churches! Did you think it would endure forever? that we would pay for *your* ease forever?

– Meridian in James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie*

Introduction

Although sex and gender have in the past been academically discussed as the same entity, scholars such as Judith Butler and Teresa de Lauretis, in *Undoing Gender* and “The Technology of Gender,” respectively, propose that both concepts are not the same, neither are they a biological given. Butler and de Lauretis state that gender and sex are social constructs, influenced by social rules and patterns (Butler 1; de Lauretis 717). Originated from Feminist theories, gender studies started as a branch that now flourishes as a separate theoretical field. Andrew P. Smiler suggests, in his work “Introduction to Manifestations of Masculinity,” that the study of gender was thought, at first, to be intertwined with women's studies, resulting in the study of gender construction primarily in view of a Feminist perspective (585). To this matter, Sócrates Nolasco adds that “feminism shows up as a reflexive reference to men who are reassessing their masculine condition, as well as to groups that face discrimination in regard to race and sexual orientation, like black men and homosexuals” (20).⁵ Consequently, there was no emphasis on masculinity itself, being it primely approached in a single manner: as a hegemonic oppressing force in the femininity/masculinity binary. However, oppressed groups of men aiming at redefining their masculinities also looked up to feminism as a guide for their own agendas.

Nevertheless, more recent works emphasize the study of masculinities in a pluralistic way. The understanding that hegemonic masculinity is only one among many other forms of masculinity allows the concept to be fully analyzed and not shallowly

⁵ Translation to English by this author. The original is as it follows: “O feminismo aparece como referência reflexiva para os homens que estão revendo a condição masculina, como também para os grupos que sofrem discriminação racial e de escolha sexual, como é o caso de negros e homossexuais” (Nolasco 20).

observed. The connection and interference of factors such as social hierarchy and power, sex, age, location, and historical time are key elements in the construction of masculinities.

This chapter analyzes the different social, cultural, behavioral and political aspects which influence the construction of masculinities, and point out their different impact in this process. The purpose here is to construct the concept of masculinities that will lead to an understanding of African-American masculinity. Then, the concept will be applied to the analysis of the plays that form the corpus of this thesis.

1.1 Defining and Differing Gender from Sex

Masculinity, as mentioned previously, was formerly analyzed as part of a major field, Gender Studies. To better understand the concept of masculinity, it is imperative to discuss not only the concept of gender, but also that of “sex,” understood as a social and cultural construct. To fulfill this intent, what follows is a conceptual review of the academic definition of gender and sex.

First of all, gender is a key element in psychology, politics, and sociology, for it connects one's internal world with the external world. Accordingly, gender is not only crucial to the construction of individualization among people, but it is also related to the construction and reinforcement of culture within a given society (W. Boechat 15). Therefore, the concept of gender should not be reduced to the same as sex. By doing so, it has posed problems to feminist scholars to the understanding of femininity, as it does, currently, to the redefinition of the concept of masculinities (Cardoso 67).

In *Undoing Gender*, Butler describes gender as socially constructed, being influenced by categories such as sex, ethnicity and race, and performance (3). Similarly, authors, Stephen Gregg of “‘Strange Longing’ and ‘Horror’ in *Robinson Crusoe*” and Christine Delphy of “Rethinking Sex and Gender” observe that gender performance is strictly connected to sexuality, class, and race (Gregg 37-38; Delphy 52). The idea of performance enforces the disruption between the former belief of gender as a biological feature from the contemporary view, which perceives it as social construct, the product of social interactions and behavioral patterns, as an accomplishment (West and Zimmerman 42). According to Liz Stanley, in her work “Should ‘Sex’ Really Be ‘Gender’ – Or ‘Gender’ Really Be ‘Sex’?,” “‘gender’ is conceptualised in much of social science theory and research as a set of ‘internalised’ traits, attributes, behaviours, and so forth” (37). Consequently, not only gender results from our social interaction, but it is also the outcome of features we externalize and internalize.

Likewise, Stanley explores the social constructionists' conceptualization that “‘gender’, social sex and psychological sex . . . are all entirely matters of upbringing” (35), an approach that highlights the importance of former social interactions in children's life, as well as the early instillation of social values. The interactions and reinforcement of beliefs in early life will reinforce social norms and ideologies. To this matter, that is, to a scholastic understanding of the concept of gender, the variants society, culture, and social norms are usually those reflecting Jewish – Hellenic – Christian – Gnostic backgrounds (Cardoso 67).

Other scholars seem to disagree with the notion that gender and sex are a matter of social construction. In this case, sex differences appear to be a given consensus. Candance West and Don H. Zimmerman, contradicting Butler's proposal, affirm that “sex

is a determination made through application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males. The criteria for classification can be genitalia at birth or chromosomal typing before birth, and they do not necessarily agree with one another” (42-3). Although they bring into focus the item “sexual organ” back to the characterization of gender and sex, it is worth observing that even taking genitalia as a factor to define gender and sex, it is still based on social agreement and consensus.

Opposing West and Zimmerman's concept of gender and sex differences based on genitalia, Liz Stanley points out that, “women and men are not always nor emphatically distinguished from one another either biologically or psychologically” (34). By this affirmation, she enforces that like gender, sex is a social construct as well. It is exemplified by the observation of people like Drag Queens, Transvestites, and Transsexuals, who are socially taken as having, or always have had, a certain “sexual organ” but in actuality embody another. It is often common for Intersex or Transsex individuals to be socially mistaken for the sex they enact, and their choice of social display (e.g. clothes, makeup, hair style choices), opposing to the sex their genitalia reveal. It is a confirmation that sex goes much further than a definition of chromosomes and biological sex organs (West and Zimmerman 44).

As shown thus far, the concepts of both gender and sex are academically controversial. Besides the problems of defining both terms, there are also debates about the hierarchical relation of one term upon the other. For Christine Delphy, akin to Materialist Feminism, observing sex outside the biological sphere is a consequence of the Marxist hierarchical view upon gender. For her, by accounting for gender opposition between masculinity and femininity it is possible to establish sex differences. Therefore, gender is the one responsible for defining sex (Jackson and Scott, *Gender* 18). On the

other hand, there are those like Liz Stanley, who considers both concepts to be just one, proposing that “sex should be considered gender” (35). Furthermore, there are those like Matthew Pateman, who claim for a less graded positioning. Pateman asserts that differentiation between the two is necessary to define and analyze them, and that one influences – and defines – the other with the same tension (168).

It is, then, controversial, if not impossible, to try establishing a hierarchical order between both gender and sex. Both concepts interrelate constantly by defining and redefining their signification within a given society. Siding with the idea that gender and sex are social constructs based on performance, it is now possible to come to terms with the conceptualization of the terms masculinity and femininity.

Unlike Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott's notion that gender differences result in masculine and feminine categories (*Gender* 16), Christine Delphy and Judith Butler observe that gender and the binary masculinity and femininity do not establish a straight, one-to-one, connection (Butler 10; Delphy 19). Similar to the relation between sex and gender, it is also complicated to establish a direct connection between gender and masculinity and femininity. The influence gender has over masculinity and femininity and vice-versa is also complex to trace. That said, it is then possible to see masculinity and femininity also as social constructs, much like sex and gender. To support this idea, it can be seen that both concepts of gender and masculinity change among cultures as well as over time within the same culture (Butler 10; Jackson and Scott, “Becoming” 270).

Yet, there are scholars such as A. Samuels, who go as far as proposing that gender should be “in-defined.” Though it would destabilize our notion of society and its categories and stereotypes, it would permit changes regarding sexual policies and actual

prejudices, so a better, more egalitarian society both to men and women could be built (W. Boechat, “Arquétipos” 15).

After looking at the complex categorization of gender and sex, and the binary masculinity and femininity, it is now possible to focus on the theoretical construction of masculinities and their characteristics. One should bear in mind that all these categories are social constructs and as such, vary from culture, time, and location. What follows is a brief historical review of the urge to define masculinities and create a field of study separated from feminism.

1.2 Localizing the Study of Masculinities

In the introduction to *O Masculino em Questão* (*The Masculine into Question*), Walter Boechat comments on the lack of studies about men in comparison to studies about women (7). He says that although women have been on the spotlight in gender studies, there is a need for the construction of a new man, as there was a need for the reinvention of the woman, in view of the changing social values of gender and culture (8). Furthermore, he points out that, historically, men have always been connected with notions of power and competition, and consequently, often regarded as the role model to be looked after (9). Therefore, it has taken a long time for the concept of “man” to be considered worth studying. This disparity in time to the realization of this need, in comparison to the early urge for feminine studies, created an unbalance in the hierarchical relation feminine studies have upon the study of masculinities, by favoring feminism.

Antony Rowland, Emma Liggins, and Eriks Uskalis observe that the study of masculinities is fairly recent as a result from being obscured by Feminist studies. Taken for granted for most of the 20th century, masculine aspects can be found in literature from the Renaissance until today (3-4). The fact that men were deemed not worth being studied came from the common belief that men were already the majority of writers, and also held the place of cultural model and power in society. Consequently, masculinity, as it is studied today, is given most of the time within the binary opposition femininity and masculinity; for femininity was usually the focus of study, and masculinity was only tackled by default. For that matter, manhood was historically seen as the difference from boyhood and femininity⁶ (Nye 1944).

In “Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony,” Mimi Schippers discusses R. W. Connell's concept that masculinity is a constant balancing between men and women's daily internal and external influences that causes gender formation (86). Masculinities and femininities come from the externalization of certain features and by the internalization of societal rules that occur throughout people's lives. In the same way, Carrie Paechter says in “Masculine Femininities/Feminine Masculinities: Power, Identities and Gender” that masculinity is the gender relation men and women undergo (254). Therefore, both masculinities and femininities arise from the relation they have between them, and especially by how men and woman embody given characteristics and socially perform their gender.

In psychology, Jung remarks that for individuals to function well in relation to gender, they should present a balance between masculine and feminine (W. Boechat,

⁶ I actually endorse Robert Nye's opinion that the binary masculine/feminine is a problem, and masculinity is much more likely to be established from oppositions among other masculinities (1938). The different forms one can be a man is straightly linked to the concept of masculinities rather than femininities.

“Arquétipos” 13). Nevertheless, Jung believes that the opposition between masculinity and femininity is the representation of the primordial opposition, resulting in all the other binaries for our society. Anyhow, the masculine always relates to – originates from – the superior vector of the binary opposition while the feminine aspects follow under the inferior part of the binary (Cardoso 60). Still, Jung considers that the differences between masculine and feminine do include sex, but they are *not* biological. The sex difference in this case is due to socio-cultural constructs (Cardoso 65-6). To this matter, Jung's view on masculinity and femininity is much more open to changes and interpretation than those which link the concept of sex to biological aspects.

Indeed, Western Jewish/Christian culture tends to associate feminine behaviors and traits to negative attributes, praising everything that is *truly* masculine. An example could be found in the analysis of the following characteristics: the masculine behavior celebrates extroversion, aggression, objectivity, and rationality, while the feminine behavior observes qualities such as patience, tolerance, empathy, and kindness. The characteristics in the first group are praised and celebrated in our culture and society, as opposed to the second group.

Still in the field of psychology/psychoanalysis, Freud considers the masculine and the feminine, within a given society, to be related to established roles; these could be either real or symbolic (Prado 124-25). Moreover, Freud also posits that the concept of both masculinities and femininities is one of the most complicated to define in sciences. It is due to the fact that the concepts in the field are all entangled and their boundaries are not clear cut (de Matos 149).

According to Nolasco, the urge to establish the study of “men” comes from the same urge women had for feminist studies: “. . . the search for autonomy and critical

understanding in relation to the domination which individuals are exposed facing the Western political model” (20).⁷ He calls our attention, however, to the fact that differently from movements that claimed for equality and freedom from oppression – like black movements, feminism, and queer studies – the study of masculinity is much less of a political movement, which, in comparison to these others, is not political at all (20).

The historical questioning of masculinities actually started in the late 17th and early 18th century, in those then developed nations – France and England (Nolasco 21-2). The critical thinking of gender roles were imprinted in much of the literary work of that time, as in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Choderlos de Laclos. In this epistolary novel, the role of men and women is defied by its rebel characters who do not fulfill the normative role of their sex at that time. For example, the Marquise de Merteuil, considered a “precious Frenchwoman,” plays the role of the spinster player, who is always in charge and unattached to others (Nolasco 21). Besides, Danceny, who is taken as a lover by the marquise, is oblivious of the seduction game around him. Both characters embody the opposite normative gender role, questioning its norms.

According to Joseph H. Pleck, the spark for masculine studies, academically, started from the 30s on (1). During the 1970s, the hippie culture was the one which defied sexual inequality (Nolasco 22-3). According to Sócrates Nolasco, it was during this decade that both the United States and England had their first attempt to problematize and rethink the role of men in society, in order to restructure the social order (88). As a consequence of bringing to surface the questioning of masculinities and their stand in

7 Translation to English by this author. The original is as it follows: “. . . é a da busca de autonomia, de crítica à relação de dominação a que os indivíduos estão expostos diante do modelo político do Ocidente” (Nolasco 20).

society, books that dealt with masculinities and their issues ranked top in best seller lists in developed nations such as the United States and Canada during the 1980s (88).

On the other hand, less developed nations, namely, Latin American countries, only developed social researches about masculine subjectivity much later. The first Latin American countries to account for these studies were Argentina and Puerto Rico, which tried to deal with men's emerging needs to rethink their emotional stand and their relation to institutions such as work and family (88).

Therefore, it is crucial to rethink masculinity to deconstruct cultural-historical stereotypes and archetypes around this concept (W. Boechat, "Arquétipos" 15). Across history, much has been culturally lost as consequence of globalization. Yet, considered loss or not, the point is that the referential of what it is to be a man has *changed* (Ulson 72). The changes in contemporary societies have been in fact massive, deep, and quick, celebrating consumerism, technology, and globalization. They have destabilized our basis resulting in fear for the future of society (Ulson 76). Indeed, "ethnic and religious minorities less fit to face the occurred changes, were excluded"⁸ (Ulson 76-7).

After exploring the historical construction of the masculinity field of studies and its need in contemporary society, more profound analysis of the construction of masculinities can be pursued. The contemporary historical moment we have been living for the past couple of decades should be taken into account so construction and deconstruction of the several concepts of masculinities can be revised and categorized. In the next section such work will be further discussed.

8 Translation to English by this author. The original is as it follows: "As minorias étnicas, religiosas e menos preparadas para as transformações ocorridas se viram excluídas" (Ulson 76-7).

1.3 (Un)doing Masculinities

On observing the literature about masculinity, it is impossible not to notice the strong connection this term holds to another concept: manhood. Often times, the terms masculinity and manhood are used interchangeably, as if they were so entangled that it is not possible to distinguish between them. As a matter of fact, the line that distinguishes both terms is fine, and authors such as Judith Butler and bell hooks tend to use the term masculinity rather than manhood, or in fact both interchangeably.

For this matter, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines manhood as “1 [U] qualities such as strength, courage, and sexual power, that people think a man should have . . . 2 [U] the state of being a man and no longer a boy.” The first definition resembles the concept of masculinity itself. Masculinity is defined according to Judith Butler, Bronwyn Davies, Christine Delphy, Stephen Gregg, bell hooks, and others, – and the concept will be analyzed closely right below – as a social construct that comprises the negotiation of different behavioral characteristics related to how to be a man. The concept is also tied to gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. The second definition of manhood goes along with what Stevi Jackson and Sue Scot discuss in “Becoming Gendered,” which defines manhood as the passage from boyhood to adulthood when a man embodies masculine qualities (270). Therefore, I address masculinity as the combination of social behavior characteristics a man should embody to be a full-developed, grown “man,” while manhood as the state one reaches when he encompasses such masculine features. It is worth mentioning that manhood is not a final stage, but it is recurrently renegotiated.

Formerly, the idea that masculinity opposes femininity, as man opposes to woman, comes from mainstream belief instilled by hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony is the power that pressures society to affirm a certain imposed model (B. Connell 61; McLeod 221), hence hegemonic masculinity “function[s] to legitimate the dominant social position of men and women's resultant subordination” (McLeod 222). Although our social values tend to enforce, celebrate, and embrace hegemonic masculinity beliefs (Davies 283), this masculine ideal is not embodied by the majority of the population but rather imposed on them (B. Connell 61). As a consequence, subordinate masculinities, namely, those which do not fit the models of hegemonic society, are confined to peripheral spaces. It is vital to remark that, “we should always talk about plural masculinities rather than a singular, uniform masculinity” (McLeod 221). Therefore, the common sense celebrates hegemonic patterns which support white-heterosexual-patriarchal values, and hegemony subjugates any value that does not fit its categories.

Considering the existence of plural masculinities, some traits are closely related to hegemonic masculinity, while others, not encompassed by the hegemonic model, are to peripheral masculinities. Based on R. W. Connell, Mimi Shippers states that:

masculinity is an identifiable set of practices that occur across space and over time and are taken up and enacted collectively by groups, communities, and societies. Through their recurring enactment over time and space, these practices structure the production and distribution of resources, the distribution of power in the form of authority, cathexis, by which Connell means the social arena of desire and sexuality, and symbolism or the production of meaning and values. (86)

For psychoanalysis, especially in view of Jung's theorization, the idea of “man” (needs to) changes over time, and this is due to cultural alteration, not to the needs of a particular individual (W. Boechat, “Arquétipos” 15). Accordingly, it is presupposed that everyone's psychological state is “tinted” by culture – of a given society – and thus influenced or controlled by it.

MSRI, short for male sex role identity, is the hegemonic/conservative conceptualization of masculinities according to psychology. Pleck asserts that, “the MSRI paradigm holds that the fundamental problem of individual psychological development is establishing a sex role identity” (3). He adds that in our society, “the failure to achieve masculine sex role identity is a major problem in our culture” (4), and it generates negative venting ways that hurt men back. Furthermore, MSRI ensures that we learn our sex role by identification, modeling, and experiencing culture every day, through cognitive learning (19, 68). Thus, sex role identity is guided, according to conservatives, by the series of beliefs dictated by the MSRI. Before moving further into the notions by MSRI, we should take a look at the definition of sex role, as well as the stereotypes and norms that surround it.

Pleck defines sex role as:

the set of behaviors and characteristics widely viewed as (1) typical of women or men (*sex role stereotypes*), and (2) desirable for women or men (*sex role norms*). The behaviors and characteristics comprising sex roles include aspects of personality (traits, dispositions) and social roles (especially activities performed at the job and in the family). In personality, the male role may be characterized as aggressive, achievement

oriented, and emotionally inexpressive. In specific social roles, it may be characterized by such terms as breadwinner, husband, and father. (10-1)

Pleck discusses further that sex and social roles are indeed different. While social roles encompass a set of desirable behaviors and characteristics and can be dictated, sex roles are not only desirable but considered typical, so one can dictate them but also take note of behavioral patterns. Sex roles are a peculiar and more complex type of social rules (10-1).

Therefore, as Pleck presents, defining sex roles involves both social behavior and personality traits. Sex role stereotypes emerge from the common sense views of what these behavior and traits should be for men and women; sex role norms are the ideal behavior and traits for men and women, how they should be and act; sex typing is specific to singular individual according to what traits they embody and how they behave (Pleck 11).⁹

Furthermore, MSRI changes over time, so its hegemonic bases depend on the society and historical moment it is part of. “The MSRI paradigm is, ultimately, a product of its culture. It gives intellectual shape and scientific legitimacy to deep-seated cultural concerns about masculinity and its definition” (Pleck 7).

In a certain way, the MSRI paradigm is so backwards and instilled in our society that it claims that traditional roles are in themselves a positive concept. It claims that traditional sex roles are biologically and psychologically inherent in each person and that society and its rules only serve for them to flourish. The only problem, according to the

⁹ Up to this moment, I actually see no problems with the *definitions* of sex roles and their stereotypes and norms. The problem with the MSRI is the preconceived-squared way it establishes the characteristics and roles connected to masculinities. Yet, applying such concepts not as barriers but as mechanisms for analysis and development of the study of man is helpful.

MSRI, regarding the traditional roles is that many people fail to fit in such categories, but that they are a mandatory part of a healthy sexual development (Pleck 4).¹⁰

In order to fight this paradigm, the sex role strain (SRS) comes into scene. Accordingly, it proposes that:

- 1.* Sex roles are operationally defined by sex role stereotypes and norms.
- 2.* Sex roles are contradictory and inconsistent.
- 3.* The proportion of individuals who violate sex roles is high.
- 4.* Violating sex roles leads to social condemnation.
- 5.* Violating sex roles leads to negative psychological consequences.
- 6.* Actual or imagined violation of sex roles leads individuals to overconform to them.
- 7.* Violating sex roles has more severe consequences for males than females.
- 8.* Certain characteristics prescribed by sex roles are psychologically dysfunctional.
- 9.* Each sex experiences sex role strain in its paid work and family roles.
- 10.* Historical change causes sex role strain. (Pleck 9)

Despite the fact that I support the SRS paradigm, it is necessary that the core of hegemonic masculinity and its characteristics are defined and listed, so that the obstacles

¹⁰ This thought is so absurd that, by saying the problem of traditional sex roles is that many people fail to perform and achieve them, it takes for granted the very fact that for being necessary and positive to men/society, these roles should be of easy performance. It actually is the opposite, very hard to be reached. Moreover, as for being beneficial to men, the balance should weigh much more for positive results than for the contrary. Thus here I inquire: How can something be fundamental and positive to society, and here specifically – men, if it is almost impossible to be reached, therefore only accessible to a small group of individuals? The answer is easy to grasp: *It is not.*

imposed upon all sorts of men can be located. Consequently, it is then possible to discuss conceivable solutions to fight the hegemonic model.

