Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of American Culture and Literature

REPRESENTATION OF SYMBOLIC BATTLES IN AMERICAN FOOTBALL FICTION: DON DELILLO'S *END ZONE*, JOHN GRISHAM'S *BLEACHERS* AND DAN JENKINS' *SEMI-TOUGH*

Anıl Bayır

Master's Thesis

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KABUL VE ONAY

Anıl Bayır tarafından hazırlanan "Representation of Symbolic Battles in American Football Fiction: Don DeLillo's *End Zone*, John Grisham's *Bleachers* and Dan Jenkins' *Semi-Tough*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 16 / 09 / 2015 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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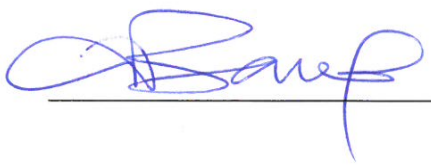

ANIL BAYIR

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

My grandfather, Ali Korkmaz.

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ÖZET

BAYIR, Anıl. Amerikan Futbolu Romanlarında Sembolik Savaşların Temsili: Don DeLillo'nun *End Zone*'u, John Grisham'ın *Bleachers*'ı ve Dan Jenkins'in *Semi-Tough*'ı. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2015.

Amerikan futbolu içindeki savaş söylemi, yazarlar tarafından Amerikan toplumunun göz ardı ettiği ya da yüzleşmekten çekindiği çatışmaları ve mücadeleleri edebi eserlerde anlatmak için kullanılmaktadır. Don DeLillo *End Zone* (1972) isimli romanında üniversiteli bir grup Amerikan futbolu oyuncusunun sahip olduğu karşıt görüşleri ve belirsiz cinsel eğilimlerini Amerikan futbolundaki savaş söylemi üzerinden anlatmaktadır. DeLillo aslında Amerikan futbolu gibi erkekliği ve askeri kavramları vurgulayan bir sporun nasıl içten içe bir belirsizliğe ev sahipliği yaptığını anlatmaktadır. Yazar bu baskın eril kültürde kendi düşüncelerini gizlemek için sembolik bir savaş veren karakterler ve kullanılan dil aracılığıyla ve Amerikan futbolunun sahne arkasındaki heteroseksüel normlara uymayan özelliklere dikkat çekerek Amerikan kültürünün şiddet ve savaş yanlısı değer yargılarını eleştirmekte ve bu değer yargılarına karşı çıkmaktadır. John Grisham *Bleachers* (2004) adlı eserinde sembolik savaş söylemini ölümsüzlük ve ölüm sonrası itibar (post-self) kavramlarına erişmek amacıyla verilen mücadeleyi tanımlamak için kullanmaktadır. Romanda, Messina kasabasının futbol kültürüne, başarı ve başarısızlık kavramlarına, kişisel ve toplumsal çatışmalara, ortak belleğe ve kişisel hatıralara atfedilen değerler oyuncuların ölümlerinden sonraki itibarını belirleyecek aracılar olarak sunulmaktadır. Yazar, Amerikan futbolunun nasıl unutulmaya karşı sembolik bir ölümsüzlük savaşına dönüştüğünün altını çizmektedir. Dan Jenkins *Semi-Tough* (1972) romanında Amerika'daki siyah ırkın eşitlik mücadelesini Amerikan futbolu söylemi ve sembolleriyle anlatmaktadır. Beyazların üstünlüğü görüşü ve bu doğrultudaki bütün baskın değerler siyah oyuncuların kendi takım arkadaşları ve toplum ile sürdürdükleri ilişkiler vasıtasıyla eleştirilmektedir. Siyah Amerikalılar sahip oldukları fiziksel üstünlükleri sadece beyaz Amerikalıların zenginleşmesi ve güçlenmesi yolunda kullanmak zorunda bırakılmıştır. Eski dönemlerdeki kölelik kavramı, 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında spor ve özellikle Amerikan futbolu bağlamında vücut bulmaktadır. Buradan yola çıkan Jenkins, eserinde Amerikan futbolundaki modern köleliği yine Amerikan futbolunun söylemini kullanarak ırkçılığa karşı sembolik bir eşitlik savaşına dönüştürmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

End Zone, Bleachers, Semi-Tough, Sembolizm, Savaş, Söylem, Hegemonya, Post-self, Irkçılık, Amerikan futbolu.

ABSTRACT

BAYIR, Anıl. Representation of Symbolic Battles in American Football Fiction: Don DeLillo's *End Zone*, John Grisham's *Bleachers* and Dan Jenkins' *Semi-Tough*. Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2015.

