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Revenge and Reconciliation in Ernest J. Gaines' *A Gathering of Old Men*

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Dedication 1

I would like to dedicate this work to

My mother and father

My brothers and sister

My close friends

Ahmedamsi. I

Dedication 2

I would like to dedicate this work

To my parents

My dear wife

My family and friends

Belhadj. B

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We thank ALLAH for helping us to accomplish this work.

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Abstract

This research is a thematic study that studies the themes of revenge and reconciliation in Ernest J. Gaines' *A Gathering of Old men* novel. This work is divided into three chapters. Chapter one is about the historical, social and personal background of the novel *A Gathering of Old Men* during the Post-civil rights movement era. Chapter is the theoretical part in which we discuss the themes and styles of African American Literature during the Post-civil rights movement. In chapter three we analyze excerpts from the novel in order to look at the ways in which the themes of revenge and reconciliation manifest themselves.

Key words: Revenge, Reconciliation, African America literature, Post-Civil rights movement.

List of Abbreviations

BPP: Black Panther Party.

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigations

LSU: Louisiana State University

NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

PCRM: Post-Civil Rights Movement

SCLC: Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SSAC: Soul Student Advisory Council

UNIA: Universal Negro Improvement Association

USA: United States of America

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Revenge and reconciliation are familiar themes in the African American literature. The African American literature has tackled these themes especially in the southern part of US in order to convey a message of years of suffering and social inequality. Ernest .J. Gaines uses these two themes in his work *A Gathering of Old Men* for the same reason. Gaines uses in his novel *A Gathering of Old Men* the physical act of standing as a symbolic representation of coming to dignity and manhood. That has represented the psychology of the southern African Americans in the modern civil rights era, as a way of taking responsibility to represent their attitudes. We aim to spotlight on the reasons of revenge in the south of US according to Gaines' *A Gathering of Old Men*. We aim also to show how reconciliation and integration could be a solution to end racism and violence.

1. Aims of the study

We aim in this study to show the ways in which the themes of revenge and reconciliation manifest themselves through the narrative. We argue that these two themes are constant in the novel and this shows the extent to which they are important for both the writer and the historical period in which the story is set.

2. Research Questions

1. How does Ernest .J. Gaines represents the themes of revenge and reconciliation in the post-civil rights movement era in his novel *A Gathering of Old Men*
2. To what extent has the civil rights movements failed to end segregation in the rural south in the US?
3. To what extent can be the justice be efficient in ending violence in the rural south of the US in Gaines' novel *A Gathering of Old Men*?
4. What are the main images of integration in Gaines' *A Gathering of Old Men*?

3. Statement of the problem

This study investigates the failures of the civil rights movement in ending the old attitudes of taking revenge and to which extent the reconciliation is the best solution to end racial issues according to Ernest .J. Gaines' *A Gathering of Old Men*.

4. Research Hypotheses

The consequences of the modern civil rights movement create new attitudes in dealing with violence in the American's southern states; the images of revenge and reconciliation which are respectively represented in a way of seeking peace through strength and finding viable mechanisms for integration.

5. Objectives of the study

Our study aims to reach at the end all of these points:

1. Extracting the images of revenge and reconciliation in Gaines' novel *A Gathering of Old Men*.
2. Assess the achievements and failures of the civil rights movements in ending segregation in the rural south of the US.
3. Shows how justice would be the last solution in ending violence from the novel *A Gathering of Old Men*.
4. Extracting the main images of integration in Gaines' novel *A Gathering of Old Men*.

6. Methodology

Our dissertation is a thematic study. We analyze the themes of revenge and reconciliation through studying the narrative and dialogues in Gaines' novel. We also use the concepts of the postcolonial theory to analyze the effects of whites' use of power and oppression on African Americans. In addition to that we can integrate the African American literary criticism theory to understand the themes of revenge and reconciliation which examining by the African American community during the post-civil rights movement.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is about the historical, social and personal background of the novel *A Gathering of Old Men* during the Post-civil rights movement era. The second chapter is the theoretical part in which we discuss the themes and styles of African American Literature during the Post-civil rights movement. In the third chapter we analyze excerpts from the novel in order to look at the ways in which the themes of revenge and reconciliation manifest themselves.

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Introduction

This chapter deals with the historical, social and personal background. We are going to describe the historical period from the 1950s to 1970s because it has a direct relation to *Ernest J. Gaines*'s works in general and to his Novel, *A Gathering of Old Men* in particular. We begin with 1954, when the NAACP reached one of its main goals which is the issue of desegregation in republic schools (Karson, 2005, p.13-14). As that long period had known many changes, we have seen that it would be better to divided into two main periods.

The first period will be the Civil Rights Movement era because it has an important role in *Ernest J. Gaines*'s works; so it can give us a clear idea about his rationale and ideology. In addition to that, it is holding the major important events that could be the reason of *Gaines*' writing. We will show how it was born and how it developed. We will talk about its main leaders and we will list its main goals during that period. The second period will be the Post-civil rights era; because it is the period of the novel, which we are dealing with, and because it is representing the big changes of the African American situations in their society. We will give its historical description, give its leaders, laws, and give some of its main events. Last and not least, the personal background explores *Ernest J. Gaines*' biography, works, style, themes and his personal political views during those periods.

1. Historical background

1.1. Civil rights movement from 1950 to 1960

1.1.1. Civil rights movement background

The civil right movement was born from the inspiration of the organization NAACP, which established in 1909 by a group of whites and blacks. The main of its co-founders was Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois who edit the *Crisis* magazine after four years later to higher the voice of the NAACP. The main goal of this organization was to stand against segregation in public schools which known as the Brown v. Board of Education issue. Even though the NAACP was one of the earliest movements, it knew how to continue steadily for a long period to achieve its objectives with the non-violence techniques, which stand on the role of the Courts. The 1954 was the year of the NAACP's victory and all of colored American people in the US when it finally achieved one of its main goals when the Supreme Court declared that segregation is not legal in public schools anymore. The movement did not stop at this achievement and continued claiming its issues and organizing political demonstration like

the March on Washington in 1963. The NAACP later has achieved other goals that are the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and Voting Act in 1965. (Karson, 2005)

1.1.2. Civil rights movement leaders

a. W.E.B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois the co-founder of the NAACP and a Pan-Africanism supporter was born in Massachusetts on February 23, 1868. In 1895, he was the first African American earning a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Du Bois was one of the great loud voices who called for African-American rights during the first half of the 20th century. He co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. Du Bois played a big role in arranging several Pan-African Congresses to free African colonies. He died in Accra Ghana on August 27, 1963, just one day before Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. (Biography -W.E.B. Du Bois, nd)

b. Rosa Parks

The famous African American civil rights activist Rosa Parks was born in 4 February on 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama. After her mother divorce, Rosa Parks followed her mother to Pine Level, Alabama to stay at her grandfather's house. She studied in segregated schools, in Pine Level and Montgomery. She worked in factory in Montgomery. In 1932, Rosa married Raymond Parks, an active member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. After that She get in civil rights activities by joining the Montgomery section of the NAACP in 1943 and become a secretary to NAACP President E.D. Nixon until 1957. Her refusal to give her seat to a white man was a big reason in the Montgomery Bus Boycott 1955, because of the boycott; the segregation law in transportation ended on December 20, 1956. Rosa Parks received many awards in her lifetime; she died in Detroit, Michigan on October 24, 2005. (Biography-Rosa Park, nd)

1.1.3. Civil rights movement acts

a. Civil right act of ending segregation 1954 in public schools

The hard continues series activities of the civil rights movement with the non-violence techniques of the NAACP finally have seen the benefits of a long period of fights. After several well organized acts against the Jim Crow laws. Hereby, the Supreme Court decree On May 17, 1954 to end any kind of segregation in public schools and supposed Jim Crow laws as illegal laws. Days after days, the civil rights movement became more aware and confident about the end of segregation. (History-Brown v. Board of Education Re-enactment, 2009)

b. The Montgomery Bus Boycott

The event started in Montgomery, Alabama from 5 December in 1955 to December 20, 1956 when Rosa Parks, the NAACP member refused to give her seat for a white man in The Montgomery Bus Boycott when she was going back to her home from work. Parks arrested and interred jail for her illegal action. Parks took the chance and she wanted her case to be heard by the public and make it as a political issue. Martin Luther King, the leader of the civil rights movement supported her and called to abstain of riding Montgomery buses. The Black citizens took a decision and decided to refrain riding the buses for a long period and take the blacks' taxis or walking by their feet to their works or activities instead. Even though The Montgomery bus issue jailed Parks and cost her and King a lot of money, but it was the first step of the civil rights movement in the political areas. (Michael Jay, 2008).