Nevertheless, it is expected that the majority of men endorse and follow the hegemonic patterns. Besides instilling of such concept in their minds throughout life, they support normative characteristics because it is normally easier than opposing sex normative characteristics and suffer its sanctions (Pleck 140).

1.4 Hegemonic Masculinities Traits

Constructing masculinities, as it is discussed in the previous section, is a matter of performance and behavior within a cultural setting. The hegemonic model of masculinities establishes its own series of traits and behaviors that are enforced by a given society. In this regard, reasserting what was said previously, this research deals mostly with Western societies, that is, those reflecting Jewish – Hellenic – Christian – Gnostic backgrounds.

Within Western societies, some of the most common characteristics related to performing masculinities involve the representation of “bodies, dress, patterns of consumption, sexual orientation and vigor, speech and discourse, work, fatherhood, relations with women, and many more besides” (Nye 1944). The hegemonic perception of masculinity also requires “men [to] be emotionally stoic, take risks, seek status, and avoid anything that might be deemed either feminine or homosexual” (Smiler 585). Indeed, subjugating both women – and feminine traits for this matter – and homosexuality are commonly considered two of the most important prerequisites to be a

“man.” The latter, in fact, is often related to embodiment of feminine attributes (Rowland, Liggins and Uskalis 22).

Beyond question, men are coached from childhood to deny everything feminine, deeming it as negative. Nilton Sousa da Silva asseverates that, “it's really common for us to hear social and normative attributions such as: 'A man doesn't cry'. 'A man doesn't play with dolls'. 'This isn't a game for men'. 'A man plays with another man, not with women'. 'A man needs to be a macho' (bully). We could remember here a series of other attributions through time, which socially condition the man”¹¹ (197). Similarly, Sócrates Nolasco attests that the problem with masculinities comes when it is related to the macho stereotype. Based on absolute truths that look at men as always competing and aiming to win, the macho stereotype promotes anti-feminine traits such as never showing their feelings. Thus, it is beneficial that men resign such stereotype (40).

Throughout the history of Western society, some activities have been straightly related to men, such as hunting, warring, and working. Every relation men have had toward their children has to do with working, leaving the mother as the one to provide children with a role model and emotional support (Nolasco 193). Today, however, men tend to take some roles that were previously entrusted only to women, changing the status quo which existed before (Nolasco 194). This change in society asks for further pondering regarding the role of man in contemporaneity.

In “O homem: sua alma, sua 'anima,’” Heloisa Cardoso congregates a series of attributes connected to both femininities and masculinities. These characteristics,

¹¹ Translation to English by this author. The original is as it follows: “É muito comum ouvirmos atribuições sociais e normativas como: “Homem não chora”. “Homem não brinca com bonecas”. “Isso não é brincadeira de homem”. Homem brinca com homem, não com mulheres”. “Homem tem quem[sic] ser macho” (valentão). Poderíamos lembrar aqui uma série de outras atribuições através dos tempos, condicionando o homem socialmente” (da Silva 197).

assembled by common knowledge, can be found in the appendix page for consultation and further details. It is worth remarking that both sides of the binary holds both good and bad attributes, as considered by society.

If we pay attention to the characteristics hegemony relates to manhood, it is possible that we assemble them in three major fields: violence, family, and work. Violence brings together concepts such as war and its consequences; family gathers up aspects related to fatherhood; work, in its turn, garners issues such as power. Traits regarding hypermasculinity can be traced to each of these categories. To systematize this research, further hegemonic traits will be exposed as part of these three major topics.

1.4.1 Violence and the Man

In the book *Genders*, David Glover and Cora Kaplan review the historical perception of masculinity relating it to warfare and the grotesque. As a matter of fact, being a “man” has been connected to both physical violence and war.

Violence brings men back to their primitive instincts, distancing them from the “rational contemporary societies;” acting irrationally distances men from being emotional, which is considered a feminine trait (Rowland, Liggins and Uskalis 28; Reynaud 411). Men are supposed to be “reasonable, more clearly identified with rational activities, and . . . less emotional” (Reynaud 408).

Indeed, the grotesque is accepted as a manly behavior when associated to acts related to war and violence. Nevertheless, when the grotesque is a reflex of the masculine body itself, it is unacceptable. The male body can neither become attractive to the

audience gaze (Rowland, Liggins, and Uskalis 9-11) nor lack the classical balance and control (Reynaud 416-17). It should not be desired or turned into goods for consumption; it is not for the public dominant and subjugating gaze. Male bodies should be “concerned with hardness, aggression and heterosexual performance” (Reynaud 407).

Another violent aspect involved in being a man can be traced historically to the rites of passage. Glauco Ulson mentions that globalization removed the marks people used as a referential for what it is to be a man (72). The shock between cultures is a strong particularity of globalization. In the Americas there are two major examples for this issue: Native Americans and the African diaspora. Until today, both populations struggle with their masculine identity for not being able to fit their prior beliefs to European requisites, causing them anxiety and despair as a result of failing to achieve the standards for manhood.

Before globalization, then, each archaic society had its own rites that marked male maturity. They represented the life cycle itself: life – death – rebirth. This representation stated that the boy died and was reborn into his male adult life as a man. Being a man required these young adults to act according to the rules dictated by hegemonic values that govern their society (Ulson 73-4). Today, such rites of passage are also translated into the culture of street gangs. Young men get involved in this culture to prove their braveness in a way old warriors did. Hunting and warring were major masculine activities (Salles 89). When young men risk their lives to pass their test, and finally became part of the gang, it represents the death of the teenager and the birth of an adult *man* – a warrior.

Besides, the use of guns, nowadays, and of arrows and swords by ancient cultures, symbolized the man's possession of the phallus, the power. According to Freud,

every man sees in himself the triangle: force, power, and phallus (de Matos 151). Other representations of power come by the fathering of children, showing men's virility, especially by impregnating different women (74-5). The dispute for territory and "females" has always been a main trait of masculine behavior, the externalization of competitiveness (de Matos 151).

Masculine traits can be traced in every minor behavior in men's everyday life. Still resulting from behaviors such as hunting and warring, eating habits also help build masculinity. In "'Strange Longing' and 'Horror' in *Robinson Crusoe*," Stephen Gregg affirms that appetite for food affirms men's role as dominant (47). Likewise, in "Men, Meat, and Marriage Models of Masculinity," Jeffery Sobal suggests that, "[d]oing masculinity' means eating like a man" (139). The act of opting to ingest meat rather than vegetables goes back to men's past routine of hunting and butchering, which are considered virile activities.

Violence in men also results in another problem in the construction of masculinities: Hypermasculinity. According to Pleck, it often results in crimes, violence, and repressive social attitudes (24). Although hypermasculinity is the over-exaggeration of masculine features, which is sometimes harmful to society and men themselves, it hides insecurity. Hypermasculinity is thus considered a mask for the embodiment of traits undesired by hegemonic masculinity, therefore being expressed as the exaggeration of desirable traits (Pleck 5, 23; W. Boechat 13-4).

Although dividing characteristics in groups helps out exposing hegemonic masculine traits, it is sometimes impossible to untangle them. The translation of the concept of the warrior figure is a good example. Today, the warrior behavior in man is seen as his working hard to provide for his family. Though it is a behavior that correlates

to power and strength (protection), it also indicates the relation to major fields in men's life such as work and family.

1.4.2 Family, Fatherhood and Patriarchal Power

Often, the notion of both fatherhood and masculinity are mistaken, especially when considering the father figure and the male figure (W. Boechat, *Arquétipos* 16). In a way, this misconception of both terms shows that the idea of being a man results in the idea of being a father. The consequences of this thought prove problematic to man. First, because the two concepts becomes intertwined, and second, because there is much expectation regarding what it means to be a father, culminating in further expectations of what it means to be a man.

It is indisputable that the role of fatherhood is fundamental to the construction of hegemonic masculinity. The image of the father is presented by Walter Boechat as “a source of stability, discipline and order in the family, being possible to extend his command power to all society”¹² (*Arquétipos* 16). This power is so important to man that the very existence of single-mother's homes threatens men's power, for it shows them that women can exercise the same role as men, deeming men as unnecessary to the family's existence (16).

The role of men inside the family sphere is disputable and dependent to the very core of the society they are within. Therefore, if the role of men and women inside a

¹² Translation to English by this author. The original is as it follows: “Este é visto como fonte de estabilidade, disciplina e ordem na família, podendo estender seu poder ordenador para toda a sociedade” (W. Boechat, *Arquétipos* 16).

family is variable, so is the concept of family itself. Family is not a given but a culturally constructed concept and institution (Cardoso 55-6).

According to history, the first families were not monogamous and much less tyrannical. They divided each member's role fairly, including the parents' relation and care to their children (Cardoso 57). Across history, in Jewish, Greek, and Islamic societies, women tended to be valued in different ways such as for being plunder, work and/or sex material, and also for their hospitality. Such positioning resulted in leveling their behavior to match their social positioning (Cardoso 58). As women became progressively more submissive to men in response to their great value, the balance between parents' roles within the family also changed to match that of society in general. Only later in history, after the Industrial Revolution, that women's status changed, for men's physical strength was not a required working trait anymore (Cardoso 58).

According to Paula Boechat, despite comments claiming that the family has become worse over time and has been going through a crisis, it is indeed perfectly well; only its values have changed over time (109-10). It is actually common for the middle-classes and society in general to attack this institution during transition periods (110). As society and its pillars are generally less flexible in relation to changes, for supporting the maintenance of traditional values, the institution of family is, thus, among the most traditional ones (114).

Historically, our society has viewed men as breadwinners and family providers, while women have played the role of housewives and caretakers for the children. In order to be a real *man*, the father was supposed to provide for his family, whatever it took him. Such attitude was prejudicial not only to the man, who needed to do everything by himself and not ask his family for help, but also to his family. Besides wearing out the

man, this structure also kept the father away from his family. Work always came first in this relation (P. Boechat 114).

As society has changed, this model has also tended to change. This normally starts at the individual level but progresses to the entire family system (P. Boechat 114). The decaying pattern is eventually disrupted by giving birth to a more permissive model. Praising pleasure and individuality as its goal, the contemporary family model is based on individualism. As family members tend to focus on their own goals, they seek for their happiness by their own means, sometimes even leading to internal disruptions within the family. It results in a culture of solitude, and a new type of suffering (P. Boechat 115).

The changes in society, however, have resulted in a better balance regarding family roles. The recession in the job market allowed women to go outside their homes and seek for a career, forcing men to adopt women's former roles inside the house. At the same time, women obtained roles such as being the breadwinner and the provider. In this new society, there are no well-defined boundaries of what is considered to be a woman's or man's task, resulting in more flexible families (P. Boechat 115-6).

There is indeed a new problem resulting from these new family models. With the economic recession and women leaving their homes to seek a career, many men feel as though they are not needed as a family member anymore, and thus they leave their homes. As a result, there are much more single-parented families currently, especially mother-oriented. Of course the one responsible for such changes is not the economic sphere alone, but also the fact that society is now more flexible. In contemporaneity, divorce is no longer a taboo as it used to be, leading to more dissolved marriages, so people may search for their happiness outside the wedlock.

As a result of mother-oriented homes, children's egos are the ones which have suffered: they have become more vulnerable and fragile. At such homes, as well as at those in which the father is always at work, the mother symbolizes stability and support, while when there is a father, he symbolizes dynamism and possibility for a change (Bauch-Zimmermann 148). Elisabeth Bauch-Zimmermann adds to this matter that:

the father incarnates the conscience; his realm is the reason and knowledge, the light and sun. In a patriarchal society, the elderly, the fathers, are the ones who rule, legislate and keep the tradition alive. For the child, the father is the thermometer between the exciting outside world and their home. The father's attitude toward work, ambition, success and competition affects and colors the child's attitude, and can both make the child wish or fear growing up. It is the father's strength that gives the child the sense of safety and self-control, as well as it is his authority that helps the child to find out their limits. This is the way the father gives birth to his children.¹³ (Bauch-Zimmermann 148)

The father is the main role model for his children; he is the representation of law, order, and culture. He works as a bridge to connect his children to the outside of their home. As a bridge, though, he can both allow the children to experience the outside world or keep them inside their homes (Fabre 221). The father image is thus fundamental to the

13 Translation to English by this author. The original is as it follows: “O pai encarna a consciência; seu reino é a razão e o conhecimento, a luz e o sol. Numa sociedade patriarcal são os mais velhos, os pais, que governam, legislam e mantêm viva a tradição. Para a criança, o pai é o medidor entre o excitante mundo exterior e o lar. Sua atitude para com o trabalho, a ambição, o sucesso e a competição afeta e colore a atitude da criança, e tanto pode fazê-la desejar crescer como temê-lo. É a força do pai que dá segurança e autoconfiança, assim como é a sua autoridade que ajuda a criança a descobrir seus limites. Esse é o modo pelo qual o pai dá à luz seus filhos” (Bauch-Zimmermann 148).

well-balanced development of children's personality, being that their success directly linked to the father's success as a role model.

The role of men as fathers not only determines their fate but, consequently, the fate of their entire family, influencing their wives, but especially their children's psyche.

1.4.3 Work, the Man's Burden

Men who generally incarnate hegemonic masculinity models are recurrently associated with integrity, work, and power (Rowland, Liggins and Uskalis 24). They are the man of the house, the provider, the one who controls the money, the head of the household and all the members within it (Hartmann 97-101). This masculine need for power, especially over money, elucidates the connection among the study of masculinities, Materialist Feminism, and Marxism. For establishing themselves as a dominant social unity, men need to subjugate others especially by using class and economic power.

Helena Matos presents us with the fact that across history, work has been more than a personal realization and family need, but an affirmation of masculinity (193). It was through work that the man became Man. Other roles taken by men were and are also connected to working, as we have seen previously, mainly through the role of fatherhood and being the head of the household. As it has happened with family roles, the more opened the working field has become and has allied itself with a less conservative society, the more it has allowed men and women to interweave their social roles and their masculine/feminine traits. Today, as it is easier for women to pursue a career, men are

allowed to stay home and take care of their family and also to look for more unconventional types of work.

Nonetheless, men are still caught up in the middle of the capitalist system. According to Ulson, “the typical modern man [is] rationalist, technocrat, mechanist, a robot serving the production of consumer goods¹⁴” (77). This belief of 'the richer the better' is the one responsible for such robotic behavior and men's own enslavement (77).

Moreover, according to Helenice de Carvalho, the fascination men have toward their work is due to their need of an outlet for their failures and deceptions in other fields of their lives (193). Therefore, men take the role of the working figure for several layered reasons in their lives. All of them, however, serve as bonding mechanisms for the construction of masculinities in view of the hegemonic model.

1.5 Undesirable Traits and the Construction of Non-Hegemonic Masculinities

Once the masculine traits connected to hegemony are listed, it is now possible to have an insight of the attributes related to oppressed masculinities. Non-hegemonic masculinities are placed in inferiority and subjugation in relation to hegemonic patterns and their traits are often the opposite of the ones that are gathered by the hegemonic model. These subjugated masculinities create an infinite number of possible manhood constructs by multiple combinations of race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, and other socially influencing characteristics.

14 Translation to English by this author. The original is as it follows: “o típico homem moderno, racionalista, tecnocrata, mecanista, um robô a serviço da produção de bens de consumo” (Ulson 77).

To exemplify oppressed masculinities, there are three groups that can be taken into prospect: Asian Americans, Latinos – Latin Americans, and especially important for this study, African Americans. For comparison purposes, European Americans – white society – can represent the values of hegemonic Western society in general, in contrast to the other three communities mentioned above.

Representing the dominant community, European Americans carry most of the traits desirable by hegemonic models of how to be a “real man.” As a counterpart to white dominant forces, Latin American and Asian immigrants, together with Latinos, Asian Americans and African Americans – U.S. born citizens – face a weakening situation for often occupying low working-class positions, lacking social status, having trouble providing for their families, and being subjugated in regard of their cultural upbringing and behavior.

There are indeed other communities that face a different construction of their masculinities, for example, the gay community. In fact, every community in which men do not fit the patterns of being white, heterosexual, middle-class and a U.S. born citizen faces the possibility of having certain obstacles for their men to construct a positive masculinity front hegemonic society.

Moreover, every new element in the equation adds a new influence to one another. For example, being gay and black adds to each other a new problem, creating a new construction of masculinity. Besides the elements involved in the combination, personal choices also guide such masculine construction.

It is worth mentioning, still, that besides the fact that men from each of the peripheral communities seek for their own model of masculinity, they also look up to

hegemonic models as the ideal for their own construction, a fact which helps increase their problems in achieving a healthy manhood pattern for themselves.

Next, the African-American model of masculinity will be briefly over-viewed so the plays composing this thesis corpus can be fully analyzed.

1.5.1 The Black Man and His Struggle to Find Manhood

African-American men endure one of the most castrating situations in the United States. As discussed by bell hooks in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, deprived from the ideal of manhood which African men celebrated in their tribes back in Africa, African slaves were imposed European-American values which were impossible to be successfully reached (4). Contrasting the standards of men providing for and protecting their families, and looking for good jobs, black men face several problems to find work, and consequently to provide for their family because of economical sanctions (Janey 20-21). As in America “[m]en of color are seldom viewed or portrayed worthy of respect, trust or admiration in the media and society at large” (Janey 24), African Americans end up having a distorted perception of what it is to be a man and to embody masculine traits (Janey 22). The fact that black men face economic issues, like Latino men for instance, places them in the same domestic situation, namely, having their wives as providers for the household. Black men, then, tend to abandon their homes, resulting in single-parented, split-up families – mother centered.

Moreover, as a result from the sanctions black men suffer from mainstream society, bell hooks contends that African-American men react to psychological castration

by acting over sexually, aggressively, and criminally. However, unlike white American society, black men's sexuality places them as commodity, psychologically castrating them. Their violence is looked down the same way their crimes are, and harsh punishments are inflicted upon them (*We Real Cool* 60).

The situation of African-American men and their construction of masculinity are indeed way deeper than presented above. In order to deepen the discussion of their particular case of constructing manhood, and to analyze such masculine ideals in the plays composing this thesis corpus, further characteristics of African-American masculinities are presented in the next chapters followed by a discussion of the plays.

1.6 Conclusion

Hegemonic masculinity is but one possibility among many others regarding social interactions and moral codes. In fact, there are different models of masculinities within the United States of America. However, the hegemonic pattern, as seen, strongly influences the concept of masculinity that the subjugated models carry. Even struggling to stand for themselves, Asian, Hispanic, African-American, and gay men, among others, also endorse the role of the man as the provider, the importance of earning money and being successful – economic and class importance –, the submission and subservience of women to men, as well as the positioning of man as the role model for their children. Therefore, it is possible to notice that, even being models that urge to differ from the hegemonic model, they end up looking up to it and incorporating similar characteristics as their basis.

Social constructs and performance processes, sex, gender, and thus, masculinity are concepts that challenge traditional social perception. Likely to be considered as a consequence of sex and gender, masculinity is a controversial concept that only fairly recently has been able to stand by itself apart from femininity, even though much of its construction is given by the binary differentiation, and subjugation, of feminine traits. Easily recognized, hegemonic masculinity imposes its own universe of traits that a man is supposed to embody to be part of the dominant strand of society. Although not all men embody such traits, the majority of them still endorses patriarchal hegemonic values and subjugates those who cannot achieve them to maintain their hierarchal position. Fighting for freeing themselves from hegemonic forces and for a better place in the hierarchical system, those who are considered to perform subjugated masculinities also end up supporting hegemonic values. Therefore, in their turn, such hegemonic forces indeed pressure them back even tougher, for subordinate men are supposed to be barred from achieving full manhood. This happens because those who are found in the higher places in the hierarchy do not want to lose their position.

It should be noticed that if subjugated minorities praised their own characteristics over hegemonic values, and stopped pursuing such unattainable traits, it would make men's lives easier and more fulfilling, and would disrupt hierarchical structures that also subjugate women in this process. Patriarchy, hegemony, and hierarchy are but social constructs that are validated by people's everyday choices that should be avoided and further discussed so we can reach social balance and equality.

In the next two chapters, by taking into consideration the concepts discussed previously, the African-American construction of masculinities will be further analyzed, and examples that support these propositions are provided by the plays as well as

discussed. Furthermore, the role of women and womanhood will be highlighted as a possible solution for black men's failure in their achievement of manhood in the plays.

CHAPTER TWO – CALL AND RESPONSE: THE PURSUIT OF MANHOOD IN
DUTCHMAN, BLUES FOR MISTER CHARLIE AND A RAISIN IN THE SUN

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
This debt we pay to human guile: With
torn and bleeding hearts we smile, And
mouth with myriad subtleties.
Why should the world be otherwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us while
We wear the mask.
We smile, but, O' great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask.

– Paul Lawrence Dunbar

Introduction

The issue of African-American identity has played a key role in the history of the United States since plantation times. Even from within the oppressive system of that time, former slaves such as Booker T. Washington, William W. Brown, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass have fought to express themselves, especially by learning how to do it through writing. They are considered the pioneers of African-American literature, for they stood up to their masters and to the laws of their time to seek literacy within mainstream society under the risk of being punished. Literature was a powerful tool to fight white oppression, as it raised awareness about the real situation of slaves, as well as it spread political ideas and agendas to help improve their situation in the United States.