The battle discourse in American football is used in literary works to address the controversies, conflicts and struggles that the American nation neglects or refrains from encountering. Don DeLillo, in *End Zone* (1972), narrates the controversial views of a group of undergraduate American football players and their sexually ambiguous tendencies through the battle discourse of American football. In fact, DeLillo portrays how instinctively American football, a sport that emphasizes notions like masculinity and war, hosts ambiguity. Through characters fighting symbolically to hide their thoughts in this masculine culture and showing traits that undermine the heterosexual norms in the back stage of American football, DeLillo criticizes and challenges the paradigms of American culture in a battle against hegemonic masculinity. John Grisham, in his work *Bleachers* (2004), uses the symbolic battle discourse to formulate the concepts of immortality and the post-self. In the novel, the values placed on the football culture of Messina High School, namely success and failure, personal and social conflicts, collective memory and personal memories, are presented as the instruments that will decide the prestige of an athlete after his death. Grisham underlines how American football transforms into a symbolic battle of immortality against oblivion. In his fictional work, *Semi-Tough* (1972), Dan Jenkins portrays the African American fight for equality in America through the discourse and context of American football. The white supremacist view and all other dominant norms are criticized through the medium of the black players' relationships with both teammates and the rest of society. The old concept of slavery, in the second half of the 20th century, is turned into reality again by sports, especially American football. In his work, using the discourse of American football, Jenkins transforms the modern slavery in football into a symbolic battle of equality against racism.

Keywords

End Zone, *Bleachers*, *Semi-Tough*, Symbolism, Battle, Discourse, Hegemony, Racism, The post-self, American football.

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INTRODUCTION

Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, and disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.

George Orwell from "The Sporting Spirit"

Since ancient times sporting events, as collective and social occasions, have been meticulously chronicled, and these representations have described various elements ranging from the atmosphere and the mood of the participants to sentiments evoked by such games, or in Homer's words, "the excitement of the moment, the engagement by the participants and spectators, and of course the celebration of play--in the drama of the competition" (qtd in. Meyers 337). Viewed in the context of Plato's "the drama of competition," sports have been an essential part of human history and civilization.

Accordingly, the introduction of this thesis will describe the ways in which battle symbolism is formed, which also constitutes the core focus of this study. Establishing the historical framework of sports, the introduction will summarize the connection between battle symbolism in American culture and American football. After integrating background information of sports fiction and demonstrating the treatment of sports symbolism in different works, this part will explain the analytical approach to the fictional works to be scrutinized in this thesis. Lastly, for organizational purposes, the definition of terms, problems and debate of battle symbolism will be made clear in the latter part of the introduction, where a theoretical outline for each work will be drawn separately.

Since the inception of social interaction, individuals have sought to *play* in some way or another; and with many people getting involved in sports activities in time, the nature of the games has evolved to become more competitive as spectators have demanded a winner. Furthermore, competitions have brought fame to the tenacious players with talents and skills that impress spectators. That is, the rationale of the games has morphed into ideals that are more fierce and triumph-oriented, as Plato argued, "life must be lived as play; playing certain games, making sacrifices," only then is one able to "propitiate the gods and defend himself against his enemies," or in contemporary terms: "*win* in the contest" (qtd. in Meyers 337).

Another domain where the idea of winning and triumph overrides all other values is wars and battles, another product of human history stemming from the same dynamics, as sports and from motives almost as old as sports. Sports and war share similar dynamics and motives in that the aim in both is to form dominance and hegemony over the opponent. In this context, we can say that soldiers in a sense were personifications of game players fighting for their ideals on battlefields. According to Mcclelland, the link between soldiering and athletics goes back to Homer's *Iliad*, and much of the ancient Olympic Games took the form of military fighting skills disguised as competitive athletics (54). As this is the case, Mcclelland maintains, "it is not surprising that war and sports borrow from each other's vocabularies" (54). Besides Homer's *Iliad*, Pindar's *Victory Odes* appears to be one of the earliest examples of sports writing in western literature where fighting was used as a metaphor for larger issues. Pindar reports multiple sporting events including "chariot [racing]," and contact sports, such as "boxing, wrestling and pancration" (Willcock 6). The most striking aspect of such a convergence concerns the primary purpose of both activities: victory. Victory, or winning either in sports or on a battlefield, is symbolically associated with survival and life; whereas failure, or losing is a surrogate for death; death of a soldier or an athlete. In both fields, participants are destined to exhibit physical skills, cunning moves and savvy decision-making at crucial moments. About this parallelism, Richard Meyers asserts that "the universal action of play relates to the triumph in the contest, and the agony of losing, a veritable metaphor for *death*" (337).Therefore, games and war since ancient times have converged more than they have been intended to by creating subtexts and metaphors in constant interaction with each other.

Adapting the ideas of winning and losing to the American national values, Thomas A. Tutko asserts that sports vocabulary is the "vocabulary [that] incorporates all of the cultural values" of America (114), including the ones concerning the protection of the homeland. Before moving further, it is necessary to explain how these "values" have come to describe both athletes and soldiers, and how "cultural values" are "crystallized in sports" (114). In both fields, athletics and war, participants are expected to exhibit physical skills, cunning moves and smart decisions at crucial moments. For example; we can assume both a soldier and a player must be "courageous, loyal, competitive,

dedicated, fierce, determined, aggressive, team persons, tough-minded, psyched-up, and motivated" (114).