1.2. Post-Civil rights movement from 1960 to 1980**1.2.1. Southern Christian Leadership Conference**

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is an African American organization has established on 10 January, in 1957, in Atlanta. It has started by the gathering of sixty black ministers and civil rights leaders to appreciate the success of the new non-violence technique of the Alabama bus-boycott movement, which impressed them, to think about other non-violence techniques in the future. The (SCLC) in its beginning was holding just its full-time staff and after a period, another groups like the Sit-In and Freedom riders have joined it. In 1961 the (SCLC) was started its first actions in a form of the marches that organized by the Students Non-violence Coordination Committee (SNCC) movement but this campaign was failed because of the lack of experience and the bad planning. Even though it was hard time for the African American community with the Police pressure, murder, burning their houses; The (SCLC) continued its fighting till it started gaining the success in 1963 which noticed by Martin Luther King's motivation letter from Birmingham jail. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference gained its big success during the President John F. Kennedy presidency who supported the African American rights and declared later the Civil rights Act in 1964 and Voting Act in 1965. The (SCLC) did not stop just at this, it continued defending its issues and even after the death of Martin Luther King, it kept working for the sake of human rights. (Nancy, nd)

1.2.2. Martin Luther King Jr. And the SCLC

Martin Luther King Jr. the co-founder and best-known African American leader of the civil rights movement; he was born in Georgia on January 15, 1929. He played a big role in stopping the Jim Crow laws of segregation in the United States; also in his leading period; the civil rights movement created The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957, which succeed to achieve the civil rights act of 1964, and the voting rights acts of 1965. He made cooperation with “sit-in” movement and they create the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. King was imprisoned several times. On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. and his supporters made the historic March on Washington with more than 200,000 people in the shade of the Lincoln Memorial where he made his famous speech "I Have a Dream". He gained the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. A sniper assassinated him on April 04, 1968. (Biography-Martin Luther King Jr, nd)

1.2.3. Nation of Islam

The originally Saudi man Wallace D, Fard who believed that Islam is appropriate religion for the blacks because it gives them the same equal rights with the whites, established Nation of Islam (NOI) in 1930 in Detroit. After Fard left to the Saudi Arabia, The Nation of Islam has led by Elijah Muhammad in 1934. During Muhammad’s leadership to the (NOI), it earned several thousands of followers in all of Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee and other cities. Even though the Nation of Islam was established and known later, but it was widespread attention after the joining of Malcolm X in 1952 who became its Spokesman later. Malcolm was established a Newspaper called *Muhammad speaks* which gained huge number of followers. Malcolm X left the organization in 1964 and let Elijah Muhammad leading it until his death in 1975. After Muhammad’s death, Louis Farrakhan replaced his leadership in 1978 and new it. (William M, 2003)

1.2.3.1. Nation of Islam leaders

a. Elijah Muhammad

Elijah Muhammad, the leader of Nation of Islam organization after Wallace Fard was born 7 October 1897 in Sandersville, Georgia. He is one the son of the minister Wallace Poole and Mariah. He Joined the Public School where he received his basic knowledge before he drubbed out to help his family with working. Muhammad was married with Clara Evans in 1919. In 1923, he left his hometown Detroit to live in North. He met Wallace Fard the founder of the nation of Islam and he joined his organization in 1931. Muhammad became later the chief

of the National of Islam and the head leader of the organization when Fard left the US to Saudi Arabia. Muhammad met many other Islamic groups and civil rights leaders before his successes to attract Malcolm X to join his organization. Elijah Muhammad stayed the leader of the Nation of Islam until his death on 25 February 1975 in Chicago. (Nikolaus, nd)

b. Malcolm X

Malcolm X was born in 19 May on 1925, in Omaha Nebraska. He was one of the best-known African American nationalist leaders; he was the voice of the Nation of Islam between 1950s and 1960s. He was born for a father who was a member in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), that what make him experience the harassment acts from the racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. His family moved from city to another to avoid those acts until the death of his father in a car accident after that Malcolm X's siblings had been taken to an adoptive home. After he left school in 1939, he went to Boston where he became a drug dealer he had been arrested and prisoned for ten years. In the prison he adopted the Nation of Islam rules and changed his name from Malcolm Little to Malcolm X, he was released in 1952. He became a chairman for Nation of Islam, his ideas where not welcomed to Martin Luther King. In 1964, he breaks up with the Nation of Islam again because of his thoughts. He went to North Africa and Middle East and made the Hajj in Saudi Arabia again, he changed his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. Malcolm X was assassinated on the evening of February 21, 1965, in Manhattan, where he was about to deliver a speech. (Biography-Malcolm X, nd)

1.2.4. Black Panther Party

1.2.4.1. Black Panthers Background

The black power era is known by several movements, which were claiming for black rights. One of the most important movements was the panther party, which established in 1966 by Bobby Seal and Huey Newton who were members of group called Soul Student Advisory Council (SSAC). These two students have conceptualize the theories and ideology of the party; they were 24 years old when they began to create this ideology. As much as any movement, the panther party had known many changes at the level of ideology, those changes refer to the perceptions and views adopted by its members particularly Newton. (Berman, 2008)

1.2.4.2. The Black Panthers ideology

During the 16 years, the perception of the party can be classified ideologically to 04 phases: The Black Nationalism, The Revolutionary socialism, The Internationalism, The Intercommunalism. However, the main thought of the party inspired its orientation from The Civil Rights Movement, which is the peaceful social reform. Since they were members of the SSAC (Soul Student Advisory Council), it was disagreement within this council between who preferred campus cultural enrichment and who advocated the community mobilization. (ibid)

In its beginning, the Panthers adopted the idea of separation to create a black nation state within America; this idea of nationalism according to panthers was the solution to protect the black heritage. By the end, the idea of Black Nationalism started to disappear while new ideology was appeared to be adopted. (ibid)

a. The Revolutionary Socialism

The reason behind moving from Black Nationalism to revolutionary can viewed in three factors respectively:

- New interpretation of race and class
- More practical conceptualization of socialist thought within the party
- The acceptance of non-black allies.

Newton referred this shift to his life and its independent reading of Mao Tse-tung works, which means appearance of an opposite front against the Capitalism and imperialism that, represents the racial struggle; the chairman Fred Hampton clarifies that the enemy are not whites, but those who called Capitalist. The Vietnam War helped the panthers to make many alliances with minorities to support their issue in considering the USA government colonized the black American as much as what happen with people in Asia and Africa. (ibid)

b. The Internationalism and Intercommunalism

After his release from prison in 1970, Newton was claiming for democracy in United State as much as can be applied in worldwide, this action was announcing new change in panther ideology to internationalism. In addition to the opening of the international, section of Black Panther in the Algerian capital Algiers because it was the refuge or anchor of revolutionaries in which they can communicate in easy way. Another idea represents the new orientation of panthers that is Intercommunalism and it found a great support from Chinese people, it reflects the Marxist-Leninist thought that is concealing the national boundaries. Finally, panther party appeared as a prominent party within the black power movement with its

ideology and orientation through that period and among changes, it could be as a model for parties, which struggle to protect and claim for rights of people over world. (ibid)

1.2.4.3. Black Panther Party Leaders

a. Huey Newton

Huey Percy Newton was born on 17 February 1942 in Monroe, Louisiana. He is a social political activist and the founder of the Black Panther Party with Bobby Seale in 1966. Newton was graduated from high school in 1959 and completes his studies at college, the San Francisco's University School of Law in and finally he gained the Ph-D in social philosophy from California University in Santa Cruz, 1980. Newton entered jail several times for obtaining weapons and the longest time in jail was for 15 years for killing a police officer in Louisiana. Newton in his latest years has surfed from drugs and drinking alcohol. Hi shot died on the street on 22 August, 1989 in Oakland, California. (Biography.com-Huey Newton, nd)

b. Bobby Seale

Bobby Seale was born on 22 October 1936 in Dallas, Texas. He moved with his family to California and studied at Berkeley high school where he started building his politics knowledge. Seale in 1955 has joined the Air force and finished in 1959. In 1962 Seale and Huey Newton have met for first time, at the rally protesting of Kennedy administration's blockade of Cuba and became friends later. Seal and his friend Huey Newton became the co-founder of the Black Panther Party in 1966 after they set its ten laws. Seale has arrested in 1968 with seven other activists and when he released from jail in 1973 Seale found that most of the Panthers have jailed or killed. He carried working on the political issues and supported the people in jails who were calling for equally rights for the blacks. (Craig, nd)

1.2.4.4. The fall of The Black panther party

The American government has seen that the BPP is dangerous on the national security of the US. The FBI used an iron hand on the members of the Black Panther Party. They declared a war on the Panthers and considered them terrorists. Many of the members of the party had killed, beaten, jailed, or exiled. The FBI was searching for all the institutions of the Panthers. They also used other black organisation to help them whether with information or murders. (Cannon, 1970)

1.2.5. Post-Civil right movement acts

a. Sit-in

This act has exactly set at 4:30 p.m. of 1 February in 1960. It is another non-violence technique, which used as a test from the young members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The event started when a group of young students decided to gathering in segregated places at local Woolworth department store lunch counter. This act has supported by the civil rights movement and many other whites who are against racism and segregation. The Sit-Ins act either was one of the new non-violence techniques which used by the civil rights movements to defied their issues in the political forums. (Michael Jay, 2008)

b. Freedom Riders

The freedom Riders is a group of students who tried another non-violence technique which crossing the law of segregation. The young tried to travel in buses, which concerned segregated and illegal action. The Freedom Riders have divided into two groups, the first in the Greyhound bus, and the second in a Trailways bus. The riders of Trailways bus have surprised by the klans who crossed the road by the rocks in bus station, break the bus windows, and tried to blow up the bus, but the police came on time and safe them. (History-Freedom Riders, 2009)

c. March on Washington

It is the most noticeable moment in the civil rights history. It settled in 28 August 1963 in Washington when many of civil rights members and religions joined with 200,000 Americans. This event has prepared for the political claims to serve the racial and job problems that blacks have suffered from. This moment either was March Martin Luther king Inspiring speech "I Have a Dream". (History-March on Washington, 2009)

d. Civil Rights Act 1964 and Voting 1965

Finally the dream became true on 2 July, 1964 and the civil rights movement achieved one of its main goals which is the public places' desegregation, when the supreme Court by Lyndon B. Johnson decree again the law which absolutely ends the segregation in public places. This law has proposed by President John F. Kennedy. A year after, the congress Issued the Voting Act of 1965 as support decision to achieve the justice for the African American people. (History-Civil Rights Act, 2010)

2. Personal background

2.1. Ernest J. Gaines' life

Ernest j. Gaines is the oldest son of Manuel and Adrienne Gaines; he was born on 15 January 1933 in Louisiana around The River Lake plantation. His father Manuel; because of the bad situations, the lack of jobs and the creased family problems forced him to leave the family and let Adrienne suffering with her seven children when Gaines was just eight years old. The hard conditions in Louisiana and the difficulties to find a job forced Adrienne to leave the Plantation and work in Orleans. She left her children with her aunt Augusteen Jefferson who has a great influence on Gaines' personality and his life because of her endless courage and fighting in her life and he considered her as the greatest person he ever knew. (Abrams, 2010).