Besides all the fighting the African-American communities have undertaken since slavery times, their struggle is still pertinent today. In the history of African-American battles for their rights, perhaps the most important period was the 1960s. Within this period of Civil Rights, the Black Power Movement was key for the re-affirmation of a black identity. Phillip Brian Harper mentions that this movement in the 60s has had a strong influence over the U.S. up to the present days, especially to the African-American communities and their culture (6). Literature, especially the militant genre, has played a key role in critically portraying the obstacles black communities have faced, and their responses to them (Gates Jr., and McKay 49). Furthermore, literature is also responsible to present them with possible solutions for their struggles.

It should not be forgotten, though, as Henry Louis Gates Jr. has remarked, that the attention of mainstream society and culture to the literature of the Other is a rather recent phenomenon (Introduction 2). This contemporary way of dealing with literature written

by the Other allows us to understand literature in its specific context, and to analyze distinct communities in face of their peculiarities and needs. By applying the concepts of literature of the Other from Cultural Studies to the analysis of African-American literature, we notice that this literature connects strongly to the African roots of black people, especially in its form of drama.

Written in the 60s, the plays analyzed in this thesis intend to show black people's major problems in their daily lives. Thus, in this chapter, I aim at analyzing the protagonists in these plays, namely *A Raisin's* Walter Lee Younger Jr., *Dutchman's* Clay Williams, and *Blues'* Richard Henry. However, other male characters that influence and are influenced by the main characters will also be observed. The female characters will be focused on in the next chapter destined to analyze their role for bonding and healing. This chapter is divided in two parts. The first analyzes the obstacles involved in the journey of African-American males in search for their manhood, while the second analyzes their responses to such obstacles. The decision of having both issues in the same chapter, despite the length of their discussion, is due to their symbiotic relationship, for both influence one another and are recurrently intertwined.

PART 1 – Obstacles

Why have you spent so much time trying to kill me? Why are you always trying to cut off *my* cock? You worried about it? Why?

– Richard in James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie*

2.1 Manhood at Risk: The Obstacles African Americans Face

The construction of black masculinity is not an isolated – uninfluenced – event in Western society. Men in American society, black or white, still look up to European models as the standard to shape their masculinities. Kendric Coleman discusses how European standards of masculinities negatively affect the black man in search for his manhood. According to him, black masculine identity is formed and “negotiated in response to social and personal imperatives, responsibilities and problems” (14), problems which play a major role in this construction, since black people have been subjected to oppression and psychological castration for centuries.

Coleman elaborates that, “many black men define their manhood the same as white men do—as breadwinner, provider, procreator, and protector” (2). Richard Majors and Janet Billson add that:

Unlike white men, however, blacks have not had consistent access to the same means to fulfill their dreams of masculinity and success. Many have

become frustrated, angry, embittered, alienated, and impatient. Some have learned to mistrust the words and actions of the dominant culture. (1)

Although many African-American men tend to rely on European values to build their manhood, there are certain aspects that are exclusively performed by black men:

[the] black male [tends] to be more traditional in the way he embraces typical masculine values: aggressiveness, being competitive, being successful at work, protecting his family and self-confidence. But he is also more likely than the white male to place a heavy emphasis on warmth, gentleness, and standing up for his beliefs. (Majors and Billson 33)

Despite their unique masculine characteristics, Black men recurrently search for a model of masculinity shaped by white standards that are difficult to be reached, if not impossible. They are denied access to the most basic requisites to reach these masculinity models, thus also restating white men as the incontestable masculine and patriarchal figure (Coleman 16). bell hooks also reckons to this matter, “that black male identity [is] defined in relation to the stereotype whether by embodying it or seeking to be other than it” (*We Real Cool* xii). Therefore, even though denied access to fulfill their masculine image, black men still conceive their manhood based on European standards.

Coleman uses the Black Masculine Paradigm (BMP) to understand black manhood. The BMP helps to comprehend why black men look up to European standards in spite of their negative impact on their lives, and the mechanisms they employed to reach for their manhood. He describes this concept as:

a construct used to trace historically specific components that inform black masculinity and explores the physical and psychological defensive

strategies employed by black men. . . . power, money, and sex(uality) are located at the core of the BMP, and these social objects are negotiated through politicization, prescribed masculinity and heterosexuality. (iii)

Nevertheless, it is not surprising that by asserting white values as the parameters to follow, African-American men are doomed to fail, for “being male and black has meant being psychologically castrated – rendered impotent in the economic, political, and social arenas that whites have historically dominated” (1). The black man is considered the most endangered “species” in modern society (hooks, *We Real Cool* 89), that is, black men are threatened by all means. Indeed, the very use of the word “species” is considered to be a negative stereotyping of African-American men as beasts (hooks, *We Real Cool* 134).

To sum up, scholars Majors and Billson present an elucidative data about the evils of African Americans living under European standards for building their identity:

the statistics show a clear disadvantage to being born black and male in America: Black males have higher rates than white males on mental disorders, unemployment, poverty, injuries, accidents, infant mortality, morbidity, AIDS, homicide and suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, imprisonment, and criminality; they have poorer incomes, life expectancy, access to health care, and education. We prefer to define these social problems as *social symptoms* of a history of oppression. (12)

After discussing the white American oppression upon black people, and its negative impact on their identity construction as a result of African-Americans looking up to European models, it is now possible to identify and discuss in which obstacles this process results, as well as to comprehend their impact on black men's construction of their masculinity.

2.1.1 Politicization and Stereotyping of the Black Body

After the disruption of slavery, one way white people kept their power and control over African Americans was by stereotyping their identity and behavior, and politicizing their skin color. Coleman defines politicization of the black body as:

the process through which black skin, as a result of continuous historical and contemporary perpetuation of degrading stereotypes, is positioned as inferior by a hegemonic society . . . [it is] the distortion of the image and representation of blackness, rather than an indoctrinating process. . . . through the lens of the dominant society skin color is controlled and defined through stereotypical impressions. But unlike film in a camera, these impressions are not blank but coded with racism to collapse blackness, creating a corrupt gaze of black men. (39)

The plays *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Dutchman* show extensive stereotyping of black people, especially men, through statements coming from white characters.

In *Blues*, the entire plot revolves around a segregated town, in which the white part of the town, Whitetown, fights to cover its members' crimes against the black counterpart of town, Blacktown. Recurrently, Whitetown citizens refer to black people by characteristics of their bodies in a pejorative way. Similarly, Lula, in *Dutchman*, refers to Clay in racist stereotypes, which make references to African-American features; those which were specially over-emphasized and exaggerated to perpetrate in the white mainstream imaginary to denigrate black people. Examples of the stereotyping of the black body, in a negative degree, can be seen in a variety of ways, from “innocent”

descriptions of a body feature, to a stronger politicization of the black body in a much more threatening and diminishing way.

As for “innocent” stereotyping, one repeating occurrence in the two plays is the use of the adjective “liver-lipped.” Relying on a human organ to name the way African Americans' lips are colored, this adjective is pejoratively over-emphasized in mainstream conscience in order to bring down the African Americans' morale. In *Blues*, we can see the example of such use in the following excerpt: “WHITETOWN: That liver-lipped nigger is lying” (Baldwin 102), whereas an example also occurs in *Dutchman* when Lula says: “Clay, you liver-lipped white man” (Baraka 1957). In both cases, though only a characteristic, white people make use of it to derogatorily typify the black body as inferior to that of white people. Besides, in the second example, Lula calls Clay a “white man,” but featuring a “liver-lip.” By stating that, Lula is placing Clay in a much inferior position to that of a white man for bearing black characteristics.

As for the stronger politicization of the black body, the plays present more intricate examples. In *Blues*, surrounding the crime scene, two of the most important aspects regarding manhood are how black people, both men and women, are stereotypically sexualized, and how the relationship between black and white people happens.

The sexual aspect of the relationship between black and white people is a key element in their relation not only as an obstacle posed by white people, but also as a factor for strong responses. It externalizes the imbalanced power relation between blacks and whites. In this play, black men are portrayed as animals and beasts, as exemplified by what Ellis tells Jo:

Mrs. Britten you're married and all the women in this room are married and I know you've seen your husband without no clothes on—but have you seen a nigger without no clothes on? No, I guess you haven't. Well, he ain't like a white man, Mrs. Britten. . . . Mrs. Britten, if you was to be raped by an orang-outang out of the jungle or a *stallion*, couldn't do you no worse than a nigger. You wouldn't be no more good for nobody. I've *seen* it.
(Baldwin 50)

Ellis, a white man, depicts the black man's body as grotesque, accounting for what Phillip Harper discusses that, “the black man historically has been perceived as the bearer of a bestial sexuality, as the savage 'walking phallus' that poses a constant threat to an idealized white womanhood and thus to the whole U.S. social order” (9). Ellis presents the idea that, if a white woman has sex with a black man, who in his opinion has an organ with gigantic animalistic size, she would be tainted and deformed by him to become “no more good for nobody.” By sexualizing the black body, the Whitetown citizens disparage the black men to the level of an object to be consumed, or of an animal which should not mix with human beings.

Further in *Blues*, the distinction between Black and Whitetown regarding the way men convey their sexuality becomes more distinct. As Richard, the lead male character, says, “They [white men] can rape and kill our women and we can't do nothing. But if we touch one of their dried-up, pale-assed women, we get our nuts cut off” (Baldwin 25). Lorenzo also states previously in the play that, “That damn white God that's been lynching us and burning us and castrating us of everything that makes a man a man for all these hundred years” (4). These two statements exemplify the black man’s feeling of psychological emasculation and domination by whites (Gibbs 130). These sentences

introduce the two sides of the relationship between a black man and a white woman and between a white man and a black woman.

As the black body is politicized to the level of a commodity, white people can consume it the way they please. Furthermore, gender also plays its part in the relationship balance, damning women to also serve as objects to men. Therefore, what is seen in the play, as it will be exemplified below, is the white man using both the black and white female bodies, but denying access of black men to the white female body, for commodities are not allowed to have any other commodity.

Similarly, in *Dutchman*, Lula also stereotypes Clay, especially in view of his sexuality. Accused of being assimilationist, Clay is approached by Lula in a subway in New York as she taunts and teases him. From offering herself to him to offending his sexuality, Lula is the representation of mainstream American ideology. Clay's black body is nothing more than a commodity subjected to the white gaze, to be consumed by white people. Politicization of his image occurs through her repeatedly addressing his masculinity by highly sexualizing his "black body." This sexualized view of him is depicted in a range of different ways.

First of all, Lula plays the role of a stalker who follows Clay after seeing him through the subway window. She acts highly sensually to call his attention, and her upfront sexuality is symbolized by her chewing an apple and also by insinuating herself to Clay in the act of offering him the fruit. Furthermore, as they get acquainted with each other, she starts to address his sexuality more overtly by stating the stereotypical way black men should behave sexually, in contrast to the assimilated way she claims him to be acting like: "Clay! You middle-class black bastard. Forget your social-working mother for a few seconds and let's knock stomachs. Clay you liver-lipped white man. You would

be Christian. You ain't no nigger, you're just a dirty white man. Get up, Clay. Dance with me, Clay” (Baraka 1956). In regards to this issue, Keith Clark states that, “society is guilty of phallusizing black men” (63) and hooks adds that white people (men and women) envy and desire their bodies (*We Real Cool* xi). In this environment, black manhood is swapped by black sexualization “[in] this economy of desire, which is anything but equal, the 'hypermasculine black male sexuality' is feminized and tamed by a process of commodification that denies its agency and makes it serve the desires of others, especially white sexual lust” (hooks, *We Real Cool* 79). This construction of the black body is the consequence of the former “image of the Afro-American male as a sexual fiend” (hooks, *We Real Cool* 68); that is, “black males [are] outside the category of human . . . [they are perceived] as animal, beast, other” (hooks, *We Real Cool* 134).

The objectification of African-American men, as well as their stereotyping as sexual beasts, account for both attracting white women, because of the new and exotic, the same way it can cause repulsion (Coleman 61). The two sides of the attraction are exemplified by the way white women act toward Richard in *Blues*. While Northern white women offered themselves to Richard for sexual encounters, even paying him for the sexual adventures at times, Southern white women, as Jo Britten, fear his black body.

The first type of reaction white women have toward the black body is exemplified by both the way Lula acts toward Clay in *Dutchman*, and, as said above, by the actions of the white women with whom Richard slept in *Blues*. By any means, Lula tries to treat Clay as her object of sexual desire; she places him inside of a box, and, in doing so, wants him to fulfill her stereotypical assumptions. She, in the same fashion as white women in *Blues*, is from the North. Embedded in a social extract that allowed assimilation of black people in mainstream society better than the Southern United States,

these women allowed themselves to fantasize about the black body and act on their desire. Lula is really upfront about her sexuality by repeatedly asking Clay to “rub bellies” with her and “knock stomachs.” The same way, the pictures Richard carries with him, from liberal Northern women, are part of a bigger taboo in the South, being used against him in his postmortem trial, mainly for the fact that women in such pictures were not posing in an appropriate way the respectful Southern ladies would be. These Northern women go as far as cheating on their husbands and paying large amounts of money to satisfy their desires as if Richard is no more than a “boy toy.”

RICHARD: I take their money and they love it. Anyway, they ain't got nothing else to do with it. Every one of them's got some piss-assed faggoty white boy on a string somewhere. They go home and marry him, dig, when they can't make it with me no more—but when they want some *loving*, funky, down-home, bring-it-on-here-and-put-it-on-the-table style—
(Baldwin 26)

On the other hand, as exemplified by previous excerpt from *Blues*, when Ellis is talking to Jo about the body of a black man, the black body is proven to be seen in the South as a “sexual beast,” but this time not in a desirable way. Whitetown citizens create this big stereotype and taboo of black men as animals so that their women are forbidden to sleep with Blacktown men. As said previously, both black people, in general, and white women are subject to the white man's will, fulfilling his desires and sanctions. As an insight of this reality, Jo argues that if a white man wants to act on his desire toward a black woman, it would generate no consequences, whereas if the gender was changed, those white ladies would no more bear any respect inside their communities.

The relationship between white men and black women is portrayed in *Blues* as exemplified by Parnell's conversation with Jo: "A lot of the other kids in school used to drive over to niggertown at night to try and find black women. Sometimes they bought them, sometimes they frightened them, sometimes they raped them, and they were proud of it, they talked about it all the time" (Baldwin 62). White men are allowed to sleep with and use black women's body as they please, as long as they do not get attached to them. It is fine to treat them as objects, as animals, to provide them with sexual satisfaction. On the other hand, if it is a white woman with a black man, "[a] white woman who surrenders to a colored man is beneath all human consideration" (Baldwin 112). White women are yet prisoners of sexist social injustice.

In *Dutchman*, the protection of white female virtues is taken to such an extent that, as attested by the tension between Clay and Lula, she not only butchers him, but also requests the passengers to dispose of his body, as if it were a stain to be cleaned out of American society.

Nonetheless, the objectification of the black body for sexual desire or gaze, as well as for the fear and repulsion it can cause, is equally damaging for the African-American man, especially in terms of achieving manhood, as "the sexual objectification of the black male body since slavery has ripped the very fabric of black masculinity" (Coleman 154). Being turned into a commodity, black men take one step back from their humanity, and thus from achieving the same rights as white men.

In a different manner, *A Raisin in the Sun* also presents a sexualized view of the black man, and men in general, in regard to stereotyping his sexual conduct and desires. There are two major moments when it is made explicit. Walter Lee Junior, who could be considered the main character of the play, or at least the main male character, is the son

of Lena, also called Mama, and Beneatha's brother. They all share the same house with Walter's wife, Ruth, and son, Travis. However, he is not the head of the household, but his mother, a fact whose relevance will be discussed further in this thesis.

During a moment of frustration, for not being the head of household, Walter Jr. who seeks for peace in the streets is confronted by his mother as to whether he has a woman (or many) outside the wedlock:

MAMA: It's dangerous, son.

WALTER: What's dangerous?

MAMA: When a man goes outside his home to look for peace. . . . You done found it in some other house?

WALTER: No—there ain't no woman! Why do women always think there's a woman somewhere when a man gets restless. (Hansberry 1795)

By immediately assuming the presence of a woman, the black man is stereotyped as an insatiable sexual beast who can only find peace in a female body. It is worth noticing, though, that gender here is much more at stake than race; the way Lena stereotypes her son is the same way women stereotype their men, treating them as sexually adventurous and insatiable. Likewise, Beneatha has an argument with Asagai, an African man from Nigeria. While he is opening up to her, she accuses him of treating her as “someone's episode in America or . . . one of them!” (Hansberry 1790). She instantly assumes that he does that to every other woman he knows, using his “feelings” as an strategy to seduce them. She also infers that he plans to dispose of her as soon as he is done with his studies in America and goes back to his life in Nigeria. Asagai, however, different from Walter, not only refutes the inference, but as a scholar, he is actually able to recognize the box he

is being placed in. His answer denounces American women's (independent of race) pre-established concepts about men and their sexual behavior:

It's just that every American girl I have known has said that to me. White – black – in this you are all the same. And the same speech, too! . . . It's how you can be sure that the world's most liberated women are not liberated at all. You all talk about it so much! (Hansberry 1791)

Although the previous two examples of sex objectification of men in *A Raisin* are much more connected to gender issues than to racial issues and display a less prejudicial consequence to black men than objectification in *Blues* and *Dutchman*, the same inherent assumption of black people as insatiable sex animals still works for bringing down the black man. The consequences vary depending on the color of the women involved in this relation. When they are white, the black man is bound to suffer. Both Richard and Clay paid with their lives for getting involved with white women. In *A Raisin*, Walter Jr. and Asagai do not suffer any sanctions for they do not get involved with any white woman. However, black women still stereotype them as sexual predators, negatively influencing their morale.

Institutions such as the Media are major agents in the perpetration of stereotypes regarding the black man, the stereotypes of the criminal and the sexual beast being the most common among them (Coleman 33-108; Harper 114; Gause 26). None of them, indeed, make the task of flourishing in American society any easier for African Americans. Television news, newspapers, magazines, among other vehicles of the media, frequently bring attention to crimes involving violence and/or sex exercised by African Americans, spreading the sentiment that they are constantly a threat (Gause 26).

Deemed as potentially dangerous, black men have problems to improve themselves with regards to class, as well as to have access to goods such as education, justice, and health, as do alike material ones. Kendrick Coleman points out that intuitions are not color blind; much to the contrary, he states, “black men in particular need to equip themselves with tools that allow them to navigate within American social institutions in order to increase social and economic mobility” (14).

As a consequence of institutional slavery, black people were denied to be part of most mainstream institutions. By keeping those who are not part of them, for instance African Americans, excluded from their privileges, such institution and their members can maintain and reinforce their power and influence (Coleman 44). Regarding institutionalization and exclusion of the black figure:

blacks in general have been thrust into primarily white social institutions . . . Most of these institutions have a hegemonic base and design and have paid little or no attention to the conditioning of African-Americans. Many African-Americans have proven that they can adapt to and benefit from these institutions, but many more would if the base of these institutions were redesigned with diversity in mind. (Coleman 13-14)

Both Walter Jr., in *A Raisin*, and Richard, in *Blues*, are examples of black people's lack of access to social and economic mobility. Walter Jr.'s major reason for restlessness is his not being able to succeed and provide for his family. Working as a driver, Walter is unable to perceive any possibility of improvement and ascension; he is trapped by institutional racism that prevents him from achieving the freedom to try and be whoever he wants to be professionally. In addition, Richard is also a victim of black oppression even though he leaves the South and moves up North. He is unable to find a job or any

lucrative opportunities other than those which stereotype the black man, in his situation being a male prostitute; “like Southern Blacks, Urban Blacks become locked in a spiraling world of decay. It is here that this decay creates and I locate the beginnings of black on black crime” (Coleman 64).

Crime and institutions of justice are side-by-side when it comes to preventing the African-American man to prosper. By repeatedly being caught by police officers for crimes they have not committed and subsequently being found convicted by the legal system, black men lose their beliefs in law and justice and start to fear justice figures such as judges and police officers, for they stand as their enemy. It is not surprising that news of white people committing crimes are taken as a shock, at the same time that black men are taken as the most probable people to be guilty of a crime, often being mistakenly convicted (Coleman 56; 20-1).

The trial conducted in the last act of *Blues* provides us with examples with which it is possible to prove the pressure inflicted by the twisted justice system to find the black man guilty. Every time The State is questioning one of the black witnesses, it tries to place more guilt upon the black characters than there is, even by using black stereotypes against Richard and the other blacks who are testifying. There are examples in the event of each of the black characters questioning by The State.

