

Jennifer Wilmot

Major: English Literature and Communications

University: Chestnut Hill College

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sw. Anand Prahlad

Mentor Department: English

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"Either he was too weak, or the world was too strong": Motifs of male wounds and healing in African American literature

Jennifer M. Wilmot and Sw. Anand Prahlad

African American men throughout history have tried to establish and define their identities, collectively and individually, beyond those formed, forced, and fashioned by western civilization. Consequently, they have inflicted pain and despair, consciously and subconsciously, on the entire race, Black women, and regrettably themselves. African American literature, fictional and non-fictional, has served as a measure capable of providing a study of the African American experience as a whole. In examining its works, readers meet the achievements and failures, hindrance and progression of its people. HTML In this research I will briefly examine through literary analysis the intense emotional wounds and perspectives of two archetypal males in African American non-fiction and poetry; the severely indignant and the emotionally detached character. I will investigate relationships between the male character, their female counterparts and children if existent through the novels, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, *Native Son*, and *In My Father's House*, as well as the poetry of Etheridge Knight. Specifically, I will determine the origin, infliction, and potential healing of their wounds by analyzing certain influences in their lives such as; being slaves or direct descendants of slaves, the household conditions they grew up in physically and psychologically, the presence and/or absence of parents, and the impression of Christianity. Furthermore, I will explore the suggestions made by the authors on how these characters, if possible, can regain their manhood.