Gaines was obligated to work hard in picking cotton at his early age to help his family. His first studying was at the church where there is no library, electricity or even desks tables as founded in republic school. Gaines was reaching his skills in writing through the letters that he was writing for his friends and neighbours. He also started writing and directing some plays in church. Gaines' dream of attending libraries and read book became true when he moved to live with his mother in Vallejo, California who married with another man. Gaines started attending Vallejo library and reading book. He interested in reading for Willa Cather and John Steinbeck's. Gaines influenced by the writing of Hemingway, Faulkner, Turgenev, Chekhov, Flaubert and Joyce who learned from them all writing techniques. After his graduating from high school, he joined the American Army and after finished service, Gaines decided to complete the bachelor's degree at San Francisco State College. After the graduated from college, Gaines waited ten more years to be a real writer he worked and seined in the application for the Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Award. Gaines won the prize and gained money and a deal with Stanford constructive feedback on his work. After 60 years old of singleness, Gaines finally married for the first time married in May 1993 with Dianne Saulney, the mother of three children. Gaines moved later to live in Louisiana with his family where he built his house. (Carmean, 1998)

2.2. Ernest J. Gaines' works

Ernest Gaines did not consider the type of literature he writes for. He ones said that if readers buy his books they are free to categorize his writing wherever they want. In the course of life, Gaines has published about seven literary works, six novels and one collection of short stories titled *Bloodline* (1968). His first touch with literature was in Vallejo Public Library in northern California. Even though he considers his moving from Louisiana the best thing that happened to him Gaines uses it as a setting for all his novels. He published his first novel

Catherine Carmier in 1964. It is a love story between a white girl and a black guy. Firstly, it was a simple story he wrote it and sent it; later on, he discovered its failure so he destroyed it. He saved the outline and then, after enhancing his creative writing in Stanford, he recalled back that outline and the story was in the can. It is about the change and its consequences. Ernest gets the technique of recalling characters from his other literary works so he would use one of the characters from *three men* in *Bloodline*. Gaines said that *Of Love and Dust* (1967) produced in order to gain the publication of his short stories *Bloodline*. This novel contains themes like the conflict between the past and change and unequal distribution of wealth and race. (Carmean, 1998)

With the inspiration of his Aunt Augustine Jefferson, whom Gaines believes has the greatest influence on him being a novelist. Ernest Gaines wrote *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* in 1971. This novel is divided into four parts "The War Years," "Reconstruction," "The Plantation," and "The Quarters". It is most well-known novel, which awards the Pulitzer Prize and adapted to a film. The good timing that he acquires this novel was published on the rising the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, it is a great explanation to the request of recognition by African Americans. (ibid)

After the success of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, Gaines wrote his novel *In My Father's House* in 1978. Gaines ones said that *In My Father's House* affected him a hug pain, he also said that he used every methodology to write it throughout seven years. In this novel, he elaborates the themes of personal responsibility and the relation between past, present, and future through his main character, the Reverend Phillip J. Martin, a sixty-year-old Baptist minister and civil rights leader in St. Adrienne, Louisiana. (ibid)

Gaines' fifth novel is *A Gathering of Old Men* (1983). Again, with the Louisiana setting this novel sheds a light on the conflict between blacks and whites. Gaines elaborates themes like manhood, justice, revenge, need of integration and others. (ibid)

In 1993, Gaines has spent seven years to write *A Lesson Before Dying*. This novel has been originally set in 1988 but due to non-answer of an Angolan prison, Gaines return back in time and set it in 1948 during the time of racism. This novel focuses on theme of manhood, elaborates by two men, a teacher and field worker who judged to death for a crime he had no direct relation with. (Ibid)

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter we identified the historical, social and the personal background of the story *A Gathering of Old Men* by Ernest J. Gaines during the civil rights movement and post-civil rights movement. We have given a general background of the civil rights and post-civil rights eras and tackled its main events and leaders. We have drawn a small image of its social situations to talk at the end about the biography of Gaines and the main things that affected his personality and his way of writing. At the end and from all of these results we have found that the post-civil rights era is a remarkable period, which holds some of the most important events in the African American literature and history.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two: Themes and Styles of the African American literature
From 1960s to 1980s

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Introduction

Toni Morrison, the African American writer once said: “We have always been imagining ourselves . . . we are the subjects of our own narratives, witnesses to and participants in our own experience. . . . We are not, in fact, other.” (Morrison, 2008). Therefore, The African American literature has known many themes. These themes are the main ones that characterize the African American literature during the post-civil rights movement or the last half of the 20th century; which most of its works can criticized just under the African American literature or Postcolonial literature criticism. Because they were the daily subjects of the African American community and representing the people who lived as a colonised and slaves for a long time. In this chapter, we are going to give a brief background of the African American literature in light of post-civil rights movement era. Then we will tackle the previous themes and styles in literary works of some well-known writers. In addition, we are going to talk about Gaines' works, style and his success.

1. African American literature and styles of the Post-civil rights era

1.1 African American writers

1.2 Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison is a famous African American writer and novelist. She was born on February 18, 1931 in Ohio. Her name was Chloe Ardelia Wofford and later changed to Toni Morrison when she published her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970. Her parents are George Wofford and Ramah Willis Wofford. Her father died just a short time after his parents' death; this why Morrison was lived with her Mather's family. They leaved to Kentucky to work in the plantations but they faced the hard way of living so moved back to Ohio. She took her first studies at Loraine where she had a strong relation with her teachers. She was the only African American students in Elementary school. She took the chance of reading many books when she was working in Lorain's library. The chance gathered her with the two famous writers Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in the same high school. She completed her master degree in literature in 1955 at Cornell University. She worked as a professor in Texas Southern University for a long period. Morrison moved to work in Howard University in Washington, D.C where she met a man from Jamaica called Harold who married her later and took her name to become Harold Morrison. (Carmen, 2008)

Morrison published her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970. Its story talking about a young girl called Pecola Breelove who is disgusted just because her race, gender and class. In 1973 Morrison was published her second novel *Sula*. This novel examining the traditions with

two African American women characters who lived together from the childhood, but they separated by the effects of changes of the modern community which do not believe in any relations of friendship. *Sula* did not attract a great number of readers as Morrison's first novel but it awarded some prizes. In 1977, Toni wrote her third novel *Song of Solomon* it is about her mother's family stories, which heard it from her mothers' father John Solomon Willis. In 1984 Morrison became the Schweitzer professor of the humanities at the state university of New York in 1984. She wrote her first play *Dreaming Emmet* in 1986. The play stands on the first character Emmet, a teenager boy, who killed in Money while he was visiting his family in 1955. Two years later, in 1987, Morrison published her fifth novel *Beloved*. The novel stands on a slave woman in Kentucky who decided to skip with her husband and their children to Ohio River to live in freedom. The novel gained many awards and selected in 1988 to win the Pulitzer Prize. In 1992 she published her sixth novel *Jazz* which tackling the theme of love and death. It is talking about a teenager woman, Joe, who moved from the rural south to New York neighborhoods in the north to find jobs but at the end, she killed in a party. In 1993, Toni Morrison published her critical text *Playing in The Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. It concerns now as a classic African American literary criticism work. In the same year Toni Morrison award the Nobel Prize in literature. (ibid)

Morrison's mother Ramah died on 17 February 1994. Nevertheless, the daughter did not stop her writing and hard working. She honored by naming a reading room with her name for her work *Degga* which talking about theatre, dance and music. In the same year, she published *To Die for the People: The Writing of Huey P. Newton* which holding the works of the black panthers Party's leader Huey P. Newton. Toni published many works which collecting her speeches and critical works. She published in 1997 her seventh novel *Paradise* which examining the existence of love and shows it's important and influence for the individuals. The novel tackles a lost women who find themselves at the edge of black town called Ruby which its people fears from the change, so they attempt to kill these lost women rather than let them influence change Ruby's traditions. The novel *Paradise* acted as a movie in Oprah Winfrey in 1998. In the same year, Morrison published a collection works of James Baldwin. In 1999, she published with her son Slade a literary collection with "*The Big Box*" which is a series of children's books and she published several poems like "*I am Not Seaworthy*", "*The Lace maker*", "*The perfect Ease of Grain*" and "*The Town Is Lit*". In 2001, Morrison and her son published their second literary collection "*The Book of Mean People*". After that, she published another poem "*Black Crazies*" in MS magazine. In 2003, she published her eighth novel "*Love*" this novel examines the theme of love in the post-civil rights movement in African American

communities. She published with her son Slade in 2003 the third collection “*The Lion or the House?*”, “*Who is Got Game?*”, and “*The Poppy or the Snake?*” in 2004. She published also in 2006 *the foregone house* and her novel *Mercy*. However, Toni Morrison carried her life with many other works which showing he creativity and hard work. She enriches the African American and the universal literature by her great works. (ibid)

2.2 Alice Walker

Alice Walker is an African American Poet, essayist and novelist and civil rights movement’s activist. She was February 9, 1944 in Eatonton, Georgia. Her father is Willie Lee Walker and her mother is Minnie Tallulah Walker. Even though her father was working just in sharecropping, but her family gave her great love and care. Alice started writing in her early age, as she known by her self-confidence. Alice, unfortunately, had an accident on her eye which caused unintentionally by her brother; but her pain and suffering did not stop her studies. She completes her scholarship at high school with a good degree, and she joined Salmon College in 1961. Her desire to be a civil rights movement activist led her to leave her studies at Salmon College because this college was not helping her future project. She moved to Alabama to stand with the civil rights movement as she had affected by act of Rosa Parks in Bayonne bus. She had the chance to be the student of Zinn who is a white teacher but he known by his helping the black people during segregation era. (Mary, 2010)

Alice published her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* in 1970. The novel talks about of a sharecropping family in the rural south. It is telling the story of Grange’s family who suffered a lot from racism and violence. The father Grange found himself obliged to skip his family to live in New York. After his leaves, his wife did not reset her misery and suicides. The son Brownfield also lived in mass and violence and he kills his wife Mem who is educated and a schoolteacher character. Mem tried to defend herself from Brownfield’s violence but her trying did not successes and he killed her just because he thought that she would control him. The father Grange, finally, returns to his family after the suicide of his wife and he fixed his bad relation with his daughter but he could not do the same with his son who is psychology completely damaged. (ibid)

In 1976, Alice wrote her second novel *Meridian*. In this novel, Alice tackles herself through the hero character Meridian Hill who is a young black woman, college student and in the same time a civil rights movement’s activist just like Alice. This character had a relation with her activist partner who became the father of her child. Meridian decided to leave her family to complete her studies. (ibid)