When interrogating Lorenzo, The State infers that all the reasons he presents for the argument between Richard and Lyle are lies; it does not believe that the reason for the discussion at Lyle's shop was the issue of providing change for the twenty-five-cents coke, and neither in Richard's sobriety. Moreover, The State keeps calling the judge's attention to enforce the oath under which Lorenzo was, which also occurs during Meridian's questioning: “THE STATE: Your Honor, will you instruct the witness that he is

under oath, that this is a court of law, and that it is a serious matter to be held in contempt of court!” (Baldwin 92), regarding Lorenzo; and “THE STATE: Your Honor, will you instruct the witness that he is on the witness stand, not I, and that he must answer the questions put to him!” (Baldwin 103), when Meridian is questioned by The State. By doubting the veracity of their words, The State reinforces the stereotype of black people as liars and not reliable. Besides, when interrogating Juanita, The State tries to invalidate her statements by bringing up disconnected events from her life, so her connection to Richard could be questioned. In Mother Henry's questioning, the problem was due to The State treating her with fake formality during the trial, while in reality white people treated her as any other black person in their daily interaction, disrespectfully and inferiorly, as exemplified by her statement: “No white man never called my husband Mister, neither, not as long as he lived. Ain't no white man never called *me* Mrs. Henry before today. I had to get a grandson killed for that” (Baldwin 100). Furthermore, questioning Meridian, The State condemns his use of the church to spread equality values among its congregation members, blaming this positioning as the one which has influenced Richard's behavior: “THE STATE: You are not in the pulpit now. I am suggesting that you are responsible—directly responsible!— for your son's tragic fate” (Baldwin 102). Furthermore, The State also implies that Meridian and Juanita were having an affair, promoting the stereotype of black people as promiscuous and sexually active: “THE STATE: What is your relationship to the your, so-called student, Miss Juanita Harmon? . . . You are nothing more than old friends? . . . You have been celibate since the death of your wife?” (Baldwin 103). This is also reinstated by The State's assumption that Richard and Meridian have already discussed women at one point or another in their father-son

relationship: “THE STATE: You never discussed women?” (Baldwin 104). Indeed, the State would not get away with this attitude if it were toward the white population.

Furthermore, the passage that should be indeed highlighted in relation to the sexual stereotyping of the black body can be found in one of The State's assertions when questioning Father Meridian: “And yet, you, a Christian minister, dare to bring us this tissue of lies in defense of a known pimp, dope addict, and rapist! You are yourself so eaten up by race hatred that no word can be believed” (Baldwin 104-5). In this affirmation, The State, which was supposed to provide equal rights and judgment to all races and ethnic groups in America, outrageously reaffirms a series of stereotypes regarding the black male. Pimp, drug addict, and rapist are all labels which contribute to these characteristics to become truly part of black men, and for some, use them as a mechanism to get back at mainstream society for perpetuating these stereotypes. As well, The State even calls Father Henry a liar, sustaining the ideology of black people as traitors and dangerous to the white society. The State, which was supposed to be neutral and equal to every citizen in the United States regardless, ends up spreading the wrong image of black people through its positioning as authority.

On the contrary, The State goes soft when questioning the white witnesses, placing Lyle, the real guilty figure, in an untouchable baseline. When the State questions his wife Jo, for instance, they induce her to criminalize Richard more than it was indeed true. Jo portrays him as a drunkard and a sexual pervert:

He said all kinds of things, dirty things, like—well—just like . . . he might have met [me] on a street corner and wanted—wanted to—for a night! And I was scared. . . He acted like he was drunk or crazy or maybe he was under the influence of that dope. I never knew nobody to be *drunk* and act like

him. His eyes was just going and he acted like he had a fire in his belly.

(Baldwin 83-4)

As a matter of fact, she mistakes his language and cool pose for a sexual assault and roughness toward her; she sees him according to the concept of black men as criminals and sexual beasts: “. . . he pushed himself against me, real close and hard—and, oh, he was just like an animal, I could—smell him! And he tried to kiss me, he kept whispering these awful, filthy things and I got scared, I yelled for Lyle!” (Baldwin 84). Moreover, she lies to the Justice System without even being considered suspicious, when she states to have been with Lyle at home, when in actuality he was butchering Richard at the time:

COUNSEL FOR THE BEREAVED: In an earlier statement, several months ago, you stated that your husband had spent that night at the store. You now state that he came in before one o'clock and went to sleep at once. What accounts for this discrepancy?

Jo: It's natural. I made a mistake about the time. I got it mixed up with another night. He spent so many nights at that store! (Baldwin 86)

Furthermore, The State suggests to Parnell that his perception of his white friend Lyle and of his black friend Father Meridian is different, because he does not trust the second: “THE STATE: We can conclude, then, that you were willing to trust Lyle Britten with your life but did not feel the same trust in Reverend Henry?” (Baldwin 110). The State tries to reinforce the perception of black people as below whites. In addition, The State comes up with extra information, all of it not matching reality. It states that Richard was trying to create an uprising among young black folk in their town, to which Parnell denies any knowledge. Afterwards, The State attempts to enforce on Parnell the fact that Lyle was right by saying that everything Lyle said was in accordance to reality, not providing any

room for mistake. Parnell is left with both of his hands tied, not being able to confront the “truth” created by the legal representatives during the trial.

In this way, the institution which was supposed to enforce truth and law helps spread stereotypes of black people and denies them access to a better future and equality within white society. It is no surprise, thus, that by the end of the trial, the guilty white man goes unpunished while the black “innocent” man loses his life. Fortunately, the black community is finally able to perceive the situation as a wake-up call, “the only real sense of hope in the play” (Malburne 46).

African-American men are also classified in old stereotypes such as Uncle Tom and Sambo. Viewed as symbols of submission and obedience (Majors and Billson 7), the male characters are repeatedly called Uncle Toms throughout the plays. Papa D., the African-American bar-owner in *Blues*, is taken for an Uncle Tom by Whitetown people; Walter thinks about acting like an Uncle Tom in front of Lindner, the white neighborhood association leader in *A Raisin*; and Clay is strongly reprimanded by Lula for acting like an Uncle Tom in *Dutchman*. In every occurrence of such a stereotype, other black characters, or even Lula to this matter, look down on the character in question, since being an Uncle Tom means to be a traitor to the African-American cause and identity.

Papa D., for example, considered an Uncle Tom by the black community, is undesired among his fellows. On the one hand, he is seen as a traitor by the black people in his town, for he mixes with and “bows” to the white citizens. On the other hand, being black, Papa D. is never fully accepted by white people as one of them; he is only tolerated as a well-behaved “nigger.” Being an Uncle Tom places Papa D. as a caricature

of himself; he is not white, but he does not act like an African American either, being less than both sides of the relation.

As for Walter Jr., his intention of bowing to Lindner and act complacent to his offer in order to take advantage of the situation also places him in a position of less than a man. Subjugating himself to the white man is considered an outrage by his family, all their pride and respect in relation to Walter would have been lost if he had indeed carried on with his plan. However, in the end Walter recognizes his mistake and turns the table.

Likewise, Lula severely judges Clay for being an assimilationist. Her recurrent judgment of Clay as an Uncle Tom places him in an inferior position regarding both white and black folks. It is only by defying assimilationist manners that he will be able to fully reach his manhood. Nevertheless, “Uncle Tomming” is more of a response to black oppression and a mechanism of survival than an obstacle, as discussed in the second part of this chapter.

Furthermore, Coleman discusses the use of the word “boy” for diminishing African-American males as less than “men.” It is used as an insult and white people often call black men “boy” to level them as immature and dependents (102).

Throughout *Blues*, Richard is referred to as “boy,” especially by the Britten couple. Being a boy is indeed the opposite of being a man; by calling black people boys, regardless of age, white people are preventing them from ever reaching their state of manhood. Lyle's will for preventing Richard to be a man is materialized through the way he uses language to refer to Richard. This is the way white people use words to diminish and psychologically castrate the black man.

In truth, Lyle calls every black man his junior, “boy.” When in his store, Lyle addresses both Richard and Lorenzo as boys to place them as inferiors to him. The

conversation starts with Jo, his wife, calling Richard a boy: “Boy, what do you want?” (Baldwin 72), while he addresses her as ma'am: “No ma'am. You see, I don't never carry on me more cash than I can afford to *lose*” (Baldwin 72). Whereas Richard calls Jo by a title of respect, she repays him by calling him a boy, showing the power relationship between white and black people. Lyle proceeds: “Now, if you looking for trouble, you just might get it. That boy outside—ain't he got twenty cents?” (Baldwin 72), to what Richard outrageously responds “That boy outside is about twenty-four years old, and he ain't got twenty cents. Ain't no need to ask him” (Baldwin 73). Richard, perceiving Lyle's attempt to deprive both him and his friend from any pride, counter-arguments by saying his friend's age, as a way to show his interlocutor that he understands his use of the vocative. Not giving up, Lyle still states: “You say that like you thought your Daddy's name was some kind of protection. He ain't no protection against *me*—him, nor that boy outside neither” (Baldwin 73). In this final statement, Lyle not only addresses Lorenzo, and Richard by default, as boys, but also places the latter in a “childish” position. By mentioning his father's protection, Lyle is inferring that Richard is incapable of stepping up for himself without the help of a parent. He places Richard as if he is not a fully-grown *man*.

Similarly, when arguing with Walter Jr., Beneatha in *A Raisin* tells him, “thee is mad, boy” (Hansberry 1779), treating her brother as a person who cannot think by himself and is dependent of others. By treating her older brother as a boy, she makes it clear that she perceives him as not yet a man. The use of “boy” in this play, then, is not a wish to prevent Walter Jr. from reaching his manhood; rather, Beneatha's sassy comment works as a wake up call to show how distant he is from his goal of maturity as a man. However, this choice of word turns out to work negatively upon Walter, for he feels as if

the only thing he still possesses in white America, his adulthood, is taken away from him as even in his own house he is not respected as a man: “Nobody in this house is ever going to understand me” (Hansberry 1779).

Lula, in *Dutchman*, is much more upfront with Clay. Even though she does not explicitly call him boy all the time, she tells him “You look like you been trying to grow a beard . . . You look like you live in New Jersey with your parents and are trying to grow a beard” (Baraka 1948). Depicting him as a boy eager to mature, she emasculates him also by taking him as a child and not as a “man.” Indeed, removing masculine traits from Clay functions as taking away any manhood he still has in himself. Lula is in fact a powerful strategist for all the mind games she plays have the purpose of putting him down.

Over the course of American history, other words have been applied, but the word “boy” figures as one of the most humiliating words to refer to a black adult man (Coleman 102). The word itself, as seen in *Dutchman*, is not recurrently mandatory to be used in order to take black men's pride away, but if the very meaning is conveyed, as Lula does to Clay, the situation works as if the word was already there.

The politicization and stereotyping of the black body is seen in a range of different ways across the three plays analyzed above. The examples provided help to understand how the white characters in the plays use this strategy to psychologically castrate the black male characters and prevent them from reaching or developing their manhood. Reversely, when black characters use stereotypes with their kin the effect is the opposite. Although it has some degree of censure, it gives black man input to rethink their stand in order to reach their manhood. However, not all black men are able to perceive the possibility in their hands through the positive argumentation, only feeling as

if further censured. Therefore, stereotypes work differently whether a black or white person uses them to address the black body, although, in general, the negative aspects tend to override the positive ones.

2.1.2 Lack of Opportunities and Psychological Castration

As previously stated, institutionalized racism prevents black men from ascending in terms of class, and from being able to find good jobs with a fair income. As middle-class black men take white hegemonic models as their own (Coleman 14), they are bound to fail and suffer in the hands of institutions that allocate them as external figures.

Louise Archer, Simon Pratt, and David Phillips discuss that working-class men – especially black – are at a disadvantage because of their social positioning. Holding values such as being the head of household, breadwinner, and provider, these men are presented with hardships and few opportunities, which can make them anxious to achieve what is often taken for granted by white middle-class families (445).

In all three plays, we see this construction of masculinity based on social positioning and on fulfilling the role of the provider as major aspects in the formation of masculinity by the black male characters. None of them, though, is as strong as in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

The play depicts the frustration of the black man for not being able to achieve white Americans' standards. Walter Jr. works as a driver, and as such, does not make enough money to provide for his family. According to Andrea Hunter and James Davis, “the meaning of manhood has been treated as largely unidimensional and universal – man

as economic provider and as head of the family. Further, what Black men are and what they should be is measured against the status and privilege of White males” (20). Walter Jr. represents all of these values regarding his construction of masculinity, for the focus in the plot is his frustration for not possessing more, namely: economic resources and power within the household.

Throughout the play, Walter deals with situations which emphasize his different positioning in society from that of a white man, mainly in fields considered to be mandatory for achieving manhood, such as the business world. Walter thus comes to the realization that “being black and male in American society places one at risk for unemployment” (qtd. in Hunter and Davis 21).

Having his mother, Lena Younger, as the head of the family and only being able to provide for his family with his mother and wife's help, Walter feels symbolically castrated and emasculated. This emasculation is clearly stated when he compares himself to white people of his age, and realizes that some opportunities are denied to him: “Mama – sometimes when I'm downtown and I pass them cool, quiet-looking restaurants where them white boys are sitting back and talking 'bout things . . . sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollars . . . sometimes I see guys don't look much older than me –” (Hansberry 1795). Also, his frustration as a provider comes from the fact that his family follows a twentieth-century African-American family trend in which women go outside the household to work at their jobs and thus have monetary power at home. That wouldn't be a problem if he could control the money, as for, in general, the issue is much more centered in controlling the money and giving orders than in earning the money itself. When in power and control, men do not tend to feel emasculated (hooks, *We Real Cool* 9). However, as it is recurrently shown throughout all the women's statements during the

play, “the insurance money belongs to Mama” (Hansberry 1779) and Mama seems as she will not “give it to you [Walter] to invest in any liquor store” (Hansberry 1779). This money represents Walter's possibility of taking control over his family and reaching what he conceives as manhood, as well as fulfilling his dream.

The role of the black female as the provider and the head of the family is also evident when Walter gets more and more frustrated for not achieving his ideal manhood. As a solution, his mother, Lena, ends up giving him the money, which is eventually stolen by his “friend” Willy. This situation actually shows that Walter is unprepared to deal with financial responsibilities. From the beginning to the climax, *A Raisin in the Sun* displays the experience of America's beliefs of what manhood is: possession of money, enforcement of patriarchal values, and providing for the household.

Even though this problem is not as evident in *Blues* as it is in *A Raisin*, yet a few similarities are shared between these two plays. Both Lena Younger and Mother Meridian function as the head of the household. As matriarchs, they hold the most crucial decisions and influence upon the men in their houses. Moreover, Meridian's wife, that is, Richard's mother, also needed to work to provide for her family. Allied with the fact that Meridian is a minister, much of masculine pride is at stake both for him and his son.

Richard lacks a role model as a father and fatherhood is indeed considered a major way for achieving manhood. Lacking economic venues to prove themselves as providers, black men often rely on having children to assert maleness and virility (Majors and Billson 16). However, this is a double-edged sword, for African-American couples are bound not to work well in such situations, and single-parented homes are often the rule with the mother as the head of the household. It thus leads the sons in these households to lack a masculine role model to help them figuring out their own manhood

(16). Majors and Billson state that, “because of a lack of resources, services, goods, information, and jobs, lower income blacks often have hours of free time on their hands” (85). With free time on their hands to spare in any activity it pleases them, black males thus need a strong fatherly role model, who is respected and admired by their sons, to develop as fully grown men. Otherwise, young black males will turn to the streets to learn masculine values (85-6).

The first of Richard's troubles with his father is the fact that, as a community leader, Meridian should not be as passive as he is to all of the Whitetown oppression upon Blacktown. Being young and revolutionary, and for also having experienced the reality of the North, Richard wants his father to understand how a man, or at least how a model of man, should take a stand for their wills and rights. This is perceived through a series of Richard's statements throughout the play, especially in one of the conversations he has with his grandmother: “I didn't want to come back here like a whipped dog. One whipped dog running to another whipped dog. No, I didn't want that. I wanted to make my Daddy proud of me—because, the day I left here, I sure wasn't proud of *him*” (Baldwin 20). Further on, he also says: “But I just wish, that day that Mama died, he'd took a pistol and gone through that damn white man's hotel and shot every son of a bitch in the place. That's right. I wish he'd shot them dead. . . .I'll never forget the way he looked—whipped, whipped, whipped, whipped!” (Baldwin 20). In the first sentence, Richard expresses how ashamed he is of his father. Wishing to make something of himself to make his father proud, Richard is indeed trying to compensate for his lack of admiration for his father. By assuring that he was not proud of Meridian, Richard reinforces that he did not look up to his father as a role model. He subsequently supports his claim by saying that he is ashamed of Meridian for he did not take any actions after Richard's mother died during

her working hours at the hotel. In these two instances, by using the adjective “whipped” to describe his father, Richard alludes to the slave past of black people, comparing his father to a sore whipped slave, a symbol of a less-than-a-person figure without any will or positioning in society.

By not taking a political stand before the white society, Meridian does not fulfill Richard's desire for an exemplary father figure, which ends up compromising his own construction of masculinity. Only after his son's death, Mr. Henry asserts his political stand in total support of his community, to the extreme of keeping a gun under the bible in his pulpit, symbols of physical and intellectual power to change black reality.

By questioning Meridian if he has ever felt anything for Juanita years after his wife's death, Richard tries to place his father in the role of a man he is comfortable with:

RICHARD: Did you ever think of marrying Juanita? . . . Why would you like to hide it? I'd like to know because I'm a man now, Daddy, and I can ask you to tell me the truth. I'm making up for lost time. Maybe you should try to make up for lost time too. . . .

MERIDIAN: Yes. I've thought of marrying Juanita. But I've never spoken of it to her. (Baldwin 35)

For Richard, as well as for other young blacks, it is complicated to understand their fathers' perception of the world and masculinity, which causes a clash between them, for African-American fathers will not talk to their sons to set the example, “father-to-son-talks . . . are something many black fathers do not instigate” (Coleman 118). Richard sometimes feels as if his father wanted him to resign to the status he already occupies in the South, thereby suffocating his willingness to change his little Southern town (Coleman 67). Moreover, Meridian is diminished by The State and Whitetown during the

trial, which puts his manhood at stake. Middle-class status along with having a woman as the head of household, plus a celibate minister as a father leads Richard to have a troubled construction of masculinity.

More obviously than *Blues*, *Dutchman* also presents class as a problem; here, though, being middle-class is not seen as a positive aspect, but it is rather criticized. Lula extensively accuses Clay's wishes to be a middle-class educated person as assimilationist and false. She questions whether his grandparents have attended to Harvard and fulfilled such high positions rather than have been slaves. Clothing, language, looks, everything is made into a weapon against Clay's masculine self and his identity as a whole:

Everything that you say is wrong. [*Mock smile.*] That's what makes you so attractive. Ha. In that funnybook jacket with all the buttons. . . What've you got that jacket and tie on in all this heat for? And why're you wearing a jacket and tie like that? Did your people ever burn witches or start revolutions over the price of tea? Boy, those narrow-shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three-button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and striped tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard. (Baraka 1952)

Lula uses all the characteristics that place Clay into a middle-class position to destroy his assumptions of class, in contrast to his forefathers' origins. Letting him infer that he is buying a way of life that does not belong to him disrupts all of his manhood foundations, leading him to flip and counter argue with a distinctive, more aggressive type of masculinity, which leads the play to its counterproductive end. Besides, by questioning Clay's middle-class style and education, Lula calls attention to another obstacle faced by black working-class man: Education.

2.1.3 Rejection and the Educational System

Education is a sensitive issue to African Americans. Although contemporary society demands the pursuit of education for social ascension, educational institutions do not value the personal background, skills, and behavior of the African-American individual (Gause 21). African-American behavior within the school system is generally seen by staff and faculty as dangerous, inappropriate, and against the school and social norms (Neal et al. 50).

First of all, studying is seen by most working-class men as a delay in entering the working field, that is, a delay in making money (Archer, Pratt, and Phillips 437). Money and class ascension, as seen previously, are two of the most prestigious ways among African-American men to achieve manhood. Moreover, working-class men tend to fear engaging in risk taking situations, such as spending more money than they have in the pursuit of education to build a career, for only then start making more money (Archer, Pratt, and Phillips 445).

Embedded in white patriarchal values and in mainstream American formula, the school system becomes a mechanism which denies African Americans education, for to achieve success, black men need to deny their origins and culture (Gause 17, Majors and Billson 47). The act of privileging white values within such restricting institution is no novelty to American society. Denying literacy and education to African Americans is a remnant of slavery institution, so white lords could maintain their power (Coleman 50).

On the other hand, after years of denying and expelling the black man from the educational system, education has become an antonym of manhood, being classified as feminizing and softening (Archer, Pratt, and Phillips 433). Therefore, feeling excluded from high schools and similar institutions, black men are destined to fail. It results in young African-American men seeking for education in wrong places, such as, the streets or institutions like jails or juvenile halls (Coleman 149). Moreover, “naturally, dropping out [of school] has an enormous impact on functional illiteracy and, ultimately, marketable job skills, employment, and the ability to seek out legitimate means of proving manhood” (Majors and Billson 14).

Women, however, more sensitive in perceiving the role that race and gender, among other factors, play in the school system, are more suitable to succeed and flourish within educational venues (Archer, Pratt, and Phillips 442). Also, women do not need to prove to others their manhood, therefore much of the acts and behaviors that prevent men from succeeding on their education is not an issue to women.

Richard, biased by the view of education as feminizing and as a delayer of adult life, skips school by going up North to start life directly as a musician, which also works as a masculine safety valve for his problems. Nonetheless, he also hustles himself as a way to not only make money, but also to state himself as a sexual promiscuous being. For Richard, the streets provide him with more precious and useful knowledge than formal institutions, which Coleman discusses as a pattern for youth black men (149). His views, however, differ from his father's and colleagues' – e.g. Pete – who works as an educator, and who searches for further formal learning, respectively.

Differently from Richard, Juanita is mature enough to understand that education is a way to open doors. Her perception of education as a path to success derives from her

feminine sensibility to work with the system to dribble it, not going directly against it, as men often do. She plans to go up North and attend Law School so she can go back to the South and make a difference in black people's lives, as she says: "I had always intended to go North to law school and then come back down here to practice law—God knows this town could stand it. . ." (Baldwin 28).

