

Abstract

This dissertation takes up the representation of the marital institution in the prevailing patriarchal society in transcultural fictional texts written by four different authors as its basis, focusing on its specific features as well as its evolution in our society. The work thus hopes to supplement growing concern and research that promotes feminist consciousness by adding to the discourse and highlighting the importance of developing a healthy male consciousness. This is attempted by bringing to the forefront how the pervasive problem of toxic masculinity, a particular type of predominantly male personality, is fostered in patriarchal societies to the detriment of not only the wellbeing of men but of society in general. Toxic masculinity is thus traced in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohsin Hamid, Doris Lessing and Jean Rhys including: *The Bride*, *Moth Smoke*, *The Grass is Singing* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

This dissertation qualitatively analyses these novels in the light of the history of, and insights provided by, gender theory while keeping in mind the framework provided by contemporary research on toxic masculinity. The present work attempts to bring into focus how the characters in these novels respond to social constraints put upon them, whether their actions of the decision taken to get married are conscious or unconscious or being manipulated due to deeply indoctrinated concepts of marriage and, how it affects their marriage while living in a patriarchal society and what are the expectations of the society from these characters while being married. It is a hope that through this dissertation a consciousness of the importance of the marital institution and the correct reasons for taking these important steps instead of being pushed into it due to societal pressures.