In 1982, Alice published her third famous novel *The Color Purple*. The story talks about a young black woman Celie who is a poor and character living in the south during the Jim Crow. Celie is a mother of two children. Their father is the person who Celie has trust on him and she put him in the place of her father but he was just tricking on her. Celie lived the misery when they took her children and lived the misery twice when her beloved sister involved with the tricky husband. Alice published in 1989 her fourth novel *The Temple of My Familiar*. She tackles in this novel feminism and womenism through her first character Miss Lissie who represents the powerful women. Alice published her fifth novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* in 1992. Alice Walker inspired the first character Tashi of this novel from another character Celie in the novel *The Color Purple* who lost everything her family, village and culture when she moved from African to America; but she is very sure about her success a strong African woman. Tashi in this novel expresses traditional female who experienced a painful life with her son Adam. In 1998, Alice published her sixth novel; *By the Light of My Father's Smile* and in 2005 published her seventh novel; *Now is The Time to Open Your Hear*. (ibid)

Alice Walker and in addition to her being a novelist, she is a poet and short stories writers too. She published many poetic works; *once* in 1968, *Revolutionary Petunias* and other Poems in 1973; *Good Night, Willing Lee, I'll See You in the Morning* in 1979, *Horses Make the Landscape Look More Beautiful* in 1984. Alice wrote in addition to these poems, she wrote many other poems. (ibid)

Alice Walker's first collection of fiction short stories was *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women* in 1973, which is a collection of fifteen short stories. Her second collection was *You Can't Keep Good Women Down* in 1981, which tackles women's experience and sensitive. Alice walker published her third collection *To the Hell With Dying* in 1994. Alice Walker later published many other stories and many essays. (ibid)

3.2 Ralph Ellison

Ralph Ellison is an African American writer. He has born on March 1, 1914 in Oklahoma City. His father is Lewis Ellison and his mother is Millsap Ellison. He lived in poverty like every southern African Americans. He started reading books about music, in his early age, from magazines and recordings of opera when his mother was working as a domestic. He took his primary educations in musical harmony, symphonic forms, songs' stories, and dances of European folk culture in a public school and Douglas school. In addition to his interest in music, Ralph read about literature too. During his grading at school, his teacher Mrs. L. C. McFarland gathered Ralph with some of Harlem Renaissance writers. In his free time, Ralph

Ellison enjoyed reading fiery tales, Western detective stories, and Howard classics. Adding to his reading, he interested in listening to the rural folk tales and legends of black Cowboys stories in the street and stores from people. After his graduating from school, he gained a scholarship in 1933, Tuskegee Institution in Macon County in Alabama. He was taking classes in Music Appreciation, Modern Language, Physical Education and psychology during his music's studies at the institution. He met in 1937 with Richard Wright, the great African American writer who asked Ralph to write a book review of Waters Edward Turpin's *The Law Grounds*. (John, 2005)

Ellison wrote his first short stories influenced by the harsh style of Wright and the Hemingway's themes of African American folklore. The first works are *Heine's Bull* in 1937, *Slick Gonna Learn* in 1939 and *The Birth maker* in 1940. In his short stories, Ralph uses themes of violence, evilness and ethnic identities. Ellison published also *Mister Toussan* and he kept writing about these themes until the 1942 while his working for the federal writer's project. (ibid)

He wrote two short stories *Flying Home* in 1944 and *King of the Bingo Game* in 1945 which turning around black man character who tries to control his life. Ellison uses a new technique in his story *King of the Bingo Game* in his style; he uses Irony, Gothicism and macabre humour to tackle the realities of mixed communities by blacks and whites. During the Second World War, he published his story *In a Strange Country*. The story talks about a black officer who works as a fighter pilot. (ibid)

He returned to New York when he accepts the invitation from friends. At that time, he took the inspiration for his first novel *Invisible Man* that published in 1953. This novel became later one of the famous African American works and gained him many awards. Ellison tackles through his novel many themes that belongs to the African American experiences, which is adapted from Faulkner's novel *It was Eliot*. Ellison learned from Faulkner how to draw the map for his readers and give a perfect image of the rural south and how to success in presenting the dark reality of life in the southern African American society. He benefits learned and from Dostoevsky's classic drama and applicants it in his novel. Ellison worked also as the Albert Schweitzer professor of humanities at New York University from 1970 to 1980 when he wrote his collection essays and lectures *Going To The Territory* in 1986. Ralph Ellison wrote many other essays and short works and died on April 16, 1994. (ibid)

.2. African American styles of the Post-civil rights movement

1.2 Traditionalists

This group of writers tried carefully imitating the American educated writers. They have used the knowledge they have learned from the white schools to write with high standard of art to make a kind of inspiration for the black community. Even though the traditionalists have raised in the same period during the 1950s with the Black Arts Movement and were writing with the same way of writing; but we can simply distinguish them from their writing by the protagonist that has used by the traditionalists whose were using the racial themes and the African American issues in their works. We can take four writers as examples of this kind of writing: firstly, Gaines with his two great works *Catherine Carmier* (1964), *Of Love and Dust* (1967) and the short story collection *Bloodline* (1968). Secondly, John Alfred Williams with his two works *The Man Who Cried I am* (1967) and *A Different Drummer* (1969). Margaret Walker, either is another writer who known by her novel *Jubilee* (1966). Finally, John Oliver Killens, with his work *and Then We Heard the Thunder* (1962). (Amani, 2012).

Noel Shraufnagel describes the era through the analysing of two main writers John Alfred Williams and Ernest J. Gaines who certainly represent the traditionalism in their artistic works. They changed the vision from dealing with romantic individuals to presenting the idea of the less idealized protagonist in comparing with the typical character and show the trends of negroes who struggle against the racism more than claiming the denial of their human dignity. (Shraufnagel, 1973).

Both, Marcus the character in the story of Ernest Gaines *of Love and Dust* (1967), and Kelly from William's story *A Different Drummer* (1969), are playing the role of characters and narrators and they are representing the protagonist character who suffered from racial behaviours from the whites. Even though Marcus is representing a new kind of protagonist, which replaced violence by the act of strike in seeking revenge. Gaines in his works *Catherine Carmier* (1964) and collection *Bloodline* (1968) still uses the protagonist (Amani, 2012) either.

2.2 The Black Arts Movement

The Black Arts Movement is a famous literary movement in the post-civil rights era. It was related to The Black Power, which contained a group of poets, artists, dramatists, musicians and writers. This movement has established by Imamu Amiri Baraka in 1965 in Harlem. The style of its writers is clearly focusing on the African American culture. However, they write only for the African American community and tackling just black subjects. In addition to that, they want their works to criticize just under the African American literary criticism. Most of

this movement works either are tackling the black political issues. Therefore, it considered as the sister of the Black Power concepts. The Black Arts Movement has known by the four writers: the first writer is Amiri Baraka; the writer who tackled the racial issues that used to be between the black and white people in his two plays *Dutchman* and *the Slave* (1964). The second writer is Hakhi Madhubuti, who tried to show his proud of his race, in his collection of plays *Black Pride* (1968). Nikki Giovanni either is another poet writer who used the themes of love, loss and loneliness in her known poems *Black Feeling, Black Talk and Black Judgment* (1968). Sonia Sanchez is another poet who wrote her collection of poems *We a BaddDDD People* (1970), she wanted to show the good sole of the black common people in the urban black with vernacular language. Adding to Nikki and Sonia, the Black Arts Movement knew other female writers like Ntozake Shange, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and others. (Amani, 2012)

.3. Ernest Gaines Themes and Styles

a. Styles

Gaines once said in interview:

I come from a long line of storytellers. I come from a plantation, where people told stories by the fireplace at night, people told stories on the ditch bank. . . . People sat around telling stories. I think in my immediate family there were tremendous storytellers or liars or whatever you want to call them. . . . They would talk and talk and talk, and I listened to them. (Lowe. 1995)

Gaines started his writing with letters that he used to write for his people in the village where he lives. He influenced Mark Twain and Faulkner who were the spirit of his style in oral storytelling traditions, and he influenced by the oral narratives, language and way of speaking of the old men who were a good storytellers. This is seen clearly in his style of writing and through his special way of narrating in his works. This style is remarkable by the repetition that is simulating the oral narratives, and jazz music styles, which are well known in the rural south; this repetition creates a good tone and it is, easily, allowed the listener to understand the meanings. Gaines is basing his writing on Louisiana's folklore to represent its traditions. This technique draw a perfect image with a detailed descriptions which holding the same setting as in real Louisiana daily life to make the story simulating reality more than fiction to attract the reader and make him wants to read more and more till the end of the story. (Marcia, 1990)

Most of Gaines works are fictional and seams contemporaneous because it is taking the same place. In addition to that, he uses a type of writing that more close to an autobiography but it is not. His novel *the sky is Gray* he is using this kind of writing Gaines himself once time

said in an interview: ‘In *The Sky Is Gray*’ now, much of what little James goes through—and my middle name is James, you know—I went through. But it’s not me’’ (Lowe, 182). From this, quite we see that even though he is using a character chairing some of his personal characteristics, but Gaines declares that he is not telling his real story through his novel and the novel has written under the genre of fiction and it’s not real story.