Similarly to Richard, men in *A Raisin* also diminish the role of education as a social enabler. Travis does not seem to want to go to school, but the opposite. By not having money to keep up with his classmates, he feels ashamed of attending school, like most young black men do, for feeling diminished in the school environment. He actually begs his mother to "carry groceries" as a way to make money to fit in with the other students. As most African-American young men, Travis does not care for what he is going to learn or not learn. He cares about having the same goods and possessions as the other boys in his class, which leads him to feel like starting working life earlier than necessary in order to fit in at school.

Likewise, Walter, his father, and George, Beneatha's suitor, also do not understand Beneatha's desire to pursue education by attending Medical School. In their view, college is more than enough for black people, who, in their perception, actually need only money to succeed in life. Walter indeed tells Beneatha: "Who the hell told you you had to be a doctor? If you so crazy 'bout messing 'round with sick people—then go be a nurse like other women—or just get married and be quiet . . ." (Hansberry 1779). Walter, in this sense, diminishes both education and women as well, for telling Benny that she, as a representation of other women, should only get married and be content with women's traditional professions. Walter and George fail to acknowledge that education is a recognized way of social ascendancy. Moreover, George even states that Beneatha should

be thankful because all a woman needs to have in order to succeed in life is to have “looks,” which she has. This is exemplified by the following excerpt from the play:

BENEATHA: Yes—and I love to talk.

GEORGE: . . . I know it and I don't mind it sometimes . . . I want you to cut it out, see—The moody stuff, I mean. I don't like it. You're a nice girl . . . all over. That's all you need, honey, forget the atmosphere. Guys aren't going to go for the atmosphere—they're going to go for what they see. Be glad for that. Drop the Garbo routine. It doesn't go with you. As for myself, I want a nice . . . simple . . . sophisticated girl . . . not a poet—O.K.?

BENEATHA: Why are you angry?

GEORGE: This is stupid! I don't go out with you to discuss the nature of “quite desperation” or to hear all about your thoughts—because the world will go on thinking what it thinks regardless You read books—to learn facts—to get grades—to pass the course—to get a degree. That's all—it has nothing to do with thoughts. (Hansberry 1806)

George sees in college a possibility for getting a degree and improving his working life, differently from Beneatha who perceives education as a strategy to acquire knowledge and promote thinking. Therefore, George condemns the way she sees education and patronizes her as mainstream women are patronized; they should look pretty, “hunt for a husband,” “catch him,” and get in a good marriage. Education per se, thus, is a waste of time in George's perception of it. Beneatha, in the same fashion as Juanita, also sees the importance of the education and its connection to the white normative system. Consequently, her wish is to become a doctor so she can help black people all across the globe.

Unexpectedly, Clay behaves differently in this matter. He is actually willing to seek education and intellectual development. He is indeed similar to Asagai, from *A Raisin*, who also sees education as a way to improve people and fight inequality. However, this factor is actually used against him by Lula, who claims that he is an assimilationist, thus not a black man. By denying him education, white society tries to bring the black man down, as exemplified by Lula. Since she cannot prevent him from pursuing an education, she restrains him by threatening his manhood. This way, white society is able to keep black men in ignorance, unable to achieve power, which remains in the hands of white Americans alike during slavery.

As a matter of fact, the prevention of black men from seeking education also comes from their own peers through climate control. Climate control, in this sense, refers to the fact that when unable to achieve or have something, people in the same level try to prevent their peers to have access to such improvements as well, so all of them stay at the same level. An example of this fact was given previously by Walter and George's willingness to deprive Beneatha of further education.

As the obstacles black men face in their daily lives are understood, it becomes easier to see why they react the way they do in face of white oppression. It also makes it possible to better comprehend what triggers the intensity they put to their responses, and their validation. By the examples analyzed above, these plays provide us with many instances of obstacles that the characters face in performing their daily routine, and their relevance to black people's lives, especially men's.

The second part of this chapter will analyze the reactions African-American men have displayed towards the obstacles they face. Moreover it is expected to make clearer

the symbiotic relation that both obstacles and reaction have, so that it supports the analysis of both issues within the same chapter.

PART 2 – Reactions

I could murder you now. Such a tiny ugly throat. I could squeeze it flat, and watch you turn blue, on a humble. For dull kicks. And all these weak-faced ofays squatting around here, staring over their papers at me. Murder them too. Even if they expect it. That man there . . . [*Points to well-dressed man.*] I could rip that *Times* right out his hand, as skinny and middle-classed I am, I could rip that paper out of his hand and just as easily rip out his throat. It takes no great effort. For what? To kill you soft idiots? You don't understand anything about luxury.

– Clay in Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*

2.2 Calling for Help: Black Men's Reactions to Mainstream Oppression

African Americans' responses to mainstream oppression and institutionalized racism are as old as the institution of slavery and the foundations of the United States of America. Racialism was one of the founding stones of this country, in Louis Tyson words: “*Racialism* . . . refers to the belief in racial superiority, inferiority, and purity based on the conviction that moral and intellectual characteristics, just like physical characteristics, are biological properties that differentiate the races” (360). Over the course of the construction of the United States, several groups were racialized in order to fulfill the needs of white mainstream society (375). Once, Italians and other Mediterranean people were also considered inferior to white people. Even though they were also Europeans, the American need for second-class citizens as work force led them to create a distinction between Northern and Southern European immigrants. Other

peoples were also racialized to serve as work force in the United States, though none of them as strongly as African people and their descendants (Majors and Billson 58).

The racialization of African Americans played a stronger role in American society and lasted longer than the racialization of other peoples and ethnicities due to two reasons: cultural differences and possibility of distinguishing African-American features from European ones. African Americans have a different culture and behavioral code than those of former American pilgrims. However, what has made it possible to construct an entire system of racialization and distinction of the black community apart from others was the coinciding fact that their differing physical features paired with their differing cultural background (Myrdal 95).

African Americans' strategies to react against institutionalized racism and social pressure, however, date back way before the Slave Trade. Most of their techniques have origins in African traditions such as religion, culture, beliefs, and social behavior (Majors and Billson 56). African Americans' coping mechanisms were inherited predominantly by West Africans' traditions and culture, mostly in their perception of the world through spirituality, nature, and union within their community, which differed from that of Euro-American materialistic, individualistic, and egocentric perspective of society (Majors and Billson 56).

African-American communities were able to preserve most of their beliefs by being segregated through most of American history, be it during slavery, Jim Crow policies, racial segregation, or modern differences in their neighborhoods (ghettos and inner city communities). Therefore, gestures, symbols, and behavioral patterns were able to pass from generations to the present moment, indisputably, with adaptation and changes (Majors and Billson 59). Even though African Americans have their own style,

behavior, and perception of the world, it does not mean they are not influenced by, or even copy, mainstream Euro-American ways and patriarchal behavior.

2.2.1 African Souls: Black People and Spirituality

Spirituality is used by Meridian Henry in *Blues* as a coping mechanism against the subjugation black men face in the Southern United States. After seeing the death of his wife – possibly murdered – Meridian turns to religion to find his balance. Majors and Billson mention that:

as an ancient and indigenous part of black culture, the idea of cool bears a spiritual meaning: sense of control, symmetry, correct presentations of self, and sophistication. Coolness is a part of character – *ashe*. To exhibit grace under pressure is akin to exuding a royal demeanor. (57)

Therefore, by reaching out for his spirituality, Meridian can keep his cool and face Whitetown's people during Lyle's judgment without losing it.

Facing the death of a son, and finally comprehending the dynamics of the South through a new light, Meridian needs to find his strength somewhere else, which he does in religion, like the slaves before him did by turning to spirituals to endure the horrors of slavery. The speech he gives in church, on the occasion of his son's death, illustrates his faith in God:

My heart is heavier tonight than it has ever been before. I raise my voice to you tonight out of a sorrow and a wonder I have never felt before. Not only I, my Lord, am in this case. Everyone under the sound of my voice,

and many more souls than that, feel as I feel, and tremble as I tremble, and bleed as I bleed. It is not that the days are dark—we have known dark days. It is not only that the blood runs down and no man helps us; it is not only that our children are destroyed before our eyes. It is not only that our lives, from day to day and every hour of each day, are menaced by the people among whom you have set us down. We have borne all these things, my Lord, and we have done what the prophets of old could not do, we have sung the Lord's song in a strange land. In a strange land! What was the sin committed by our forefathers in the time that has vanished on the other side of the flood, which has had to be expiated by chains, by the lash, by hunger and thirst, by slaughter, by fire, by the rope, by the knife, and for so many generations, on these wild shores, in this strange land? Our offense must have been mighty, our crime immeasurable. But it is not the past which makes our hearts so heavy. It is the present. Lord, where is our hope? Who, or what, shall touch the hearts of this headlong and unthinking people and turn them back from destruction? When will they hear the words of John? *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So, then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.* Now, when the children come, my Lord, and ask which road to follow, my tongue stammers and my heart fails. I will not abandon the land—this strange land, which is my home. But can I ask the children

forever to sustain the cruelty inflicted on them by those who have been their masters, and who are now, in very truth, their kinfolk, their brothers and their sisters and their parents? What hope is there for a people who deny their deeds and disown their kinsmen and who do so in the name of purity and love, in the name of Jesus Christ? What a light, my Lord, is needed to conquer so mighty a darkness! This darkness rules in us, and grows, in black and white alike. I have set my face against the darkness, I will not let it conquer me, even though it will, I know, one day destroy this body. But, my Lord, what of the children? What shall I tell the children? I must be with you, Lord, like Jacob, and wrestle with you until the light appears—I will not let you go until you give me a sign! A sign that in the terrible Sahara of our time a fountain may spring, the fountain of a true morality, and bring us closer, oh, my Lord, to that peace on earth desired by so few throughout so many ages. Let not our suffering endure forever. Teach us to trust the great gift of life and learn to love one another and dare to walk the earth like men. Amen. (Baldwin 76-8)

During his sermon, Meridian reflects upon the history of black people in the U.S. and their past in the plantations. He comes to the realization of the importance of religion for black people to endure the obstacles they face, and looks at it with some amount of pride.

However, although religion is a pillar for black peoples' morale, apart from the spirituals slaves sang in the plantations and from modern black churches, the same religion which has kept blacks alive is the one which was used to bring them down. Religion was one of the foundations white people used to degrade and stigmatize black people in America.

Meridian's revisiting of past events through his sermon, however, does not serve as an embittering instance, but rather as a breeze of hope to Meridian. He is still able to see in religion a fighting tool, in which he and his community can linger on to overcome black people's new problems. As he remarks, not that they have not seen harsh days, but these present days have been spilling black blood and tinting their own land for no apparent reason but oppression. Only God, in Meridian's view, can make people learn how to live together without trying to bring one another down, as a reflection of black-white desired coexistence.

On the other hand, white men mock the theatrical way black people worship God. They do recognize, however, that religion plays a big part in African-American communities. Lyle recognizes it when he says to Parnell: "Listen to them! Singing and praying! Singing and praying and laughing behind a man's back!" (Baldwin 76). Lyle perceives religion as a dangerous tool in black people's hands. He is afraid they may use faith to mock and "betray" white people and their social structure. Therefore, Meridian's faith in religion serves as a powerful tool to keep black folk cool and raise their morale to face Whitetown.

Yet, even though spirituality helps black men find their balance, as it does to Meridian, some young black men, like Lorenzo, criticize the mainstream belief in "God." The "white God," that is, the Euro-American perception of Christianity, was used to justify slavery, as mentioned above; therefore, the view of such religion is of castration and oppression, as exemplified by Lorenzo's conversation with Mother Henry:

I don't understand Meridian here. It was his son, it was your grandson, Mother Henry, that got killed, butchered! Just last week, and yet, here you sit—in this—this—the house of this damn almighty God who don't care what

happens to nobody, unless, of course, they're white. Mother Henry, I got a lot of respect for you and all that, and for Meridian, too, but that white God that's been lynching us and burning us and castrating us and raping our women and robbing us of everything that makes a man a man for all these hundreds of years. Now, why we sitting around here, in *His* house? If I could get my hands on Him, I'd pull Him out of heaven and drag Him through this town at the end of a rope. (Baldwin 4)

Lorenzo addresses here some similar issues to those approached by Meridian. Both of them, in their own way, are angry toward the “God” who makes them pay for their crimes. Meridian tries to understand what crimes have black people committed in their past for “God” to punish them in this manner, whereas Lorenzo simply attributes the idea of “God” to the white dominating process. The former still sees the positive impact of religion upon African Americans in the end of the day. He embraces religiousness, even being the colonizer's religion, as West-Africans embraced spirituality, as a mandatory part of black people's life. The latter perceives the “white” religion as diminishing for blacks and as a mechanism of domination through ideology used by whites.

In the same way, Lorenzo rebels against God and religion, Beneatha, in *A Raisin*, while in the presence of her mother, also questions the idea of God and religiousness. Lena, in the same fashion of old black folk, reacts by slapping her daughter across the face, and demanding her to apologize: “in my mother's house there is still God” (Hansberry 1785). Lena Younger relies on her spirituality to keep her hopes high. In this sense, Lena is supported by Ruth who, being part of the scene, only looks to her mother-in-law in approval.

To Lena Younger, religion is an important element to build character and keep themselves strong front white society, as she says: “There are some ideas we ain't going to have in this house. Not long as I am at the head of this family” (Hansberry 1785). As a head of household, Lena imposes her point of view on her family, and also reinforces the importance of religion, similarly to Meridian when preaching in church.

In what follows, the analysis of the other reactions to psychological emasculation of the black man, such as: violence, crime, hypermasculinity and over sexual conduct, and alcohol and drug abuse can all be placed together within the concept of the “Cool Pose,” as defined by Richard Majors and Janet Mancine Billson below.

2.2.2 The Dilemma of the Cool Pose: Black Men's Pursuit for Manhood

The character Richard Henry, in *Blues*, provides several examples regarding questions of black man's masculinity, especially in view of his journey and disruptions of leaving the South for the North, and later returning to his hometown. This journey South–North–South shapes his personality in such a way that he is neither fully a Southern nor a Northern black man. Therefore, Richard's importance as a focus for analysis derives from his complex characterization. Meredith M. Malburne affirms that, “Richard [is] a *multidimensional* and complex character who is neither the suicidal maniac nor the sarcastic savior some critics have tried to make him” (39-40). Understanding the construction of Richard's manhood, especially in view of “Cool” performance, helps in the comprehension of his multifaceted personality.

The characters of Walter and Clay also wear the mask of “cool pose” on occasion, but they are far from relying on this performance as Richard does. Therefore, comprehending what the “cool pose” is, its role in African-American men's lives, and its consequences are necessary to carry on this analysis of black men's responses to white oppression.

Richard Majors and Janet Mancine Billson in *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* take the cool pose as:

a trademark of sophistication that proves that the black male can function well under pressure. Coolness is a stabilizer that minimizes threatening situations and earns respect from others. Cool pose may be linked with slickness, neat appearance, verbal manipulation, and the ability to stay out of trouble. Although the “cool cat” may appear indifferent to the problems around him or seem impervious to pain, frustration, or death, he is unlikely to allow his deeper feelings to surface. If he lifts his protective shield, he risks appearing timid. Cool pose helps him achieve a stern, impersonal masculinity in the face of adversity. (28)

The cool pose is thus a strategy, a performance of masculinity; it “is a carefully crafted persona based on power and control over what the black male says and does—how he 'plays' his role” (28); “the cool pose gives the black male his greatest sense of pride and masculinity. The risk-taking and self-destructive aspects of cool pose are often symbolically expressed as part of a compulsive masculinity—what some have called *macho*” (34).

On the other hand, black men become so attached to this strategy that their masculinity often becomes synonymous with this performance. They fear to expose their

real selves so that, eventually, the cool pose becomes part of them and who they are by turning it into a problem rather than a solution (Majors and Billson 45). Hence, if the cool pose does not work, the entire structure on which black men founded their masculinity crashes altogether (Majors and Billson 28).

Indeed, Richard is anxious and rough to his grandmother and friends because black men do not switch off the performance of the cool pose at their will, but rather take this performance to such exaggerated extent so to prove themselves as real men at all times (Majors and Billson 45). When talking to his grandmother, Richard expresses such anxiety in several instances:

. . . I'm going to treat everyone of them [white folk] as though they were responsible for all the crimes that ever happened in the history of the world—oh, yes! They're responsible for all the misery *I've* ever seen, and that's good enough for me. It's because my Daddy's got no power that my Mama's dead. And he ain't got no power because he's *black*. And the only way the black man's going to *get* any power is to drive all the white men into the sea. (Baldwin 21)

While in this frenzy guided by anger which clouds his mind and covers his real emotions, Richard presents his Grandma with his ultimate solution: “(*He takes a small, sawed-off pistol from his pocket.*) . . . This is all the man understands. He don't understand nothing else. *Nothing else!*” (Baldwin 22). His hatred, in his own words, is part of this mask of cool pose; he “swallows” his feeling and real emotions to present society with a cold crafted persona in order to impose respect.

In the same fashion, Clay also builds a persona embodying white middle-class values and behavior so he can pretend to be mixing with white mainstream society.

Indeed, not showing his true emotions helps him being alive and “cool” to every instance. When he loses it, he finally shows his true colors: “Lula . . . you bitch. Why don't you stop it? . . . Now you shut the hell up. Just shut up. You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know anything. So just keep your stupid mouth closed” (Baraka 1957). Like Richard, he also thinks white people do not know what goes on in the minds of African-American people. This is true because black men perform the cool pose so they can disguise their inner impulses and play the game. However, for Clay, as for Richard, they have reached the last straw. Both have their masks fall down and finally face white society. As a result, both have reached true manhood without any masks, but are killed soon after.

Lula is responsible in many ways for Clay's madness, as her recurrent provocations lead him to stop acting cool and finally show her his true colors. As a white woman, although Lula hyper-estimates men behaving violently and toughly, she discourages other performances of the cool pose which indeed help African Americans survive within white mainstream society. As a matter of fact, when talking about the connection between women, especially black, and the cool pose, Majors and Billson states:

black females are sometimes turned on by or attracted to black males who act and look cool. Those males who do not act cool may suffer a heavy penalty of rejection. Some women are attracted to the urbane, emotionless, smooth, fearless, aloof, apparently masculine qualities of the cool pose. . . . The nice guy is not perceived as exciting or mysterious, but it is easier to fathom where the nice guy is coming from than it is to understand the cool male. (Major and Billson 43)

Lula, despite discouraging Clay's positive performance of the cool pose, acts similarly to most black women; she wants black men to show their rough and unpredictable sides. However, she does not reward him as black women do; she emasculates him in return.

In *Blues*, Richard represents the “cool posed” guy, while Pete is the reflection of the nice guy described by Major and Billson. Juanita, when deciding which one to stay with, prefers to take Richard as her sweetheart. Although Pete comes out as in love with her, she actually prefers the one guy who is mysterious, rough, and strong in relation to life adversities. Therefore, even though the cool pose is responsible for destroying the black man when it is related to violence and crimes, as it will be further discussed below, black women reward the black man for being cool, thereby creating this vicious cycle. This situation described above occurs in the following passage in the play:

PETE: Why have you been avoiding me? Don't answer that. You started going away from me as soon as Richard came to this town. Now listen, Richard's dead but you still won't turn to me. I don't want to ask you for more than you can give, but why have you locked me out? I *know*—you liked me. We had nice times together.

JUANITA: I did. I *do* like you. Pete, I don't know. I wish you wouldn't ask me now. I wish *nobody* would ask me for anything now!

PETE: Is it because of Richard? Because if that's what it is, I'll wait—I'll wait until you know inside you that Richard's dead, but you're alive, and you're *supposed* to live, and I love you.

JUANITA: When Richard came, he—*hit*—me in someplace where I'd never been touched before. I don't mean—just physically. He took all my attention—the deepest attention, maybe, that one person can give another.

He needed me and he made a difference in this terrible world—do you see what I mean? And—it's funny—when I was with him, I didn't think of the future, I didn't dare. I didn't know if I could be strong enough to give him what he needed for as long as he would need it. It only lasted four or five days, Pete—four or five days, like a storm, like lightning! And what I saw during that storm I'll always see. Before that—I thought I knew who I was. But now I know that there are more things in me than I'll ever understand—and if I can't be faithful to myself, I'm afraid to promise I'll be faithful to one man! (Baldwin 32)

Although Pete reaffirms to Juanita that Richard is dead, even hinting that it may have to do with his acting cool, Juanita is still attached to the idea of the cool man. Richard's actions and postures seduced Juanita in a way no “nice guy” could do. Pete's love for Juanita is not enough in itself to be attractive; as many black women, she wants a man who does not display everything he feels. She wants a mysterious man who knows how to confront oppressive society. However, all the cool black men these African-American women want are bound to die and leave them on their own.

To comprehend the importance of the cool pose in the construction of Richard's masculinity, as well as those of Walter's and Clay's, there are a few characteristics which are better presented in the following subtopics: violence and crime, keeping oneself cool, and hypermasculinity, sexual behavior, and drug addiction. Therefore, the examples provided above are just general perceptions of the cool pose performance. Following will be the specific characteristics of the cool pose, both analyzed and exemplified thoroughly the plays.

2.2.2.1 Cool Pose, Violence, and Crime

Due to pressures by hegemonic forces, the African-American man finds, in violence, a tool to release his anger, and also a way to vent his frustration. Jewelle T. Gibbs points out that, “young Black males in America have been described as angry, alienated, aggressive, and antisocial. . . . They are often portrayed in the mass media as hostile, sullen, brutal, and violent” (128).