Gaines in all of his novels uses the third person as a narrator. He preferred to make the narration moves between different characters and not limited it to himself or just one character. Gaines in his Novel *A Gathering of Old Men*, for example, uses this perfect style of narrating. He makes every main character represented by another character. This technique allows his characters to speak easily about their relatives and this gives the novel a perfect style. Such way of narrating as Roger Abrahams called is an experimental technique. It makes a kind of dynamic in the storytelling to make his fictional novel seems more close to reality through senses of place, past and humour. However, this style of writing is just like a mosaic, which collected perfectly from different characters’ narratives to draw at the end a perfect picture of the whole story. Gaines also does not give narrative voices to his three main characters Mathu, Candy and Mapes. He had the choice to make Mathu tells his story and giving the truth from the beginning but Gaines wants to make suspense for the reader; therefore, he decided to give the other characters the role of telling stories of these three main characters. Gaines does the same thing with the Cajun characters. He lets, just, Sally and Tee Jack telling the stories of the Fix’s folks who are the main characters and the direct involves in the issue of Beau’s death. However, Gaines uses this style of narrating on the both sides of blacks and white. This way shows that each character of each side shares the same impressions, fears, feeling and experience. These narratives are uniting to build Gaines’ mosaic and draw the map for the reader to grasp the truth at the end. (ibid)

b. Themes

Gaines uses in major of his works universal themes like Manhood, dignity, racism, death and other themes. These Themes are clearly presented in his novel; *A Gathering of Old Men* through the narratives of his 15 characters. Every character tells stories of the suffering of the black families from racism and stories about the dead who killed by the whites. He uses the themes of Manhood black pride through the Act of standing of the characters who claimed the murder of Beau because they felt guilty about the dead families so they wants to do a thing for them before . Gaines also uses themes of economic discrimination which seen in the poverty situations of the African Americans and welfare of the Whites. In his novel *A Lessen Before*

Dyeing, Gaines presents the themes of Manhood and heroism through his character Jefferson who most of the time tries to make the others feeling happy and this exactly what he did with Miss Emma he eat her gumbo to make her happy. He tries to show the others that he is a real man. He also uses the theme of manhood in many in other works like *Of Love and Dust*, *Bloodline*, and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* Gaines uses the theme of love in many of his novels. He uses it in his novels, *Catherine Carmier*, *Of Love and Dust* and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. He uses the theme of the alienation between father and son as he uses other themes like education, freedom state of mind and individualism in some of his works. (Debra G, 2005)

Conclusion

From what we have stated above, we can say that the African American literary stream during the post-civil rights era is very rich in terms of the themes that the writers have tackled and their writing styles. African American works of this period have known a huge success in all over the world. A noticeable thing we can add is the women's role in this success by the great works they produced under the umbrella of the African American literature. Many Writers men and women gained numerous awards.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three: revenge and reconciliation in the novel

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Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts: in the first part, we focus on the plot and narrative of the novel and we expose the different reasons that led each of the gathered old men to claim the responsibility of the murder. We argue that segregation has a great role in shaping the old men' thinking and decision to seek revenge. We also argue that the fact that the old men gathered and stood up with courage to the white man is in itself an act of revenge.

In the second part, we are going to show the way in which reconciliation is at work in the novel. In this part, we are going to show the images of integration, and explain how justice is the unique solution to end racism and violence in the South. Finally, we are going to select some facts that Gaines mentions in his story and how these facts can help in the omission of the old and racist ideas, and maintain the peace in the South.

1. Revenge in the story

1.1 Violence Revenge

Gaines in his novel *A Gathering of Old Men* uses the theme of revenge through the act of the standing of the old men characters. In the novel most of the characters had suffered in a way or another from the racist behaviours of white people, which make each one of them claims the responsibility of murder in a sense that he has been as affected by racism and has a motive to pass to the act. Some characters had been involved in the harassment of white people and other characters experienced it with their siblings. This is clearly, evident in the third chapter of the novel through the dialog when Candy tells Miss Merle that there is no black family in the parish has not hurt from Fix and his people. (Gaines, ch3, 10). This is the only reason that makes every gathered character claims the murder of Fix's son Beau as a revenge to the suffering for the long past years he taste with his siblings.

The internal monolog of the character Chimley, when he remembered the story of the big fight between Mathu and Fix. This fight was a cause of Fix's order to Mathu to take back the empty bottle; but Mathu refused and told him that he was not anybody's servant, and after that, Mathu warned the sheriff Guidry that he would not forgive Fix if he had done something to him again. This story gives us an idea about how these characters has histories from the past that have not been resolved and that can explain the present.

Such experiences give a motive to Mathu claiming Beau's murder as an expression to take the revenge for all bad experiences that he faced with Fix. (Gaines, ch4, 18)

In Miss Merle's chapter when she was with Candy is trying to remember the bad events that Clatoo has experienced with Fix and his folks and they it can be a motivation for him to join the old men, when she said in internal monolog:

Then I remembered. It was not Fix, it was that crazy brother of his, Forest Boutan, who had tried to rape one of Clatoo's sisters. She had defended herself by chopping him half dozen times with a cane knife. She didn't kill him, but he was well marked for the rest of his days. And she was sent to the pen for the rest of hers, where after so many years she died insane. That happened just before the Second World War. (Gaines, ch3, P. 25)

In the quote above, we can see the Monstrosity of the Violations and the harassment that is applied on Clatoo's sister from Forest Boutan and his people. With all the savage punishment that was done to his sister, Clatoo will hold a great malice on Fix's brother and all of his people. This hard experience is good reason for Clatoo to claim the murder and seek the revenge to, at least, bring back the lost and violated rights of his sister to feel that he has done the right thing before he dies. Gaines through Clatoo's sister wants to show another image of harassment that reflects the daily misery of the black girls and all the black people in general. Gaines also droning another map to seeking revenge as a reaction to practice on the African American community.

The conversation of Mat with his wife Ella, when he is blaming on her because she does not know what is the matter with him, is another image of suffering can be reason to claim Beau's murder. He reminds her of what happened to their son Oliver when the white doctors in the hospital did not save him and let him die just because he was a black. (Gaines, ch5, p38). The death of his son led him to feel so angry with all the whites because they are racists, merciless and he cannot forgive them. Mat also was fed up of the miserable life that he is living with his family; this is clearly seen when he told his wife:

...George Medlow's field, making him richer and richer and us getting poorer and poorer—and you still don't know what's the matter with me? (Gaines, ch5, p38)

In this quote, Mat was complaining because in addition to losing his son in a racist way, Mat and his family was surfing from the poverty through long years that they worked for George Medlow. This also expresses the injustice, Mat feels that George family are stealing his rights, and they do not give him the disserved price in the time when George's family were getting richer. However, the death of Mat's son and the harsh poverty were

building his hatred against the whites and these experiences were good enough reasons and motives to the claim of having killed Fix's son. Therefore, Mat was waiting for the chance to seek the revenge of his son's death and for the years that his family suffered. Gaines draws through this dialog another picture of daily blacks suffering from the racist acts imposed by the whites.

Furthermore, Gaines uses another suffering image of the African Americans that they used to see with the white folks. This image is the murder of Jacob's sister Tessie, who was another victim of the violent behaviours of the white folks. This is shown in narrating of Cherry in the graveyard when he said:

Tessie was his sister. She was one of them great big pretty mulatto gals who messed around with the white man and the black man. The white men wanted her all for themselves, and they told her to stay away from the niggers. But she didn't listen, and they killed her. Ran her through the quarters out into that St. Charles River—Mardi Gras Day, 1947."..... Maybe that's why Jacob was here today, to make up for what he had done his sister over thirty years ago...

(Gaines, ch6, p.23)

The quote above shows the unjust death of Tessie who has killed in a bad way by the white men just because she refused to stay with them and keep away from the colored people. It shows also the reason, which led Jacob to join the old men and confirm his decision to stand and to take his sister's revenge who did not deserve such a fate. Gaines here shows how the history of the relationship between whites and blacks is remarked by the violence and how victims of this violence were always the black people who unjustly killed with no persuasive reason. Here again, the murder of siblings and violence is one of the main reasons which lead the old men to think in taking revenge by their own hands.

Dirty Red is another character in the novel that experienced violence from Fix's people. He has seen all the images of suffering because he lost all his family. The image of cracking pecans with his teeth and hand when he was talking about his family graves shows his anger. Dirty Red wants to make a thing for all of his family members before his death and that what makes him deciding to join the old men and led him seeking revenge. This proved in the sixth chapter when Cherry is talking about Dirty Red and his family when he said:

Maybe that's why he was here today, to do something for all the others. But maybe that's why we was all there, to do something for the others."

(Gaines, ch6, p23)

Gaines also shows in the conversation between Dirty Red and Cherry the huge number of the murders and the maskers that have done by whites on African Americans people when Cherry says:

"They getting rid of these old graveyards more and more," I said. "These white folks coming up today don't have no respect for the dead." (Gaines, ch6, p24)

This quote is proving that many black people had been killed by the white people or at least died under the suffering of racism. Gaines also wants to show the old men's gathering as a real reaction to misery of violence that African Americans lived through all the long past years and the act of standing is proving that the old men wants to take revenge of these suffering and stop all these miseries. Therefore, Dirty Red as all the gathered old men wants to take the revenge for dead people to feel that he has done a good thing before his death.

Uncle Billy is another character who stands with the old men because of his son who has beaten hard by a white folks until he lost his memory:

The way they beat him. They beat him till they beat him crazy, and we had to send him to Jackson. He don't even know me and his mama no more. We take him candy, we take him cake, he eat it like a hog eating corn. (Gaines, ch8, p80)

The quote above shows the harsh violence that committed by the whites on Uncle Billy's son. Therefore, the son is another number of the endless victims list who suffered from the whites' violence for a long time. Uncle Billy joined the old men to bring back his son's rights and all African Americans who suffered like him. He uses the act of standing and claiming the murder of Fix's son as an expression to defend his people's issues against the violence and the racist behaviours of Fix and his people because they are the cause of all what happened to them for many years. He also insists that he is the killer because he decided to take revenge for his son who unjustly lost his memory, youth, and future.

The hearted list is confusing with the misery life the African Americans through Gaines novel. Another character Johnny Paul who stands with the old men and he acted that he killed Beau because as a reaction to Beau and his family who leased the plantation and destroyed all its sense of life:

Beau Boutan was leasing the plantation from the Marshall family. Beau and his family had been leasing all the land the past twenty-five, thirty years. The very same land we had worked, our people had worked, our people's people had worked since the time of slavery. Now Mr. Beau had it all. Or, I should say, he had it all up to about twelve o'clock that day. (Gaines, ch6, p43)

That's why I kilt him, that's why," Johnny Paul said. "To protect them little flowers. But they ain't here no more. And how come? 'Cause Jack ain't here no more. (Gaines, ch6, p50)

The two quotes above shows that Johnny Paul is complaining about Beau and his family who taking the Marshall plantation, which Johnny and his people were, working on since the age of slavery. He is thinking that the plantation belongs only to the Marshall family and belongs to the African American families who worked there since ages and ages. Johnny is sad about the plantation and its situation, which changed by Beau with the burned sugarcane that it widespread more and more. Therefore, he angry because he a wear the earths' value. Johnny wanted to show the strong relation between the African Americans and the plantations and he would not any whites stole it from them. This is the reason of Johnny's standing with the old men and claiming the murder of Beau. He wants to take the revenge from fix's family who spreading and destroying the plantation where he his family raised for a long time. Gaines wants through this part to show the big relation between the African Americans with the plantation and how they great it.

The Mexican brothers in the novel Ding and Bing have gathered with the old men because of their sister Gigi who was a victim of Beau and his friends' harassment. This clearly seen when Ding told Mapes:

"I kilt him," Ding said, thumping his chest. "Me, me—not them, not my brother. Me. What they did to my sister's little girl—Michelle Gigi." (Gaines, ch9, p48)

This quote shows the harassment of Beau's folks on Gigi and the same time shows the bad acts that done by the whites on the on all the Coloured girls. Therefore, the two brothers Ding and Bing Played claimed the murder of Beau to take the revenge of their sister Gigi who and to stop all the harassment behaviours of the withes.

1.2 The role of Segregation in seeking revenge

Segregation plays an important part in the novel. In the story, segregation can be seen in the little spot where the two old men Chimley and Mathew are fishing in the river. Chimley mentions that they go fishing just for two days per week in that small spot and the whites have bought the river and monopolized it. Whites also forbid the blacks to fish in their zones. Gaines has powered this sign of segregation through the repetition of the phrase "*one little spot*" to put emphasis on this kind of racism.

Me and Mat was down there fishing. We goes fishing every Tuesday and every Thursday. We got just one little spot now. Ain't like it used to be when you had the

whole river to fish on. The white people, they done bought up the river now, and you got nowhere to go but that one little spot. Me and Mat goes there every Tuesday and Thursday. Other people uses it other days, but on Tuesday and Thursday they leaves it for us. We been going to that one little spot like that every Tuesday and Thursday the last ten, 'leven years. That one little spot. Just ain't got nowhere else to go no more." (Gaines, ch4, p16)

The quote above shows the segregation system on the river which settled by the whites and how it forbids the coloured people to fish out of their little spot and allowed them to fish just for two days per week. This is too short time because twelve fishes as a rate for the whole week is not enough while in the whites fish the time and the place they ever want. Mat and Chimley seems too sad in the novel and that is understood from the way they speak together they even do not look to each other when they speak. They also think they are too old to hide under beds and he said that they have to stand for fight against Fix and this folks and this proved when Mat told Chimley: *"I have to go, Chimley," he said. "This can be my last chance."* (Gaines, ch4, P19). This quotes shows that Mat thinks that it is the last chance to take revenge from the whites and hold all their racist behaviours and laws because Mat is very old now and he wants to do a thing for the blacks' issues even if this cost him his life. Gaines, in this part of the novel, shows that even though the old men were weak and fried, the necessity makes them jump their fear and go foreword to seek their revenge. They turned from the weak position to strong one when they think that it is their last chance and they do not have things to lose because they already lived enough long life and they have to do a thing for sack of the next generations.

The graveyard in the story also represents another image of segregation. The black people are not allowed to bury their dead within the whites' graveyards; they have just one graveyard at Marshall. Gaines shows the graveyard as a neglected place inside the plantations, which full of weeds; pecan and oak trees. Gaines mentions that the number of the dead has increased in a short time to show the miserable and the catastrophic conditions of living of the black people.

"Each family had a little plot, and everybody knowed where that little plot was. If it was a big family, then they had to have a little bit more, sometimes from the plot of a smaller family. But who cared? They had all come from the same place, they had mixed together when they was alive, so what's the difference if they mixed together now? That old graveyard had been the burial ground for black folks ever since the time of slavery. I was seventy-four, and I had grandparents in there."(Gaines, ch6, p97)

The quote above shows that the blacks are not allowed to bury their dead in the whites' graveyards and they have just one graveyard crowded by the blacks' graves and it is noticeably increased during the last years. Even though it was indirect way, Gaines tries to show that with the

segregation system blacks were obliged to grave their murders in same grave for years. Therefore, this huge number of the dead was well remarkable for the blacks. This even affected the graveyard's situation, which is invaded by weeds, and this makes it harder for the blacks to take care of all their relatives' graves. This huge number of the black's graves makes the old men feeling worse about their past. This feeling encourages the old men and give them good reasons to take the decision to seek revenge and this is shown through their choice to stand at the graveyard before attending Mathu's yard, to see their dead who mostly have suffered from the whites. They visited the graveyard to take more motivations to stand against Fix because they think they are going to make a great epic at Mathu's yard. This epic will be their only and last hope to revenge for all the dead in the graveyard who suffered from the whites through all their lives.

Other traces of segregation can be seen in places where the black people are live. The houses are parts of the real estate of the landowners, those houses lack for the conditions of a good living; they are composed of two or three rooms and a porch in the front. In times when the black people were working in the plantations, the owners built those houses to keep them close their working places and separated from the whites.

The length of the quarters was little less than half a mile, beginning with the highway and going back into the fields. The bushes and weeds grew so tall on either side of the road that the road seemed no wider than a king-size bed sheet... The doors and windows of the few old houses were open, but no one sat out on the porches, and no one stood in the yard or worked the gardens..."

(Gaines, ch6, p98)

The quarters as the quote shows are in bad conditions it even do not contain the primary needs. The blacks still living in the same bad condition from a long period. They even not allowed buying plantations or houses and they have just to live the old quarters beside the plantations where they work which fool of weeds and do not hold any sign of urban life. This situation which caused by the old housing segregation system enhanced the misery of the blacks and in addition to the daily harassment from the whites; the black villagers were obligated to be patient and surrender till the death of Beau which was the turning point of the novel. The misery in which they live and the thoughts about Fix's reaction about the death of son pushed the old men to do a responsible act which holding Fix and his folks and the same time to take the revenge for the dark life that caused by the whites.

Gaines draws the last image of segregation in his novel through the bar, which remains, to the early times of segregation. The bar contains a little room for the black people and it is separated from the main room of the liquor store. The black people have to take their drinks and have it in their private room and no one of them is allowed to join the whites or drink in the

main room. But after the desegregation the blacks tried to drink in the main room but the whites refused that, therefore as a reaction to that, the black folks decided to leave their private room at all and they become just taking their bottles and go to drink them outside.

...Well, the nigger room's been closed now some fifteen, seventeen years. Happened when all that desegregation crap was going on—niggers didn't want to be segregated no more, so they stopped going in there. They would come to the store now and get their bottle and go squat against the wall outside to drink it, but they wouldn't go into their own little private room no more... (Gaines, ch6, p98)

This segregation image represents one of the main racist laws, which settled by the whites in the past and still in south till this time. This laws making the blacks feeling less free and make them feel that they still related to the age of slavery. Segregation as all bad situations are making accumulations which were another factor for the decision of the standing of the old men against Fix and his folks to seek the revenge of a years and years in suffering and bloods. Gains wants here to show that; even though the Supreme Court declared the law of 1964, which ends segregation in the US; it still there some images of segregation in the south which don't respect the justice. This helped the white racists to still doing their resist and violence harassments against the blacks' communities in the United States and this led the old men in the novel to make the decision of standing to take revenge.

Charlie is another character who represents revenge in the novel. He at the ends of the novel when he restores his masculinity and he take the decision and responsibility to tell the truth; he finally removes the limbo facts and he clarifies the circumstances of his crime, and at this time, Charlie declares the reason behind his crime:

"He cussed me," Charlie said to Mapes. "I was doing my work good. Cussed me anyhow. I told him he didn't need to cuss me like that. I told him I was doing my work good. He told me he wouldn't just cuss me, but he would beat me, too. I told him no, I wasn't go'n 'low that no more, 'cause I was fifty years old—half a hundred. He told me if I said one more word, he was go'n show me how he treated a half-a-hundred-year-old nigger." Charlie stopped and looked at Mapes, shaking his head. Beads of sweat popped out of his skull, running in lines down the sides of his face. "You don't talk to a man like that, Sheriff, not when he reach half a hundred." (Gaines, ch15, p118)

The quote above as many revenge's images in the novel shows the racist violence behaviours of Beau on Charlie. Beau was beating and bussing Charlie for no reason just because he is a black. Charlie's fear kept fixed in his place without doing anything for Beau or even resists beating. After his reaching the fifties, Charlie was obliged to do something for Beau's

daily violence. Charlie was obliged to take his revenge for the fifty years of violence that he spent it working for Beau.

2. Reconciliation in the Novel

2.1 Calling for Reconciliation

With a kind of hopeless, Sheriff Mapes has tried, with any way, to force the old men to tell him the truth and send them back to their homes before Fix come because Mapes is afraid for their safety. He know well that if Fix with his folks come and see the old men with their shotguns it would be a real war and no one could know how many people would die from the both sides. However, after he got a call from his officer partner from Fix's house that Fix and his men are not coming to Marshall Plantation to seek Beau's revenge; here Mapes has catch his breath and grasp that time has changed and Fix is not Fix before 15 years ago. (Gaines, 1983)

Officer Russ is another character who tried hard to stop Luke Will and Fix from going to Marshall Plantation to seek the revenge of Beau. Russ kept advising them and in the same time warning them that he is going to uses power if they refused his orders or even tried to go outside of Fix's house. He also reassures them that Mapes is doing his detects to find the killer and everyone will take his legal rights. Russ aims from these serious procedures to calls for reconciliation which marked by his advises for Fix's folks to avoid any violence act and in the same time he to alerts them to the existence of justice. Adding to this he tried hard to keep them in Fix's house because he knows well that if they went to Marshall's Plantation and they see the black old men with their shotguns it will be a big massacre of the both side and it will cause unknown consequence. (ibid)

Sully is another character who played the role of calling for reconsolidation and he is a sign of integration. He tried to support Gil in his ordeal and in the same he blamed on him when he injured his black team mate Pepper. Sully tried to advice Gil and give him inspiration to his straggle dream and he advices him that he must don't following his father's negative reactions or involve himself in taking revenge if he wants to rich his objectives. (ibid)

Fix even if he was thinking to take his son's revenge in the beginning, he preferred to take the agreement of his two sons. But Fix's two sons refused to take their brother's revenge and want to forget it and start a new life without violence because they have some projects and

they think that they would lose it if they do take revenge. Fix himself at the end grasp that the new generation is different from the old one and the attitudes has changed. (ibid)

Gil is a football player and he is going to lose career and all his dreams to be member of All-American project if he entered jail; this shown when Gil told his father Fix: "*I couldn't make All-American, Papa, if I was involved in something against the law,*" he said. "*Even if our name was involved, the Yankee press would destroy me.*" (Gaines, ch11, p138). The Old son Jean either has a store in Bayonne. Most of his customers are black people, and if he takes revenge, no one will buy from him, so he is going to close his store. "I live in Bayonne, Papa," Jean said. "My butcher shop is in Bayonne... (ibid).