In *Blues*, Richard deals with his family, friends, and strangers, regardless of race, class, or gender, in a hostile manner. Hostility is used as a defense mechanism to protect the black man from the society that denies him access to some of middle-class benefits (Gibbs 131), as well as to “protect one's chance of survival and enhance self-esteem . . . [and] as a form of protection against white authorities” (Majors and Billson 39). “For black males, two of the most common responses to blocked opportunities are rigidity and aggression” (Majors and Billson 33).

When having a conversation with his grandmother, as quoted in the previous section, 2.2.1, Richard embodies a defensive position. He is aggressive to her kindness and willingness to help him. During their talk, Richard displays his frustration of the situation black people, especially men, face in the Southern U.S. It is in this moment that his grandmother and the audience are made aware of his possession of a pistol; which he announces to be carrying with him all the time. Coleman remarks that, “under certain circumstances and in certain environments, carrying a gun becomes one of the last additives for respect. . . . Most young black males do not realize the responsibilities of having a gun. It's just another cool prescription additive” (103). As well as seen in Chapter One, weapons, especially guns, are phallic symbols, a representation that men

carry the power in society. This is the first statement that shows Richard being drawn to the gangster culture, playing by the rules of the cool pose.

Although there are two sides to the cool pose, the positive being the black men's state of coolness and self-balance, explained in the last section, it is also highlighted that the cool pose is often connected to violence (Majors and Billson 37). Historically, the black man has been pressured by society, for he has been imposed with Eurocentric patriarchal values and placed in a position of submission to whites; he has been denied achieving the most common social standards, often occupying low working-class positions, lacking social status, having trouble providing for his family, and being subjugated with regards to his cultural upbringing and behavior (Langley 234; Majors and Billson 58). As a result, the black man sees violence as a way of showing control over his life and imposing himself, as well as maintaining his pride (Majors and Billson 33-8).

Richard's public performance of his cool pose is first perceived in the play in his hometown during his visit to a bar with his peer Pete and his crush Juanita. Instead of avoiding trouble with the white folk of his segregated Southern town, he seems to rush into it; he ends up challenging Lyle, the well-known ready-for-trouble white store-owner, for just jostling Juanita. This display of acting tough proves Richard as being courageous and a real man in front of both the black customers at the bar and the white figure:

(On Lyle's way out, he [Lyle] jostles Juanita. Richard stops, holding Juanita at the waist. Richard and Lyle stare at each other.)

LYLE: Pardon me.

RICHARD: Consider yourself pardoned.

LYLE: You new around here?

PAPA D.: He just come to town a couple of days ago, Mister Lyle.

RICHARD: Yeah. I just come to town a couple of days ago, Mister Lyle.

LYLE: Well. I sure hope your stay'll be a pleasant one.

(Exits.)

PETE: Man, are you *anxious* to leave this world? Because he wouldn't think nothing of helping you out of it.

RICHARD: Yeah. Well, I wouldn't think nothing of helping him out of it, neither. (Baldwin 31)

This conversation supports the claim that Richard, by maintaining his cool, wants to stand up to Lyle, proving that he feels as free in the South as he did up North. He wants to prove to the black customers in the bar that no white man scares him. His performance reinforces his violent behavior and willingness to get into trouble with whites.

Richard and his behavior are considered threats not only because he is a black man in the South or that he experienced freedom in the North, but because he explicitly threatened Lyle's masculinity. Feeling his masculinity threatened by the white figure, Richard reacts by getting back at Lyle by the same way he feels. His major threat is seen in three main situations.

First Richard calls him a bad breadwinner, doubting his capabilities of being a provider, as Lyle cannot break Richard's twenty dollars bill: "You all got this big, fine store and all—and you ain't got change for *twenty* dollars? . . . I just dropped by to sip on a Coke in a simple country store—and come to find out the joker ain't got enough bread to change twenty dollars. Stud ain't got *nothing* . . ." (Baldwin 72; 73). Next, he questions his capability of making a child, doubting his virility: "A baby, huh? How many times did you have to try for it, you no-good, ball-less peckerwood? I'm surprised you could even

get it up—look at the way you sweating now” (Baldwin 74). As seen previously, the capability of having children is also considered a trait of masculinity desired by mainstream society. By questioning Lyle about this trait, Richard is questioning a major part of his manhood. Lastly, Richard overtakes him while they have a struggle, and Lyle ends up on the floor, which questions his power and strength. Besides having all his basis of manhood questioned, Richards tops it off by humiliating him in front of his own wife, the aggravating factor: “Look at the mighty peckerwood! On his *ass*, baby—and his woman watching! Now, who you think is the better man? Ha-ha! The master race! You let me in that tired white chick's drawers, she'll know who's the master! Ha-ha-ha!” (Baldwin 75). By psychologically castrating a white man, Richard seals his gloomy fate. He takes from Lyle the characteristics men look up to the most: their positioning as providers, virility, and being head of the household. As a result of threatening Lyle, Richard gets his threats in return, signing his death sentence even though he was not, at last, looking for trouble and wanted to settle down with Juanita.

Moreover, lacking opportunities and facing a poor quality of life, both black men repressed in the South, or those crowded in big urban spaces in the North, end up venting their frustrations by committing crimes, especially black on black crimes (Coleman 160; Majors and Billson 19-20). Such causality is a result of the fact that crime is strictly linked to both poverty and race (Majors and Billson 23).

By running away from the South and hustling himself up North, Richard was in the pursuit of his cool pose as a way to affirm his masculinity and manhood; he played the “bad nigga”:

The bad nigga was known for his physical strength, courage, pride, and ability to overcome hardships. He was also known as someone who was

willing to confront the white man at any time about his subservient position in society without fear or apprehension. In other words, the bad nigga refused to allow anyone to determine his place in society or to determine how he should live. (Majors et al. 250)

This behavior is Richard's main performance that most of Whitetown's citizens down South, especially Lyle, feel uncomfortable with and threatened by, as exemplified above.

Thinking about escaping the oppression and violence from the South, Richard finds himself in the overpopulated cities of the North, where crime is often a way of venting frustration (Coleman 62-4). Consequently, being denied opportunities and seeing his dreams far from his reach, Richard is led to do drugs as a venting tool and is criminally convicted for it.

Lorenzo, Richard's friend, is actually proud of having stayed in jail, for it gives him the security of being a man. He, indeed, rubs this fact on Lyle's face, in front of his wife Jo, to scare him and demand respect: "Jo: You'll go to jail for this! You'll go to jail! For years! LORENZO: We've been in jail for years. . ." (Baldwin 74-5). In addition, jail here also serves as a metaphor for the entrapped positioning of black people regarding Whitetown. Pete, also their buddy, does not seem concerned with having spent time in prison; on the contrary, he seems to feel more secure of himself as a man.

In *A Raisin*, Walter Jr. is not the one who commits a crime, although he and his friends intended to buy an illegal liquor license; it is his friend, Willy, who takes Walter Sr.'s insurance money and runs away from Walter Jr. and, their business partner and friend, Bobo. Stealing and tricking other people is a behavior associated with contemporary American society:

In the twentieth century American life, which observers argue is plagued by anomie, we are surrounded by a culture that places an inordinate value on materialism, success, prestige, personal possessions, and wealth. Conspicuous consumption is no longer unusual. Trickery, conning, bank fraud, embezzlement, dishonest advertising and pricing, devious manipulation of corporate structures, insider trading, and tax evasion have become the deviant tools of choice for a middle class bent on the competitive massing of goods and wealth. Violence, toughness, coolness, assault, and theft have become the preferred strategies of the lower-income groups in our society. (Majors and Billson 5-6)

Such society rules pressure the black man to extremes, which include betraying his own friends and race. Walter feels this treason as one of the strongest hits against his masculinity and chances to prosper in his own model of masculinity: being the provider and being financially secured. His conversation with Bobo exemplifies this instance:

[Turning madly, as though he is looking for WILLY in the very room.]

Willy! . . . Willy . . . don't do it . . . Please don't do it . . . Man, not with that money . . . Man, please, not with that money . . . Oh, God . . . Don't let it be true . . . Man . . . I trusted you . . . Man, I put my life in your hands . . .

Man . . . *That money is made out of my father's flesh . . .* (Hansberry 1819)

Black men's willingness to trick the white man's system reaches such an extent that they betray their own brothers to achieve success. Even though Bobo, Willy, and Walter shared the same dream of opening their liquor store, Willy could go behind their friends' backs and steal their money. The situation is aggravated because Walter's money came from his father's health insurance, which Walter Sr. worked his entire life for, giving away his

health and life, without seeing any of it. Therefore, that is the reason why Walter says the money “is made out of his father's flesh.”

In *A Raisin*, black men's crimes create a snow ball effect. Trying to pursue the fake liquor license leads the black friends to be tempted to commit further crimes. It ends up with Willy stealing Walter's money and consequently ruining his dreams.

Furthermore, in *Dutchman*, Lula insults Clay repeatedly by her mockery of his assimilationist middle-class manners, thereby enticing him to present her and white society, in general, with a strong violent response. When he finds his path to achieving his manhood, he walks through it in an enraged way. Aware of his (and African Americans', in general) repressed manhood, he threatens the whole white society: “[t]hey'll [black people] cut your throats, and drag you out to the edge of your cities so the flesh can fall away from your bones, in sanitary isolation” (Baraka 1959). In spite of his efforts to come to full manhood, “[b]lack male violence is rarely, if ever rewarded” (hooks, *We Real Cool* 60), leading his outburst to be punished with his own death. Lula’s murdering of Clay is supported by the other white passengers who help her to dispose of his body, mirroring the everyday reality, in which, white people stick together to defend themselves from crimes they commit against black people.

2.2.2.2 Keep It Cool, Stay Positive

Cool pose is not necessarily a negative performance. Majors and Billson's research on the origins of the cool pose refers back to African civilizations between 2000 – 3000 BC, such as Nigerian and Yoruba civilizations (57). The perception of cool was

related to characteristics as spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, affect, communalism, expressive individualism, oral tradition, and social time perspective (56). Some of these civilization rulers were referred to by the addition of these qualities to their title (57).

Today, the positive side of the cool pose performance is that it allows African-American men to deal with their masculinity by creating peace of mind inside themselves (Majors and Billson 37). Positive qualities involved in this performance includes: “dignity, respect, control, self-esteem, and social competence. It helps to protect the African-American male's self image and enables him to cope with assaults on his manhood” (Majors and Billson 37). In *Dutchman*, Clay portrays some good examples of this positive side of the cool pose.

Called assimilationist, phony, middle-class white man, Clay does not let Lula affect him at first. This is due to his cool pose performance being “switched on.” This performance allows him to cope with pressure and anxiety and shut down any emotion he could express. Consequently, neither Lula nor the white man in general are able to get to him. His cool attitude provides him with confidence and stability for him to make the right decisions without letting his emotions get in his way. Clay's performance of cool masculinity reinforces the original African idea of the concept.

Clay's coolness can be noticed in his responses to Lula's affirmation in the following dialog from the text:

LULA: A union of love and sacrifice that was destined to flower at the birth of the noble Clay Clay Williams. Yea! And most of all yea yea for you, Clay Clay. The Black Baudelaire! Yes! [*And with knifelike cynicism.*] My Christ. My Christ.

CLAY: Thank you, ma'am.

LULA: May the people accept you as a ghost of the future. And love you, that you might not kill them when you can.

CLAY: What?

LULA: You're a murderer, Clay, and you know it. [*Her voice darkening with significance.*] You know goddamn well what I mean.

CLAY: I do?

LULA: So we'll pretend the air is light and full of perfume.

CLAY: [*Sniffing at her blouse.*] It is. (Baraka 1953)

Confronted by Lula's sarcasm and cynicism, Clay responds to her in a cool, unaffected manner. He pretends she is not being rude and teasing him, so he only reacts as if he has no idea what she is talking about, or as if she is being sincere. He ignores the second layers of meaning with which she is infusing her sentences, and pretends to be taking them in their literal sense. He even thanks her for a masked insult, as if she really meant it. Therefore, this acting cool prevents him from direct confrontation with Lula, thus avoiding further problems to himself in a subway wagon fully packed with white people.

Nevertheless, such cool behavior can lead some white people to consider it as the stereotypes of Uncle Tom and Sambo. Characters such as Walter Jr., in *A Raisin*, Papa D., in *Blues*, and Clay, in *Dutchman*, are accused of "Uncle Tomming," in spite of the fact that they are acting strategically to deceive white folk. By believing that "Uncle Toms" are under their control, white men are fooled and do not perceive it until it is too late.

Walter Jr. planned to use this strategy with Lindner, the white community leader. Offered money to prevent his family from moving into a white neighborhood, Walter plans to profit from it by raising the value they must get paid. Although Walter is far from

being decent at this point, he is actually shutting down his emotions and hanging on by offering the same treatment black people receive back at white people:

WALTER: [*Coming to her.*] I'm going to feel fine, Mama. I'm going to look that son-of-a-bitch in the eyes and say—[*He falters.*—and say, “All right, Mr. Lindner—[*He falters even more.*—that's your neighborhood out there. You got the right to keep it like you want. You got the right to have it like you want. Just write the check and—the house is yours.” And, and I am going to say—[*His voice almost breaks.*] And you—you people just put the money in my hand and you won't have to live next to this bunch of stinking niggers! . . . [*He straightens up and moves away from his mother, walking around the room.*] Maybe—maybe I'll just get down on my black knees . . . [*He does so; RUTH and BENNIE and MAMA watch him in frozen horror.*] Captain, Mistuh, Bossman. [*He starts crying.*] A-hee-suh! Great White Father, Just gi' ussen de money, fo' God's sake, and we's ain't gwine come out deh and dirty up yo' white folks neighborhood . . . (Hansberry 1827).

Only a man with strong will is able to put aside all his pride and decide to act as an Uncle Tom, or at least, in Walter's case, planning to do so. By lowering himself to Lindner, Walter needs to put all his convictions, pride, and authority as role model to his family behind him to act as an old subordinate slave and reach for the money he wants. By putting the money first over his own character, Walter is indeed far from being a man.

Lyle and the citizens of Whitetown also believe Papa D. to be reliable: “WHITETOWN: He's worked hard and saved his money and ain't never had no trouble—why can't they all be like that?” (Baldwin 87). As a matter of fact, Papa D. plays friends with

Lyle solely while it is profitable for his business. When it no longer benefits him, he sticks to his community and does not hesitate to turn his back on Lyle:

PAPA D.: Mr. Lyle Britten—He is an *oppressor*. That is the only word for that man. He ain't never give the colored man no kind of chance. I have tried to reason with that man for *years*. I say, Mr. Lyle, look around you. Don't you see that most white folks have changed their way of thinking about us colored folks? I say, Mr. Lyle, we ain't slaves no more and white folks is ready to let us have our chance. Now, why don't you just come on up to where *most* of your people are? And we can make the South a fine place for all of us to live in. That's what I say—and I tried to keep him from being so *hard* on the colored—because I sure do love my people. And I was the closest thing to Mr. Lyle, couldn't nobody else reason with him. But he was *hard*—hard and stubborn. He say, “My folks lived and died this way, and this is the way I'm going to live and die.” When he was like that couldn't do nothing with him. I know. I've known him since he was born.
(Baldwin 87-8)

Papa D. admits during the trial his connection to Lyle, even though he does not hesitate to accuse him for his own community's sake. His “Uncle Tomming” ends when there is much at stake, the same way it happens to Walter. Similarly, both Blacktown people and Walter's family did not approve or support Papa D.'s and Walter's Uncle Tom behavior: “BLACKTOWN: Hey, Papa D.! You can't be walking around here without no handkerchief! You might catch cold—after all *these* years!” (Baldwin 87). Consequently, even though it does not cause any harm to the black man, the black community, often times, considers such behavior as being cowardly and unmanly.

Lastly, perceiving the counter-productivity of acting like an assimilationist Uncle Tom, Clay snaps out of it and displays all his anger and anxiety upon Lula:

. . . Well, don't! Don't you tell me anything! If I'm a middle-class fake white man . . . let me be. And let me be in the way I want. [*Through his teeth*] I'll rip you lousy breasts off! Let me be who I feel like being. Uncle Tom. Thomas. Whoever. It's none of you business. You don't know anything except what's there for you to see. An act. Lies. Device. Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart. You don't ever know that. And I sit here, in this buttoned-up suit, to keep myself from cutting all you throats. . . . (Baraka 1958)

At this point Clay comes clean to Lula stating that everything she sees is an act; the nice black boy and his assimilationist behavior are both lies, a performance to avoid problems within mainstream white society. Although he fails to stay alive, he finally reaches his manhood, by being both bold and assertive, the opposite of an Uncle Tom.

2.2.2.3 Sexuality, Hypermasculinity, and Substance Abuse

Addiction, both to sex or substances, is also a valid way for black man to vent their problems. The use of alcohol and drugs helps the black man to relax and forget, even if briefly, his anxieties and problems. However, by frequently relying on substances to ease their pain, African-American men become addicted to such narcotics and eventually are caught up in a cycle, in which, because of their addiction, they are not able

to work and are thus doomed to failure (Majors and Billson 22). Richard provides us with a clear example of this situation.

Deluded that the North would provide him with tools and opportunities to succeed, when Richard moves there, he ends up facing new obstacles which lead him to drug and alcohol abuse. To endure the hardships of life within white dominant society, Richard seeks comfort in drugs and getting high as a way to further vent his frustrations, as illustrated by the excerpt from *Blues* below:

I got hooked about five year ago. See, I couldn't stand these chicks I was making it with, and I was working real hard at my music, and man, I was lonely. . . . And you get out of there and you carry this pain around inside all day and all night. No way to beat it – no way. But when I started getting high, I was cool, and it didn't bother me. And I wasn't lonely then, it was all right. . . . And I didn't know I was hooked—until I was *hooked*.

Then I started getting into trouble . . . (Baldwin 29-30)

The consequences of such behavior range from social problems and exclusion, to health issues, both of them a certain path to death. Moreover, drug issues are the ones that lead Richard to serve time in prison.

Besides ruining Richard's chances of succeeding in the North, for he could not achieve his success in music nor stay out of trouble, his past as a drug addict also ruins his chances in the South. Mesmerized with the “freedom” black people have in Northern states, Richard gets used to such ideology and brings it back to the South. Showing the pictures of the white women he had been with causes him the most damage. It is seen during Lyle's trial by The State's thorough questioning of every member on the stand if they have seen such pictures. However, it is his past drug addiction that dooms him to be

branded as a shady person in the South. The jury uses this point to also accuse him of horrible things toward his own father, which helped perpetrate these thoughts among white citizens: “And yet, you, a Christian minister, dare to bring us this tissue of lies in defense of a known pimp, dope addict, and rapist! You are yourself so eaten up by race hatred that no word can be believed” (Baldwin 104-5).

In *A Raisin*, Walter's obsession with his father's insurance money, as well as his lack of control upon it, results in his feeling of emasculation. The latter leads him to do what most black men do when they feel powerless: they drink and become oblivious. His looking for peace outside his household and daily frequenting a bar change when Mama gives him the insurance money. In this moment, he swears to his son he would never drink again: “No, Daddy ain't drunk. Daddy ain't going to never be drunk again. . . .” (Hansberry 1809). Booze was only a venting mechanism, for as soon as the problems are solved, this mechanism is left behind.

Furthermore, compulsory emasculation of the black man leads to overreaction by the embodiment of hypermasculine features (Coleman 165-6). Such features are used in order to prevent others from seeing the black man as soft, feminine, or homosexual (Coleman 166). Sexuality, then, is used as a venting tool to externalize eagerness and reaffirm one's masculinity, as well as to fight psychological castration.

Blues introduces black men's symbolic castration by having black women raped and subjugated by white men. bell hooks asserts that as a response to oppression, black men have an “obsession with fucking/raping white women as a way to get back at white men for oppressing him” (*We Real Cool* 74). Richard performs this behavior when he moves North and sells his body to white women:

She's *white*, man. I got a whole *gang* of white chicks in New York. That's *right*. And they can't get enough of what little Richard's got—and I give it to them, too, baby, believe me. You say black people ain't got no dignity? Man, you ought to watch a white woman when she wants you to fiv'e her a little bit. They will do anything, baby *anything*! Wait—I got some pictures. That's the one lives in the Village. *Ain't* she fine? I'd hate to tell you where I've had that long yellow hair. And, dig this one, this Sandy, her old man works on Wall Street—. (Baldwin 26)

This type of behavior is common among black men who look for hustling and addictions to vent their feeling of emasculation, as hooks explains that, “demoralized black males who could not gain the types of employment that would affirm their patriarchal manhood . . . could have cash by taking money from wives and girlfriends, or by pimping women” (*We Real Cool* 20). Moreover, “sexual promiscuity is one of the primary ways in which Black males demonstrate their masculinity” (Majors et al. 255), an added reason why Richard is willing to sell his body to women, especially white ones. Taking white women's money by fulfilling his sexual lust, Richard feels on the top of the world, for he kills two birds with one stone. He acts on his sexual desires with white women *and* gets paid to do so. In addition, most women were actually cheating on their husbands, white men, with him. Richard feels as if he is tricking both white women and their white male partners, getting back at white society in general. This behavior, though, leads him to embrace most of his frustrations, pushing him even deeper in his drug addiction for comfort: “RICHARD: Well, I want *them* to be sad, baby, I want to screw up *their* minds *forever*. But why should *I* be so sad?” (Baldwin 26). However, he could only fulfill this destructive behavior after leaving the segregated South and making it North.