The teacher in the bar was trying to tell Luke Will and his friends that time has changed and they have to make reconciliation when he said: "The debt is never finished as long as we stand for this". The teacher either advised them to support the two teammates Salt and pepper if they want Louisiana's team win the match in the next day and avoid doing any kind of racist behaviour. This is clearly seen from his last words when he wanted leave the bar and he told Luke Will and his friends:

"I'm leaving," the teacher said. "But I will leave with these parting words. Don't do it. For the sake of the South. For Salt and Pepper, don't do it."

(Gaines, ch13, p120)

2.2 Images of Integration

Gaines exposes the images of integration in many scenes. Integration could be seen in the strong relationship of Candy with the black people of Bayonne, in general and especially with Mathu, who had raised her after the death of her parents in a traffic accident. This relationship is shown in her defence and carefulness of the old black men when she said:

"No, I won't let them harm my people," she said. "I will protect my people. My daddy and all them before him did, and I—". (Gaines, ch3, p19)

Candy declared the expression when sheriff Mapes was investigating the old men about the truth. Moreover, she claims the responsibility of the crime when she said: "*I did it*"(p. 19). Although; Candy is a white girl, she had no racial background about the colour or the origins of those old folks. She totally refused to see them harmed because she considers them her people. There are other images of integration through the life of blacks Africans, Indians and Mexicans, who brined, raised and lived together for long years.

Another sign of the integration in the story appears in the relationship between the two football players of LSU team, the black player, Calvin Harrison and the white player who is Fix's son Gilbert Boutan. Those two football players are representing the new generation who seek the bright future for all Americans, in contrast to the old ideas, which rely on violence. Gil and Cal or as they are well known "Salt and Pepper"; their relationship is the same as the cooperation between salt and pepper, one cannot exist without the other and their success depends on their unity in the game; Gaines uses this image as an example of the harmony that could be between the blacks and the white. The need of this harmony would build a peaceful America for its entire people. Gaines had declared the need of that kind of harmony when he one time said in a conversation:

...The only way you can really do things and the only way we are going to be Americans is that we have to work together. While many of the other characters in the novel are trapped in the past, the only ones who live in the present are Salt and Pepper... We've got to block for each other and do all kinds of things to get to the goal. The football players are a symbol for how we must do this together
(Lowe, 1995, p. 250)

The quote above has been taken from Gaines' conversation. It leads us to the fact through the novel that the two characters are presenting integration. There for Gaines shows their very important role in his novel. They are nearly the last hope and the best technique of the African American to stop racism and violence and live in integration with the whites. Gaines through this quote wants to show that in the sake of achieving the goals which end racism and violence. He sheds light on football players' integration which is the most beneficial technique in ending racism and violence for the new generations.

2.3 The role of justice in reconciliation

Gaines shows justice in his novel with different images and at different levels. He firstly represents justice at the level of the police's administration which is introduced by Sheriffs and police officers, and the second level of justice is shown in the form of the Court. Gaines also tackles the level of police's administration through different periods. Gaines, with an indirect way through the flashback to the past, relates the first period of justice with his character Sheriff Guidry who presents the weakness of justice. This is proved through the fight between Fix and Mathu in the store. Even though he was in the store and he knows who is the guilty, Sheriff Guidry did not act or even tried to hold this fight and he stayed watching the fight from his place. This irresponsible way of dealing with violence's issues between the blacks and the whites represents the weakness of the police system in the south, and in the same time, it shows the unfair dealing

with the daily harassments of whites on the blocks and this hence the whites to continue their racist actions. Therefore, many issues like violence, racism and segregation for a long time in the south, while the north was moving with accelerated steps to reach the justice. The second period represented by Mapes, who seemed in the first time that he is a dictator in his dealing with the old men when he was punishing them and he threatened them with the electric chair which is a symbol of non-justice and presents violence; but lately he changed his detection's techniques when he heard their stories and proves. The positive point can counted to Mapes that he seriously tried to avoid a big war between the old men and Fix's folks. Yet, this can be a sign of the rise of faithful justice as a contrast to the old police system which presented by Guidry. With don't forget also the role of Officer Russ who also tried hard to keep Fix and his folks in their house and don't go to Marshall Plantation to avoid shooting with the old men, and this proved when he was advising them to don't go to the Marshall's Plantation and he told Luke Will:

I'll do anything to keep you back here, Fix," Russ said. "And that goes for the rest of you," he said, looking around the room. He looked back at Fix. "I mean it, Fix," he said. "I have my orders. (Gaines, ch11, p87)

This quote show that Russ is very serious police man and he is taking a responsible decision to handle Luck Will and anybody to leave the house even if that obliged him to use the force, and this what was missed in the past with Sheriff Guidry. Adding to the serious decision he was also acting as a clover and affective man when he was advising Fix and his folks to not listen to Luck Will and let Mapes to complete his detects to find Beau's murderer and let the justice taking its way. However, we can grasp from the clearly changes between the old police administration and the new one that the corrupt system of law has gone and replaced by a faithful justice. The coming of sheriff Mapes represents the new ways of dealing with racial issues. Though he has used an old way in the beginning when he beats some of the old men, the sheriff has realised that each of the old men has a good reason to stand for. In times when the blacks do not have the chance to talk, Mapes would arrest them all just after he sees a white man lying dead on the ground. However, things do not go like this, and after the funeral, everybody went to the court and stand equal whites and blacks.

Gil who is the brother of Beau prefers to let justice takes its ways rather than seeking revenge with their bare hands; and that the traditional ways are no more exist in their community. We see this image when he tells his father:

"Luke Will's days are over with, Papa," Gil said. "Luke Will's days are passed. Gone forever"..."Gil "I'm not speaking of family responsibility, Papa," Gil said. "I'm speaking of the day of the vigilante. I'm speaking of Luke Will's idea of justice."
(Gaines, ch14 p76)

Gil here wants to notice his father to the change between the generation and he wants to tell him that the age when the person was taking his revenge by himself is already gone and this new age is the time of justice and just the Court and the judge who can handle the issues. He advises him to change the old thoughts, which are stands on violence and let the justice do its work.

Gaines presents the second level of justice through the existence of the Courts, which plays a very important role in the novel, and especially in the last chapter where it wisely resolved the case of the murder by reconciliation and definitely ended the calls of revenge by its declared orders that forbid any one of owning any kind of weapon. Gaines in his last chapter tries to show the big changes in system of justice and appreciate the positive characteristics of the new system, which replaced the old corrupt one. Gaines represents new system by the Court and its judge Reynolds who holds very positive characteristics. Reynolds, as Gaines presents in his novel, is a faithful, serious, wise, and the same time he has a great sense of humor; all of these are a positive characteristics weren't used to be in the past and that is the change which Gaines wants to show. Reynolds started the session with warning the attendees in the court that he will not indulge with any one less respect and this shown through the narrator Lou Dimes in the last chapter when he said:

...He warned that the trial would be conducted orderly. And he further warned the court that they should not mistake that old white-headed man on the bench as soft, because he could be as hard as anyone else, and harder if need be.

(Gaines, ch20, p213)

This quote shows the serenity of faith in the judgment. He warned all the attendees, both whites and blacks, to avoid any trick that could be affect his view, and in the same time he wants to show his neutral and prove that his judgment will be based just on the justice because justice is above the all, and if any one bucked his order he will be punished. This way of judgement gave the blacks a great hope of the bright future that stand on justice and free of violence.

Judge Reynolds produces pure integrity of judgement in the new justice system. He clearly proved that through his serious questioners that he obliged Mapes to answer or he will be punished. Even though Mapes is a sheriff and has a high level in the justice system, but this did not intercede in the judgment and he obliged to truly declare his possession when the shoot

done. This also is a clear image of the big change in the system of justice. Because, if the issue was in the past, it's probably that Mapes was used his influences on the judge or wouldn't give the definitely the truth to Judge's questions and this logically will be effect the judgment and as a consequence it will be no justice in the issue and the only loser will be the blacks. (Gaines, 1983)

Gaines shows the wise new justice system is a clearly seen through the wise final judgement of Reynolds when he declared:

He said since the two men who had killed were both dead, being the same two who had killed Beau and shot Mapes, he could not pass judgment over them, but ask that their souls rest in peace. But for the others, he said he was putting all of them on probation for the next five years...

(Gaines, ch20, p213)

This judgment above shows the wisdom of Reynolds who knows how to reconcile the issue and arrive at the judgment which satisfies all the concerned in the issue. He saw that the direct involvers of the case have all died. Therefore, he chooses to forgive all the indirect involvers and close an eye on the shooting that happened at quarters to avoid any possibility of a civil disobedience and to clean all the remains of the crime and to opening a new page free of grudges and violence as this decision satisfies them all. However, the judge proved his tact with putting all of them on probation for the next five years. He also forbid them to hang or stay near any weapon to avoid any issues like this in the future. Adding to that his question at the end of the session, he tried to confirm that nothing missed in the issue and asked if there any views about his justice to confirm that everyone is satisfies about his judgement.