Living in the North, Clay also reacts in a hypermasculine way when his manhood is threatened by Lula. After being accused of being asexual and a white-nigger, Clay shows Lula that he could be a beast anytime he wants, but that she, and white people in general, is not worth it, as exemplified by the epigraph of Part Two of this work. His hyper reaction, as well as black people's in general, is punished by death. His death illustrates hooks assertion that black men's reaction are never taken positively, but indeed highly sanctioned (*We Real Cool* 60).

2.3 Conclusion

The examples of obstacles and reactions black men undergo while pursuing their manhood, as discussed thus far, are nothing but a frame of the bigger picture. Black men are presented with many more obstacles which come from white mainstream society, the very black community, peers, and even from within their own selves. Reactions, as well, are the most varied, depending on pressure, background, and situations that are faced by the black man. Although I did not focus on every obstacle and reaction involved in black masculine performance, I focused on the most relevant examples within the plays that account for this thesis corpus.

To conclude this research, the next chapter will present the influence of family and, especially, of black women, to heal black men's wounds and help them make peace with themselves, their heritage, and their masculinity.

CHAPTER THREE – HEALING AND RECONCILIATION: MANHOOD AND THE
FEMALE FIGURE

To say that black women must be freed from the unsatisfactory male-female relationship that we adopted from whites as the paradigm of the good family has more meaning because it indicates the incompatibility of white role models with the goal of black liberation.

– Linda La Rue

The construction of masculinity, as previously analyzed, is not an isolated phenomenon in the life of black men; neither does it rely solely in the actions of African-American men. The role of women, as discussed in chapter two, be them black or white, is vital to the pursuit and construction of African-American manhood. Based on the obstacles black men endure, as seen in the previous chapter, their strong responses to them, and white society's sanctions to such responses, achieving manhood is not easy for those outside hegemonic standards. In this chapter, the role of women as healers of the African-American manhood, as well as the other mechanisms men use to cope with their obstacles to achieve manhood, will be discussed and analyzed in the three plays that compose the corpus of this study.

African-American men and women have been historically programmed for not supporting one another. The scar slavery has left on black people is the major obstacle they face to get rid of the shackles that hold them down as second class citizens (hooks, *Ain't I* 88). bell hooks pinpoints the sexist principles embedded in white patriarchal society as the main disruptor between African-American men and women, which prevent them from facing their real oppressor, the white man (*Ain't I* 88). Men learn from birth that women are their natural born enemies, and they end up treating women as such (hooks, *Ain't I* 114).

As white men have found a way to impose their model as the only valid one through “a racial caste system supported by state power in which white maleness becomes the only definition of being” (Omolade 363), black men have embraced this concept and taken it as their north throughout slavery up to contemporaneity, believing it to be the only way to survive oppression and protect their women from it.

African American's lack of understanding of the way mainstream society imposes certain models of behavior and expectations leads them to suffer the consequences. Black men assume the same values as white men but are not given the same cards to play the game; women expect men to fulfill certain roles similar to the ones white men have toward white women, but they do not realize the lack of resources black men have to live up to their expectations. The ideal of men as providers and protectors of women creates a co-dependence that cannot be fulfilled within white patriarchal society, for African-American men are not given the opportunities to find good working propositions and African-American women are not able to fulfill their idealistic relationship with men (hooks, *Ain't I* 82). Consequently, African-American men and women's relationships are filled with disruptions: between couples, parents and children, in general, within their households (Beale 146).

Since slavery days, white patriarchal values have been imposed upon the African-American population causing a negative output. This output displays bitter black women who are angry at their men for not being able to provide for their family, leading the black woman to step up as the head of household (hooks, *Ain't I* 92). Because American society has a historical fear of the black man, it has frequently provided African-American women with the opportunity of having more job opportunities to provide for the family than black men (hooks, *Ain't I* 80); however, although this is frequently confused with African-American women having a higher status in society, this is untrue, because African-American men, just for the fact of being men, already hold a higher status in sexist patriarchal society (hooks, *Ain't I* 88). Besides, despite the fact that black women have had more job opportunities, black men consider the jobs they are offered “unsuitable” and diminishing for them, as for instance: low paid menial jobs as cooking,

cleaning, being secretaries, working hard hours at factories, babysitting, janitors, just to mention a few. Therefore, African-American men do not recurrently consider themselves emasculated for rejecting such jobs (hooks, *Ain't I* 76).

As black women were often the ones able to provide for their families, white patriarchal society, racist, and sexist, created the myth of matriarchy among African-American families so they could spread the word that black women, going outside the household to make money, were de-masculinizing their men (hooks, *Ain't I* 75; Davis 216). However, such argument does not take into account other factors such as the unwillingness of men to share their resources with their families, being selfish and self-centered (hooks, *Ain't I* 76).

Often, though claiming to be emasculated by American mainstream society, black men desiring to climb the social ladder were willing to adopt white patriarchal sexist models to achieve their goals. Thus, African-American men embraced the stereotypes that the subjugating culture imposed upon them because of the possibility of social mobility (Murray 187). Therefore, instead of working together with African-American women to improve their social status, black men, especially middle-class ones, subjugate their women to prove their manhood and their position in society (hooks, *Ain't I* 94). Such acts, however, only help to disrupt the unity within black communities, by deteriorating the African-American conscience and their healing as a group. Sometimes, black men would even side with white men, their actual “enemies,” relying on sexist assumptions, projecting their male superiority over women (hooks, *Ain't I* 98). By adopting white males' ideology, black men often mistakenly take the weakening of black women as their strengthening, which distances both African-American men and women from solving their own community issues (Beale 148).

Historically, black men and women have been side by side when facing the obstacles and tortures imposed upon them by American mainstream society. Pauli Murray affirms that “black women have not only stood shoulder to shoulder with black men in every phase of the struggle, but they have often continued to stand firmly when their men were destroyed by it” (186). It is also important to bear in mind that, if according to traditional gender roles men have been emasculated by white patriarchal culture since slavery times, women have been also denied their womanhood. They have been obliged to work outside the home to “provide” for their family, have been denied protection by their men and even control and “sainthood” over their own bodies, a main given to white American women (Murray 187).

Africana literature dealing with black women and men's issues presents many ways black people from both sexes could work together to heal their wounds and avoid social pressure and subjugation. To achieve plenitude, both should free themselves from white patriarchal values and seek parameters that encompass and satisfy their needs and social possibilities (La Rue 167).

bell hooks observes that especially the black woman is able to help black men to heal their wounds and find their manhood (*We Real Cool* 140; 160-62). In American society, she has an “economic, social, biological, and historic outlook better than men for freeing black men's problems” (Haden, Middleton, and Robinson 177). The theory of Africana Womanism points out a series of solutions for the construction of womanhood and manhood.

First of all, race does not stand alone when it comes to oppression and subjugation. Joy E. Cranshaw in “African Queens and Messed-Up Chicks: Representations of Identity in Alice Childress's *Wine in the Wilderness*” makes an

imperial point to the issue by saying that “race, class and gender are hopelessly intertwined in our society, and points of both convergence and conflict have found their way into African American literary representations throughout the history of the United States” (59). Therefore, class problems have become racial problems (Wilson 6); whereas, previously, prejudice and social barriers were focused mainly on the racial level, in contemporaneity, they are based mostly in the lower-classes level (Wilson 1-2).

In American society, most relationships are competitive and take place within a pre-established social class. So lower-class people compete among each other for the scarce resources they are offered, while members of higher-classes compete for the larger resources available to them (La Rue 169). Therefore, although there are gender and racial issues to be faced in America, most of the obstacles people face vary enormously, and similarly, according to the social-class at which one is placed. The problems white and black men and women in the ghettos face share more similarities than the problems among higher-classes and lower-classes African Americans.

Secondly, according to Clenora Hudson-Weems, race transcends sex (26). For white women, the enemy is the white man who denies them power and voice. On the other hand, for the black community, though black women are oppressed by black men, the subjugation which comes from white society as a whole – from both white men and *women* – is a most important sanction and issue. Hudson-Weems follows by saying that

within the Africana culture, there is an intrinsic, organic equality that has always been necessary for the survival of the Africana culture, in spite of the individual personal problems of female subjugation that penetrated the Africana family structure as a result of the White male cultural system. . . . the White male's privilege is not the Africana men's or women's personal

problem but rather a political problem of unchallenged gender chauvinism in the world. (38-9)

It is understood that *most* of the struggle black men and women undergo is the same, and the changes for which both long must be achieved by union (38).

The black woman is family-centered up from the times of plantation, and this is a mechanism for survival (Hudson-Weems 59). Leland Hall affirms “that the family is where the Black male obtains his initial exposure to an environment of support, love and affection” (qtd. in Hudson-Weems 59). Sometimes, despite the fact that black women are the head in single-parented households, it does not mean that they are the “man of the house.” It is actually quite the opposite, for they are willing to provide other male members of the family with the role of decision-maker and authority figure (hooks, *Ain't I 73*). Therefore, women often sacrifice themselves in order to build black men's self-esteem.

A Raisin in the Sun stands out for conveying the importance of the black woman in the creation of a bond not only between the black woman and the black man, but also between the black man and himself. This bond is what allows the African-American man to reconnect with himself and thus reach his manhood. The strong female characters in the play, Lena, Ruth and Beneatha, not only portray the black female in African-American families as a role model, authority figure and provider, but also as the black man's healer and psychological supporter (Hannah 153).

Margaret Wilkerson, on mentioning Lorraine Hansberry, asserts that in her plays, the female characters “form the conventional circle of support for the male protagonists,” and thus “they are ultimately instrumental in the male protagonist self-realization” (126). In different levels, each of the female characters in the play helps Walter Jr., and even his

son Travis by default, to understand what manhood is, and how to reach it in healthy and constructive ways.

Lena, being the head of the household, breaks with the myth of the matriarch as a pejorative concept in female-headed households. Although Lena stands strong, at first, regarding the issue of to whom the money belongs, she shows that control and authority are not what builds a person's character, but how one uses such characteristics. By providing Walter Jr. with Walter Senior's insurance money, Lena is not giving up her authority in the household, but teaching her son how to be a man. She knows that he needs to learn by his own mistakes, and if he is not given the chance to try reaching for his dreams, namely his liquor store, he will never be able to distinguish what makes him a mature man:

MAMA: Listen to me now. I say I been wrong, son. That I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you. [*She stops and he looks up slowly at her and she meets his eyes pleadingly.*] Walter—what you ain't never understood is that I ain't got nothing, don't own nothing, ain't never really wanted nothing that wasn't for you. There ain't nothing as precious to me . . . There ain't nothing worth holding on to, money dreams, nothing else—if it means—if it means it's going to destroy my boy. . . . It ain't much, but it's all I got in the world and I'm putting it in your hands. I'm telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be.
(Hansberry 1808)

Lena realizes that she is the only person left in the world able to provide her son with dignity and tools to build his manhood. If she denies him the money, she will only reproduce what mainstream society has been doing to the black man. Furthermore, Lena's

control and educational reactions within her home are not castrating her relatives, but teaching them how to be respectable people. This is exemplified by her teaching Beneatha that her household is religious, as observed in the last chapter, and that while living under her roof their family should follow her rules.

Although buying a house in a predominantly white neighborhood can be seen as still insisting in being the head of the household, Lena is indeed providing her family, and here especially Walter, with the opportunity to begin their lives once more, but now making the right decisions. Therefore, by standing strong against the white neighborhood committee, represented by Linder, Walter can finally express his voice of authority and decision-making.

Moreover, Ruth, the second strongest female figure in the play and Walter Jr.'s wife, once mentions that “he [Walter] needs something – something I [Ruth] can't give him any more” (Hansberry 1780). Addressing Walter's dream as this missing “something,” she is actually addressing his manhood. What she completely misses is that she and the other female members of the family are the only ones capable of providing Walter with the tools to find peace with himself and achieve his manhood. Indeed, Ruth recurrently tries to compensate for Walter's missing manhood with food. She does not understand that it is not with food that she will help him, as Walter refutes: “Why you always trying to give me something to eat?” (Hansberry 1802). Besides, they have the same argument in several instances:

WALTER: . . . This morning, I was lookin' at the mirror and thinking about it . . . I'm thirty-five years old; I been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room—. . . and all I got to give him is stories about how rich white people live . . .

RUTH: Eat your eggs, Walter.

WALTER: *Damn my eggs . . . damn all the eggs that ever was!*

RUTH: Then go to work.

WALTER: . . . See—I'm trying to talk to you 'bout myself— . . . and all you can say is eat them eggs and go to work. (Hansberry 1777)

At this point, Ruth is not as attentive as her mother-in-law. She could have provided him with what he really needs, as she later does by providing him with a new baby to break with the negative cycle. She cannot see the power African-American women have to both help or destroy their men. However, Walter is able to perceive this, and it can be seen in the passage that follows the previous quote:

RUTH: [*Wearily.*] Honey, you never say nothing new. I listen to you every day, every night and every morning, and you never say nothing new. . . . So you *rather* be living in Buckingham Palace.

WALTER: That is just what is wrong with the colored woman in this world . . . Don't understand about building their men up and making 'em feel like they somebody. Like they can do something.

RUTH: [*Drily, but to hurt.*] There *are* colored men who do things.

WALTER: No thanks to the colored woman.

RUTH: Well, being a colored woman, I guess I can't help myself none. . . .

WALTER: [*Mumbling.*] We one group of men tied to a race of women with small minds. (Hansberry 1777)

Despite of all Ruth's efforts to show Walter the true meaning of manhood, Lena, his mother, is indeed the one who is able to show him that “as the saying goes, 'hurt people hurt people'” (hooks, *We Real Cool* 126). To raise a son who will make the right

decisions, Walter needs to be the role model for his son, Travis, by making himself the right decisions. This epiphany takes place when he is about to take bribery money from the white community leader Lindner, and his mother places him in a role model position by saying to her grandson: “No. Travis, you stay right here. And you make him understand what you doing, Walter Lee. You teach him good. Like Willy Harris taught you. You show where our five generations done come to” (Hansberry 1828). At this point, Walter finally acts like a “real” man and makes the right decision calling Lindner to tell him that:

we [Walter and his family] are very proud and that this is – this is my son, who makes the sixth generation of our family in this country, and that we have all thought about your offer and we have decided to move into our house because my father . . . he earned it. (Hansberry 1829)

This event portrays the so expected healing of the African-American man, and his possibility to “finally come into his manhood” (Hansberry 1830), in Walter Jr.'s own mother's words. By standing as a role model to his son and acting as the head of the household, Walter finally embodies the characteristics a man should have to be considered a “*man*.”

As a black woman, and wife, Ruth also goes through her own personal dilemma of whether to abort or not the baby she is expecting. Although she comes to the verge of making the wrong decision, she turns around with her mother-in-law Lena's help. Here, the female bonding and sense of community and family are crucial for the healing of the black family. By preventing her daughter-in-law from aborting her grandchild, Lena is helping her entire family to overcome their disruption through hope. The life growing inside Ruth is indeed the hope of a life change within the Youngers as a family.

Moreover, Walter's manhood is also affected by having a second child in the family. Being a father and having the responsibility to provide his child with not only the expected material goods, but also with a healthy role model, enables him to build his own character and, consequently, his own manhood. It is by giving Walter Jr. a family that the female characters grant him mechanisms to cope with his frustrations and psychological castration.

In addition, Walter has an advantage over Clay from *Dutchman*, for Walter has in his sister Beneatha an important mechanism for understanding the meaning of manhood. She does not see it in her boyfriend-to-be George, whom she repeatedly calls *assimilationist*. Her troubled relationship with him can be exemplified by the following excerpts from the play:

GEORGE: [*To BENEATHA.*] Look honey, we're going *to* the theater—we're not going to be *in* it . . . so go change, hum?

RUTH: You expect this boy to go out with you looking like that?

BENEATHA: . . . That's up to George. If he's ashamed of his heritage—

GEORGE: Oh, don't be so proud of yourself, Bennie—just because you look eccentric.

BENEATHA: How can something that's natural be eccentric?

GEORGE: That's what being eccentric means—being natural. Get dressed.

BENEATHA: I don't like that, George.

RUTH: Why must you and your brother make an argument out of everything people say?

BENEATHA: Because I hate assimilationist Negroes!

RUTH: Will somebody please tell me what assimila-who-ever means!

GEORGE: Oh, it's just a college girl's way of calling people Uncle Toms—but that isn't what it means at all.

RUTH: Well, what does it mean?

BENEATHA: . . . It means someone who is willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case, *oppressive* culture!

GEORGE: Oh, dear, dear, dear! Here we go! A lecture on the African past! On our Great West African Heritage! In one second we will hear all about the great Ashanti empires; the great Songhay civilizations; and the great sculpture of Bénin—and then some poetry in the Bantu—and the whole monologue will end with the word *heritage!* . . . Let's face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts! (Hansberry 1799)

By confronting George when she is wearing a Nigerian traditional robe, Beneatha ends up disapproving of his ideas in general. For being a college student, Beneatha, as most black people in the 60s, was experimenting concepts about her heritage and constructing her identity as an African American. When she calls George an assimilationist, which he indeed is, he rebukes her ideas by saying that she does not have anything to do with any African tradition but with African-American slaves in the past. His reaction is due to her calling him an Uncle Tom – in his own words. His struggles toward accepting his African-American heritage only reinforces Beneatha's willingness to give up on their relationship.

Her disapproval of his ideas and acts reaches such an extent that she complains to her mother further on: “Mama, George is a fool–honest” (Hansberry 1807). At this time,

she displays her dislike for George's approach toward their African heritage, and also of their status as African Americans. Then, she thanks her mother for finally understanding that she will not be with a man who feels ashamed of his heritage and is willing to embrace white Americans' cultural traditions and ideology.

In this respect, she indeed prefers to get emotionally involved with Asagai, a truly African man – Nigerian – who is schooled in the affairs of African people and proud of it. She also helps Walter to construct his own identity as a mature man by setting herself the model of man his brother should follow and try to pursue.

In her article “Education Has Spoiled Many a Good Plow Hand: How Beneatha's Knowledge Functions in *A Raisin in the Sun*,” Rachelle Gold perceives Beneatha's critiques of her brother Walter as bringing him down and thus serving as an obstacle that he may face (9). Although Beneatha can be sassy and sarcastic most of the time, I see these frequent instigations as a type of wake-up call to her brother. By mocking and confronting his points of view, Beneatha is actually making him reflect upon his decisions. By criticizing Walter on his dreams and manhood, Beneatha leaves up in the air the idea that the foundations upon which he is constructing his manhood are not the correct ones, as when she tells her mother: “Be on my side for once! You saw what he just did, Mama! You saw him—down on his knees. Wasn't it you who taught me—to despise any man who would do that. Do what he's going to do” (Hansberry 1827). In this moment, Beneatha is criticizing Walter for “Uncle Tomming” on Lindner to obtain financial benefits. Beneatha makes it clear that this is not the way a real man acts; she indeed calls him “no brother of hers.” Her critiques, opposing Gold's view of them, are helpful for Walter to comprehend what attitudes to take in order to be a man.

Ruth also acts in a similar way toward her husband, for she also tries to show him how distant from his manhood he is when he is talking business to George, Beneatha's suitor. Although Walter is unable to see how bored George is, his wife is constantly trying to keep him from further embarrassment by calling him out, similarly to how Beneatha's teasing remarks are a way to prevent him from shame outside the household.

Even though Gold does not see Beneatha as concerned about her family (12), she contradicts herself by stating that Beneatha does contribute to her family, but in an unclear way (18). Beneatha gets more formal education than the other member of her family, which grants her with a new perception of world. This new perception includes comprehending new ways a black man can pursue his manhood. Therefore, Beneatha is able to help Walter to get unattached from the colonized manhood ideal to look further for new ways of empowerment for the black man and his own principles.

Concerning family structure and female roles, *Blues for Mister Charlie* connects to *A Raisin in the Sun* in the way their female and male characters interact and are interwoven. Similarly, a grandmother is presented as the family head, and as such, she tries to fix things up with Richard, her grandson, by teaching him how things work in their community. Moreover, as Richard's girl, Juanita goes through the same dilemma Ruth faces, that is, she does not know what to provide her man with for his fulfillment: "I didn't know if I could be strong enough to give him what he needed for as long as he would need it" (Baldwin 32). As discussed above, what she could give him is his reconciliation with his desired manhood – she could heal him. She actually tries to settle down with him to raise a family together. However Lyle is too threatened by Richard's disruptive presence, for he questioned the white male power by going up North and living a "bad nigga" life. Richard's lifestyle made him not eligible to be part of the Southern

community anymore, and indeed led him to be murdered, as exemplified by Juanita's words to Meridian:

By and by Richard woke up and I was there. And we tried to make plans to go, but he said he wasn't going to run no more from white folks—never no more!—but was going to stay and be a man—a *man!*—right here. And I couldn't *make* him see differently. I knew what he meant, I knew how he felt, but I didn't want him to die! And by the time I persuaded him to take *me* away, to take *me* away from this terrible place, it was too late. Lyle killed him. Lyle killed him! Like they been killing all our men, for years, for generations! Our husbands, our fathers, our brothers, our sons!
(Baldwin 99)

Juanita tells Meridian that she tried to have Richard settled down with her, but his cool pose performance was too strong, as it was Lyle's grudge for being emasculated in front of his wife. The feud between the two men, filled with over-masculine assumptions, has cut Richard aspirations by its roots – by taking his life away.