2.4 The truth

Gaines ones time said in an interview:

I Came from a place where people sat around and chewed sugar-cane and roasted sweet potatoes and peanuts in the ashes and sat on ditch banks and told tales and sat on porches and went into the swamps and went into the fields—that's where I came from. (Lowe, 1998, p.224)

If we compare between Gaines' novel *A Gathering of Old Men* and the quote above we can easily see that Gaines uses in his novel the same setting, social conditions and the same daily social images that it usually seen in Louisiana through his real life. This similarity in the setting gave us the possibility to analyze the relationship between the historical background of the post-civil rights, which we tackled in our first chapter, and the social conditions in the Gaines' novel. This relation led us to several facts and truths in the novel. The first truth is

the existence of segregation in the south even after the Supreme Court's decision, which ends segregation in the United States. This segregation used in many forms. The first form was in the river where the whites are still controlling it and forbidding the collared people to fish, as they want and this reflecting the image of the persecution that used by the whites in the south. The second form of segregation was tackling the housing system which showing the blacks' miserable conditions and way of living and the blacks live just in the quarters around the plantations where they used to work, and in the same time its forbidden to them to own plantations or buying houses and this makes them feeling less freedom. The third fact of segregations was in the bar where it's forbidden for the blacks to drink their beer in the mixed room and this represents the pure segregating which used to be before a long years.

The second truth in the novel is the misery of all the blacks from the white. This truth can be extracted from the third chapter when Miss Merle asked Janey if she knows anybody in Bayonne hates Fix and have enough reasons to stand against him and Janey answered her: *"I don't know nobody do like Fix," she said*". (Gaines, ch3, p15) this quote is clearly proves the truth that all the black people in the novel has experienced the violence from the Cajuns in a way or another. In fact, every single family in Bayonne has a story to tell about the cruelty that Cajuns has done to them. The inner speak of Miss Merle also when she was talking to Candy: *"There's not a black family in this parish Fix and his crowd hasn't hurt sometime or other"*. (ibid) is definitely proves that Bayonne families have surfed from Fix a lot. Gaines wants from this truth to tackle the violence that used by the whites on the blacks, which draw the map to their miserable life.

From the two passages above, we logically deduce to another truth, which is the fails of the post-civil rights movements to, completely, end segregation and violence in the rural south of the UN. However, these restrictions which applied only on the blacks leading us to related it to the Jim Crow era where the blacks weren't owned the same rights as the whites. The second fail of the civil rights movements is in stopping the violence that wet on the blacks from the whites. Gaines uses the theme of violence in many sceneries in his novel like the images of violence behaviors that have used by Beau's and Fix's folks on the blacks, and crease of the dead in the graveyard, and it can be seen also through the way of thinking to take revenge by the own hands out of the Courts' justice. This is untold truth used by Gaines with indirect way to show the main African American issues that the civil rights movements have failed to resolve in the south.

There is another truth in the novel which saying that the blacks themselves are holding some responsibility of their suffering during all these years, because they were not brave enough to stop the Cajuns when they offended their acquaintances. They stayed hiding every time when one of them was punished. Adding to that all the old men are victims of tyranny whether in themselves or in their acquaintances. This has shown when Mapes is palming on Clatoo and the other old men:

Now, that's what I thought, too. Because, you see, me, you, and all the rest of them were thinking about Fix thirty years ago. Thirty years ago Fix woulda been here, woulda hanged Mathu on the nearest tree, and all the rest of you brave people woulda been still hiding under the bed. But something happened the last ten, fifteen years. Salt and Pepper got together. Now, it's nobody's fault but yours," Mapes said, looking round at all of us. "Nobody's fault but yours. Y'all did it. Y'all wasn't satisfied Salt played at LSU on one side of town, and Pepper played for Southern on the other side of town— no, y'all wanted them to play together.... (Gaines, ch14, p170)

Gaines here wants to say that if the blacks were brave they would have stood against the whites and stop their violence and racist behaviours before a long time. He wants to say also that they were holding many choices or steps to do to find a solution for their misery but the preferred to kip hides and hides from the Cajuns; and as logical consequences, their hiding supported the Cajuns to continue their harassment. The quote also shows that the blacks didn't try even to resist the whites through the Courts at list.

Another truth we can depict from the novel is the changes of the court and the law system. Blacks and whites would stand equally in the court. "*Candy hired her own lawyer, Clinton, to defend the blacks. The Klans defended Luke Will's friends*".(Gaines, ch20, p212) Another thing we can add about this truth is that the old days of violence had gone, justice is above all and the court is the only institution which brings back the swallowed rights.

The truth that while the north is seeking for integration, the rural south is still trapped in the old traditions and kept working on the old mentalities of racism, violence and segregation, adding to that the south isn't focusing on the role of administration or courts Justice and still dealing with personal issues like revenge and violence and murder. This proved in the image of the two teammates Celt and pepper who are representing the urban integration and in the other side we can find Luke Will and his friends who representing the violence and racism. (Gaines, 1983)

Another truth can be seen in the novel which is there is a change in generations. This change is shown through many levels in the novel. The first change is in the mentality, which

started from the urban side, and through the young educated characters exactly, who are presenting only their present and they don't want to relate to the past. They are holding a different mentality from their parents and grandparents. Gaines represents this generation with all of Salt and Pepper and their friend Sully who are the direct sign of integration in the novel. They are different from their fathers who represent racism and violence through all their lives. They are using goals and they want to achieve it with new techniques, and they decided to reconcile their stuck problems and trust in justice to firm to them. (ibid)

The presenting of the civil rights movement NAACP and the national press and other news channels and news paper leading us to another truth which is telling that Gaines want to show that the birth of new faithful justice as national political event and it is a sign for a new era which less violence and ruled by the justice which presented by the Court and the Judge. Adding to that the parties that was from the both sides, blacks and whites, and their clean clothes and gathering in the court during the three years shedding the light to the important events its seems just like a National Day. Adding to that Gaines uses the irony during the judgment to shows that people from the both sides shows their happiness and three freed from their convulsion and represents new impressions and attitudes. (ibid)

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have extracted all the themes of revenge and reconciliation and investigated the main reasons behind the gathering of the old men before the dead body of a white man. In addition to that, we extract the images of integration. We have found that segregation, violence acts and racism together are the reason that led the old men to seek revenge. Adding to that we have seen that the use of power would not always bring back the stolen rights, on the other hand, reconciliation and agreement would be the best solution to make an end to the old attitudes. We have tackled also the big role of Justice in ending the unsolved conflicts. By the end, we have touched the images of revenge and reconciliation that Gaines is declares in his novel.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

From our reading to Ernest J. Gaines' *A Gathering of Old Men*, we have seen that Gaines, with his perfect style of writing, has a great success in giving his readers a clear image about the miserable daily life of the African Americans in the south of the US. Gaines depends in his writing on the folkloric style, which based on the southern culture and traditions. He also let his characters telling their stories and let each character narrates his experience. By doing this, Gaines makes his novel more realistic and this gives it a great value.

From our study, we came to the conclusion that Gaines, through his novel, wants to show that the civil rights movement failed, somehow, to completely end racism and violence in the South of the US, even though it's very important role in defending the African American rights and the very positive advancements that it brought to the African American community. We proved this from the clear images of segregation and violence and through the truths that Gaines uses in his novel *A Gathering of Old Men*. We have also given examples of images of justice in the novel and its positive role in ending revenge. This proved by the corrupt old system of justice and replaced by a faithful one, which is represented by the Court and Judge Reynolds In the last chapter of the novel. Finally yet importantly, we have given examples of integration in the novel. We have argued that integration is possible in the United States and that it represents a hopeful future for the people of the South.

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Abstract

This research is a thematic study that studies the themes of revenge and reconciliation in the novel *A Gathering of Old men* was written by Ernest J. Gaines. This work is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is about the historical, social and personal background of the novel *A Gathering of Old Men* during the Post-civil rights movement. The second chapter is the theoretical part, which discusses the African American Literature, or themes and styles have known during the Post-civil rights movement. The third chapter is the practical parte we extract through it all proves of themes of revenge and reconciliation in the novel and discuss them. At the end of this part we will be answered all the questions and rich all the objectives that we settled in the beginning of this dissertation.

Key words: Revenge, reconciliation, African America literature, Post-Civil rights movement.

Résumé

Cette recherche est une étude thématique qui étudie les thèmes de la vengeance et de la réconciliation dans le roman d'un *Colère en Louisiane* n'a été écrit par Ernest J. Gaines. Ce travail est divisé en trois chapitres principaux. Le premier chapitre porte sur le contexte historique, social et personnel de l'arrière-plan le roman d'un *rassemblement de vieux hommes* au cours de l'après-mouvement des droits civils. Le deuxième chapitre est la partie théorique qui traite de la littérature afro-américaine ou de thèmes et styles ont connu au cours de l'après-mouvement des droits civils. Le troisième chapitre est la pratique parte nous extraire à travers tout cela prouve de thèmes de la vengeance et de la réconciliation dans le roman et les discuter. À la fin de cette partie nous aura répondu à toutes les questions et de riches tous les objectifs que nous nous sommes installés au début de cette thèse.

ملخص

هذا البحث عبارة عن دراسة موضوعاتية تبحث مواضيع الانتقام والمصالحة في رواية *A Gathering of Old Men* للكاتب ارنست ج. غينز. هذا العمل مقسم الى ثلاثة فصول رئيسية. الفصل الاول هو عبارة عن الخلفية التاريخية والاجتماعية والشخصية لرواية *اجتماع شيوخ* خلال مرحلة ما بعد حركة الحقوق المدنية. الفصل الثاني هو عبارة عن الجزء النظري والذي يناقش الأدب الأمريكي الإفريقي أو المواضيع والأساليب الادبية التي عرفت خلال مرحلة ما بعد حركة الحقوق المدنية. الفصل الثالث هو بناء على طلب طرف واحد نخرج هذا كله يثبت من مواضيع الانتقام والمصالحة في الرواية ومناقشتها. وفي نهاية هذا الجزء سنكون قد أجبنا على كل التساؤلات وجميع الاهداف التي طرحناها في بداية هذه الاطروحة.