The relationship Richard has with both his grandmother and Juanita, as an example of black men and women as a whole, is mutually beneficial (Hudson-Weems 66-7), for as hooks says, the black woman is the one designed to cure the man's wounds and permit him to reconcile with his manhood (*We Real Cool* 161). It is perhaps the loss of his mother under suspicious circumstances and seeing his father as unmanly for not facing the white men and not seeking for a solution for his wife's death that lead Richard to act impulsively violently, and refuse his healing through family bonding.

As a matter of fact, differently from *A Raisin*, in which the concept of matriarchy is used as a mending mechanism for Walter Jr.'s manhood, *Blues* lacks the *strong* female

characters. Firstly, Mother Henry is not as focused in the role of the head of household as Lena; she advises her grandson Richard but does not interfere too much in both her son and grandson's lives and decisions. Differently from Lena, in the sense that she uses everything in her power to lead her son, and family as a whole, to the right direction, Mother Henry's voice is unheard in the play. Secondly, by being supposedly killed by a white person, Richard's mother does not help him and Meridian to heal; in fact, their wounds get deeper. She is a figure who haunts her male relatives for being unable to protect her from the white man, emasculating them even further, as suggested by the following speech of an enraged Richard:

. . . I'm going to treat every one of them as though they were responsible for all the crimes that ever happened in the history of the world—oh, yes! They're responsible for all the misery *I've* ever seen, and that's good enough for me. It's because my Daddy's got no power that my Mama's dead. And he ain't got no power because he's *black*. And the only way the black man's going to *get* any power is to drive all the white men into the sea. (Baldwin 21)

Embedded in this race-hate discourse, the trigger for Richard to feel the way he feels is his mother's death; it has caused his father to have no actions, for he is black, and has generated the frustrations that led Richard up North. Moreover, her death also haunts Meridian, as when he confesses to Juanita: “But my confidence—my confidence—was destroyed back there when I pulled back that rug they had her covered with and I saw that little face on that broken neck. . . I keep seeing her the last time I saw her, whether I'm awake or asleep” (Baldwin 98). Meridian cannot take his dead wife's image out of his head, so he is not able to proceed with his life, forgive white people, nor find a new

partner. Mrs. Henry is then a major trigger for *Blue's* characters dissatisfaction. The lack of strong African-American women in the Henry's family to intervene in the male members' decisions breaks with the possible ways they could mend their manhood. It deprives them from the most basic mechanism black men have to reach for their manhood, namely, the African-American woman's help and bonding.

Indeed, after trying his life in the North and finding himself sinking deeper in problems and frustrations, Richard realizes that neither drugs nor “fucking” white women could heal his wounds. It is only by getting back to his hometown and to his familiar environment that healing might be possible. Even though he sees his father as a weak figure, who does not question white authority, he still respects him both as a father and as a religious figure. The paradoxical aspect in this familiar relation is that Richard functions more as a channel for his father to reach his manhood than the other way round.

Richard's death is a big catalyst in the play, for through his death, both he and his father are able to reach manhood. Richard only has his epiphany that he had already reached his manhood by his death site. His perception of not being man enough comes from white people, like Lyle, who, feeling emasculated and threatened by the black male, make black men feel as unmanly and lacking masculine characteristics:

RICHARD: You sick mother! Why can't you leave me alone? White man! I don't want nothing from you. You ain't got nothing to give me. You can't eat because none of you sad-assed chicks can cook. You can't talk because won't nobody talk to you. You can't dance because you've got nobody to dance with—don't you know I've watched you all my life? *All my life!* And I know your women, don't you think I don't—better than you!

...

Why have you spent so much time trying to kill me? Why are you always trying to cut off *my* cock? You worried about it? Why? (Baldwin 119-20)

Lyle only kills Richard because Richard has emasculated him in front of his own wife: “LYLE: I had to kill him then. I'm a white man! Can't nobody talk that way to *me!*” (Baldwin 120). Indeed, by that time, Richard should have realized that true manhood is not found in aggressiveness or killing the white “enemy,” but in building a structural family and being a role model for them, like Juanita wanted him to.

As for Meridian, when he sees his dead son, he finally wakes up to the reality that black and white men still had a lot of ground to cover to have a stable relationship:

The question put to him! All right. Do you accept this answer? I am a man. *A man!* I tried to help my son become a man. But manhood is a dangerous pursuit, here. And that pursuit undid him because of *your* guns, *your* hoses, *your* dogs, *your* judges, *your* law-makers, *your* folly, *your* pride, *your* cruelty, *your* cowardice, *your* money, *your* chain gangs, and *your* churches! Did you think it would endure forever? that we would pay for *your* ease forever? Yes! I *am* responsible for the death of my son. I—hoped—I prayed—I struggled—so that the world would be different by the time he was a man than it had been when he was born. And I thought that—then—when he looked at me—he would think that I—his father—had helped to change it. (Baldwin 103-4)

When questioned by The State during Lyle's trial, Meridian is finally able to understand the obstacles his son, and black men in general, suffer in the South, so he can finally achieve his own manhood. Opposite to the Father-Son relation, in which the Son learns from the Father's mistake, in *Blues*, Baldwin plays with this notion by allowing Meridian

to learn from Richard, indeed from his death, how to pursue his manhood and become a black *man*.

Meridian also has an epiphany in two important areas in his life: being in a relationship, and being a community leader. He realizes that he is not old enough to pursue a family and a wife of his own. Although Juanita turns him down, he sees that it is still possible to be open to a new relationship. Moreover, he understands that he could also stand up as a leader for his black community. As a black minister, he should place himself in a more active role to defend his community's interests. Although Richard is dead, the example set by his death triggers his father's awareness of his manhood, maybe also causing a catharsis in the play's audience.

Furthemore, Richard's desire to finally fix his manhood is actually guided by Juanita's attempt to build a family with him. Her perception of life, and of the black community for that matter, is, as established above, alike other black women: family centered. By providing Richard with a family, she could mend his wounds and help him reach his manhood. She wanted to act as Ruth, for having a baby would freshen up their family with a breeze of hope. Their only difference is that Ruth was more connected to her husband, due to their history together, than Juanita was with Richard. Indeed, if it were not for his argument with Lyle, her influence upon Richard would probably lead him on the path to heal his manhood and raise a family together with her.

Besides, her figure also served as a reconciliatory aspect to Meridian. Richard indeed confronts his father about their relationship, and only after Father Henry denies involvement with Juanita is that Richard pursues further contact with her. Nonetheless, it is Meridian's interests in Juanita, and a discussion they have on that topic, that brings an epiphany regarding his masculinity:

MERIDIAN: Before he came—I wasn't just making it all up, was I? There was something at least—beginning—something dimly possible—wasn't there? I thought about you so much—and it was so wonderful each time I saw you—and I started hoping as I haven't let myself hope, oh, for a long time. I knew you were much younger, and I'd known you since you were a child. But I thought that maybe that didn't matter, after all—we got on so well together. I wasn't making it all up, was I?

JUANITA: No. You weren't making it up—not all of it, anyway, there was something there. We were lonely. You were hoping. I was hoping, too—oh, Meridian! Of all the people on God's earth I would rather die than hurt!
(Baldwin 98)

His argument with her about their relationship lined up with his son's death leads Meridian to finally start healing his wounds and rebuilding his life.

In the previous chapter, the relationship black men have with white women was discussed as being a response to oppression. Black man sees “fucking” white women as a pay back to white mainstream society. In regards to black men's relationship with white women, bell hooks also mentions that this relationship is another aspect of which white men make use to prevent African-American men to reach their manhood. Presented as a solution for black men, the oppression of white women, and therefore women as a whole, only furthers the mechanism of sexism and racism (*Ain't I* 113). By attaching themselves to white women, black men make black women feel as unworthy of black men's attention, thus disrupting their mutual beneficial bond.

The *black* woman is the one capable of curing the man's wounds and permitting him to reconcile with his manhood. A white woman can bring black man's manhood up

to surface, but she is not able to mend its brokenness. For instance, in *Dutchman*, Lula teasing and mocking work as a wake-up call to Clay, who, as stated previously, is considered an assimilationist, an “Uncle Tom.” By acting this way, Lula addresses his inner self, his true self, mainly when she clearly states the theme of their conversation: “About what? About your manhood, what do you think? What do you think we've been talking about all this time?” (Baraka 1954). Therefore, the white woman serves as a reflection and a tool employed by white society to psychologically castrate the black man. Because of the threat Clay's manhood represents to white men and society, he is killed by the one who wakes up his manhood; moreover, Lula is supported by the other white passengers in the subway car, a representation of society's castration of the black men.

Clay's death is not, by any means, a statement of his non-achievement of manhood, but on the very contrary, achieving his manhood caused his death. The fatalistic fate of the play is due to Amiri Baraka's deterministic view on the assimilation of white patriarchal society, which marked the specific imaginary of the sixties. As a matter of fact, the main issues addressed in *Dutchman* can be considered both manhood construction and, specially important and highlighted, assimilation. The play ponders throughout its plots on duality between the apparent benefits of assimilating white patriarchal values, and the real benefits of freeing black people's true selves for their own fulfillment, even if they should confront the “castrating” hegemonic society, as Clay ends up doing.

Regarding Amiri Baraka, bell hooks remarks that he had quite a sexist/patriarchal vision of the relation between black men and women. Details apart, his message was that black men should be the subjugating authority within the black family (*Ain't I* 94). In

Dutchman, his perception of black women, and women in general for that matter, supports hooks's statement. There is no strong black female character in the storyline nor does the white female antagonist help Clay in any profitable way. It is also true that she helps him achieve his manhood by default, which results in his death.

The lack of strong African-American female figures, family structure, or black community in *Dutchman* pre-establishes that Clay will not be able to mend his manhood positively. The play does not display any factor that helps Clay to heal his wounds. Lula is indeed the representation of white society; she helps Clay wake up to his manhood without caring for his thriving in society. Linda La Rue mentions that even though white women were affected by sexism, they could not understand racism or the junction of racism and sexism altogether, for they were *suppressed* not *oppressed*, both words which carry different assumptions and meanings. While suppression is a lack of voice, La Rue adds, oppression implies a strong and unexplained sanction (166).

In the three plays, we can see that African-American men have a vast array of options to overcome white patriarchal society's pressure and regain control over their lives. Nonetheless, as the examples provided here show, the black female figure is a major factor in the mending process black men need to undergo. In this process, black men reach the realization that their psychological castration is in fact a result of white men's fear of black masculinity. As a matter of fact, the issue of manhood is always anchored on racial and social principles, but above all, on sexist ones. The relation men and women have within American society is crucial for the construction of the masculine and feminine concepts.

As established above, in the plays in which there are strong female characters, as in *A Raisin*, for instance, the African-American male characters are able, even if through

their own mistakes, to reach their manhood positively. With the help of his mother, wife and sister, Walter Jr. is able to use the tools he has to make the right decision for him and his family as a whole, thus making him a real man, as he mother says. If not for those female characters, he would be dragged even deeper by their black male “friends,” and by white society who insisted in taking advantage over him.

Even though there are African-American female characters in *Blues*, the girlfriend and grandmother figures are voiceless in the play, or at least, not as voiced as in *A Raisin*. Both Juanita and Mother Henry try to guide Richard on the right path, but their lack of influence over him prevents them from leading him to success. Moreover, the haunting of Mrs. Henry's figure, whose death is a major element within the Henry family, enhances the feeling of emasculation in both Richard and Meridian. Indeed, both characters are able to find their manhood; however, it is necessary for them to find further strategies to reconcile with themselves apart from women's help, and their success is not attained either way. For starters, Richard's death is the main catalyst for both his and his father's awakening. Apart from Juanita's positive impact upon both Meridian and Richard, they only find reconciliation through loss within the racialized social structure of the South from the sixties. She plays the role of the female figure and family in the healing of the African-American man and community. Her influence comes too late, though; Richard has a quarrel to solve with Lyle and is led to his death, while Father Henry is prevented to further his relation with her because of her relation to his late son.

None of these two plays have a worst case scenario than *Dutchman*, as it can be perceived by the lack of strong black female characters in it. Clay does wake up to his manhood, but the venues through which he reaches it are in themselves castrating; they are not as mending as when black women are involved.

The provocations incited by Lula, a representation of the whole white American society, serve as a call for his manhood, but they are nonetheless an attempt of suppression. Although, as a female, Lula wants Clay to empower himself as a man, she is not African-American, thus she does not comprehend a major part of his problems, nor does she want to lose her privileges as a white person in the United States. Therefore, this contradiction brings Clay to finally comprehend where his manhood lies, but he ends up finding his death by the very white mainstream society who enforces the castration of the black man.

African-American men, as exemplified in these plays, are invited to work together with African-American women for they share the same problems within mainstream society. Their mutual help is beneficial in view of their common “enemy,” the white man. Perception of people tainted by status or sexism should be put aside, or left to the white man, if black communities want to thrive and mend their brokenness, inherited from their shared past in colonial slavery, segregation and racism across American history.

The construction of an African-American ethos opposing white principles is a first step for mending black communities and finding ways to build healthy African-American manhood and womanhood models. To reject the models set by white mainstream society, which is sexist, racist and socially biased, is fundamental for African-American people to find their way back to their roots and their completeness. African-American men need to find their model of masculinity in their ancestors and union with African-American women, and thus adapt it to their reality so they can prosper and survive within American contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

In this work I intended to analyze the construction of African-American masculinities by examining the male characters in the plays *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Dutchman* and *Blues for Mister Charlie*, with the objective of showing that they undergo a similar range of obstacles, react to them in an approximate way, and seek for healing in comparable mechanisms, which make their process of constructing their masculinities closely related. Regarding this process, the issues of obstacles and reactions were emphasized, as I expected to demonstrate that African-American men constructing their manhood face a similar share of obstacles, and also respond to them in a corresponding pattern. Moreover, the use of plays, especially from the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America, during the 1960s, came from the assumption that African-American culture is highly theatrical, and plays serve as a denouncing tool for African-American issues.

Drama, as stated throughout this study, plays an important part in building African-American culture and tradition. Inherited from African traditions, African-American discourse plays with several levels of cognition which can carry several different messages within a same passage. Inserted in a context of slavery culture, in which black people had no rights for stating their minds, by signifying they could dodge oppressive forces and pass along their hidden ideologies and complaints.

Moreover, the moment which the 60s represent to the black community presents one of the best genres for analysis: militant literature. Such literature, more than other types from different times in African-American history, serves as a tool to denounce

African-American problems and raise awareness and pride regarding their ethnicity and culture.

Therefore, the three plays analyzed in this work present vivid examples of the construction of masculinities by African-American men. Portraying a moment of change and reevaluation of the black persona, the three plays present fruitful material to reflect and investigate upon.

Furthermore, prior to the analysis of the three plays, in chapter one, a discussion of the relevance of the study of masculinities, and thus a delimitation of the topic and theory to be used in this work are presented. Although the audience may wonder that the literary focus of this thesis could have been lost in this first chapter, in Cultural Studies it is difficult to attain to the literary text when the basis for its discussion is presented by sociology and other academic fields. By discussing Gender Studies through the perspective of masculine issues, I aimed at positing that the study of manhood is as valid and fruitful as the field of study of Feminism, as well as controversial and emblematic.

For this matter, the delimitation of hegemonic masculinity is essential because once it is clear that subjugated masculinities look up to the hegemonic model to build themselves, the models and patters it follows also interest in the construction of the African-American models. Concepts such as men being the breadwinner, provider, head of the household, as well as virile, strong, and smooth are crucial for the construction of both hegemonic and African-American masculinities, as stated previously in this research.

Richard Majors and Janet Billson also present us with a vital concept to the construction of African-American masculinities, the “cool pose.” According to them, this strategy, which resembles the way African ancestors positioned themselves before life, is

used nowadays as a double-edged sword. While it may serve as a tool to disguise black men's suffering and fear in face of white mainstream society, it is currently used as a tool to promote violence and crimes, as black men want to look “smooth” and fearless to their equals.

In the three plays, we can see the role of power, and for that matter the lack of it, in the construction of masculinities. Walter Jr., Clay and Richard aim at having more power, and social and family status to feel as real “men.” In this regard, money and job opportunities also play a strong role in such construction. Walter Jr. fights his mother and family for the control over his father's insurance money so he can provide for his family and feel as in control. Concurrently, Richard has an urge to prove to his Whitetown nemesis that he is in control of his own life, and does not bow to anyone. Moreover, Clay reacts to Lula's taunting by showing her that he is not afraid of white mainstream society and by rebuking that they are the ones who should be afraid of him.

Moreover, in all plays, it is observed that in face of the threatening of black men standing for themselves and trying to be free from white subjugation, white society reacts by further emasculating the black man. In *A Raisin*, Lindner, the one responsible for Clybourne Park Improvement Association, the white neighborhood to which the Youngers are moving, tries to prevent the black family of mixing with the whites through bribery and threatening. Worse than in the previous play, Lula, in *Dutchman*, kills Clay for stepping up for himself and his ideals. Similarly, Whitetown and Lyle, in *Blues*, repel the claim for equality between them and Blacktown, and through their fear of black equality, Lyle kills Richard and is supported by the white legal system of his Southern town.

In the three cases, the black male characters respond to these obstacles in similar ways. Walter Jr. gets angry and finds in drinking and going outside his household an outlet for his frustration. Moreover, at first, he sees in exploring back the white man as a viable way of scoring some privileges and calming his own self. In *Blues*, Richard goes to the North in search of his manhood and ideals, and ends up hustling himself into becoming a male prostitute, a drug addict and a convict. Furthermore, back in the South, his way of venting is by threatening the white male community pillar, Lyle, so as to make him go through what Richard, himself, was feeling in the inside. Likewise, Clay has his outburst toward Lula by claiming his powerful positioning and awareness toward white oppression, and threatening their welfare.

Nonetheless, only one among the three plays displays a positive construction of masculinity and real success of its character toward reaching his manhood. The results are due to the analysis made in chapter three, especially regarding the role of black women to black manhood construction.

To heal their wounds, black men should reject the pattern that imprisons and consequently subjugates them, in favor of a model that celebrates and empowers their characteristics and traditions. In this context, black women provide their men with tools to fight oppression and to get their pride of being black men back. They have the sensibility to notice the traps set up by mainstream society and thus are able to dodge the system and gather strength to support the black man to do the same.

Moreover, black women are indeed able to boost black men's confidence in themselves and thus feel comfortable being who they are, finally positively reaching their maturity as men. According to that, Ruth Younger with the help of her mother-in-law Lena and sister-in-law Beneatha helps Walter Jr. to construct a positive model of

manhood and thrive as the head of household and as a father. Juanita, in *Blues*, as well as Mother Henry also try to do the same for Richard, but Lyle is faster than them and is able to kill Richard first. In his turn, Clay does not have any powerful black female to boost his confidence, so the same trigger which wakes up his manhood, Lula, is the same to psychologically castrate and kill him.

As seen through the analysis of the three plays, the construction of African-American manhood happens similarly to every black man, but its results depend on the environment of which he is part, including: where he lives – North, South, small town, or big city –, the people who surround him, his social class, his success in professional life, and the women with whom he interacts. Depending on the sum of problematic situations in which he is involved, the harder his construction of masculinity might be, and the highest probability to fail might be presented to him.

Throughout this work, I hope to have made clear that the construction of masculinities, as a general concept, is influenced by a series of factors, including, but not exclusively: sexuality, class, race, age, nationality, historical context, gender, location, and social status. African-American masculinities are no different from that. I hope with this study I can help other researchers who approach this field of studies to analyze the different constructions of masculinities dealing with the back and forth influence of these different vectors upon one another.

Moreover, I hope I have contributed to the field of African-American masculine construction, African-American literature, and masculine construction as a sociological field, providing relevant source material so other scholars may rely on it for substantiating their research. I hope as well to have provided myself with the first steps to deepen my studies in this field, maybe now opening venues to observe other plays or

literary texts regarding the influence of the other factors on masculine construction within the African-American community and literature.

APPENDIX

Heloisa Cardoso (52-3)¹⁵

1) Way of thinking

Masculine Attributes	Feminine Attributes
– analysis	– diffuse conscience
– categorization	– form
– causality	– imagination
– classification	– undifferentiated
– comparison	– holism
– focused conscience	– circular logic
– content	– no causality
– creation in the plan of ideas	– no judgment
– differentiation	– archetypal possibilities
– duality	– relativism
– understanding	– similarities
– hierarchy	– synthesis
– information	– unit
– inventiveness	
– judgment	
– linear logic	
– order	
– polarity	
– rationality	
– separation	

2) Way of feeling

Masculine Attributes	Feminine Attributes
– assertion	– affection, care
– self-assurance	– help, support
– self-confidence	– listening capability

¹⁵ Translation to English by this author.

– distrust	– complacence
– independence	– consent
– intolerance	– complaisance
– isolation	– connection
– normativeness	– trust, reception
– stiffness	– devotion, kindness
	– surrender
	– patience
	– spontaneity
	– interdependence
	– bond
	– maternal
	– protection
	– receptivity, acceptance
	– relation
	– relationship
	– reserve
	– service
	– union

3) Way of acting

Masculine Attributes	Feminine Attributes
– autonomy	– communion, complementarity
– assessment	– adaptation
– culture, civilization	– circularity, cyclic
– directivity	– creation, generation
– proactive strategy	– art, conception

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