Culturally speaking, when we follow the traces of connection from sports to battles, we can start to understand the idea that any militaristic quality seen on the sports fields can be seen as warranties for the security of the homeland. In other words, a victory on the sports arena heralds the same on the battlefield. On the other hand, a loss on a sports field symbolically endangers homeland security. Tutko's words point at how these contexts are interwoven when he says that, "thus a smashing tackle in football can be seen as a competitive assertive move, behavior related to a trait that will serve as a benefit to the athlete later in life. It also fits into the rugged individualism of the American idea -- the basis on which this country was founded" (118).

Being such a symbolic enactment of larger cultural meanings, action on the sports arena also serves as a stage where the deeply embedded and collective psychological make-up of the nation is played out. This is why, for example, as expressed by Cocchiarale and Emmert, the American nation closely watches athletes and "[w]hen they win, our self-worth is confirmed. When they lose, our insecurities are exposed" (xvii). From a similar perspective, sports have become a pot where nations, communities and individuals can mix on grounds of shared feelings and achievement. However, in order not to "expose our insecurities," the romantic ideal created over sports is immediately shattered in the face of failure, since losing is believed to create anxiety and fear. By this I mean, fair play in sports, and other melodramatic imagery that sports are believed to create disappear in the face of a loss, and the ferocious side of sports appears. Thus, there emerges the symbol, which is designed to resemble sports to battlefield circumstances where loss cannot be tolerated.

Among various kinds of sports, this thesis will concentrate upon American football and its representations in fiction. One of the true pastimes of the American nation and publicly known as "the game that distinguishes men from boys," football has been loved and appreciated by American society as it is believed to represent the core values that the USA was founded upon. In addition to its war tactics and the coaches in the position of military commanders and the players that receive military-like training, treatment of successful athletes as heroes and immortal beings and racist hierarchies that provoke

political and physical struggle football has proved itself to be one of *the* games of the American nation.

The popularity of football grew, as it became one of the most dominant sports in high schools and in colleges in the United States in the first half of the 20th century. With Bowl games, a college football tradition, and of course with NFL's worldwide known Super Bowl, football has attracted millions of spectators to the games of the college and national professional teams. Boosted by fierce rivalries, high school, college and professional football still hold a widespread appeal in the US. Followed fanatically by communities and the media all across the country, football has also become a subject of interest for sports historians, sociologists and literary critics, who have examined the game to provide an insight into cultural values and social consciousness of the American nation.

Among the reasons of such growth of football, two concepts that are associated with American football, and also the producers of battle symbolism, have come to the fore: violence and masculinity. In terms of violence, although there are other sports where violent physical contact is also manifested, American football stands out as exemplary. Approaching the issue from a different perspective, William Arens asserts that it would be an "oversimplification" (72-80) to claim that American football's violence is the main reason for its pervasiveness in the culture, and "violence as the sole or even primary reason for the game's popularity" would be a wrong assumption since there are other sports which provide the same opportunity for the same purpose, such as boxing, wrestling, soccer. (72-80)But, as this thesis will attempt to show, the particular aspects of violence on the football field serve as a link between American societal values and the "battle" culture of America.

First of all, aggression on the field has always been rewarding in football. Physical toughness and dedication to body contact without hesitation are highly appreciated. In their article Zillman, Bryant and Sapolsky concur that sport is "competitive action as a means of redirecting 'instinctive' forces, primarily forces of a destructive nature" (242). Thus, subconsciously, *all people* express their innate desires for "destruction" in some way in order to "maintain their sanity, so to speak, only as they manage to re-channel their aggressive impulses, accepting *substitute* targets and *substitute* activities, but

nonetheless obtaining ‘catharsis,’ that is, a purgation of their destructive urges” (242). The argument here is that, for the American nation, football is the most popular form of this “aggression/ catharsis/ purgation” process. With its “destructive” and “aggressive” nature relieved by inflicting damage on the opponent or by performing bodily contact, American football has become a symbolic “substitute” for other possible courses of aggressive action; such as, wars and battles.

This violent aspect of football also relates it to the concept of masculinity. Firstly, as Dundes suggests, the movement of the ball across the field of the opponent is an overt symbol of Freudian view of sexual penetration (77). Moreover, athletes with more mental and physical resilience have won more regard, and these assumedly masculine traits occupy a central place in American social culture. Thus, in football, the more masculine you are the more praise and prestige you get from the society. In contrast, the “softer” or fragile or hesitant athletes are dubbed feminine, setting the football arena and discourse as a medium to spread hegemonic masculinity. As Kreager argues, “Masculinized sports . . . become socially sanctioned stepping-stones toward privilege and power sites where coaches, peers, parents, and the media encourage masculine identities founded on physical aggression and domination” (706). This is why Kreager also asserts that hyper-masculine cultures with wars and battles in their history, such as the USA, *teach* contact sports to enable the internalization of this image of hyper-masculinity. (706) Obviously, one of the best ways to promote these hegemonic ideas about male identities is no other than intercollegiate and high school level sporting events and programs. By these sporting competitions and leagues, it is hoped, and actually to most extent successfully executed, that battle-motivated and war-sanctioning adolescents be raised.

The symbolic battle construction of the game also finds its counterpart in political discourse. For instance, in one public address, President Theodore Roosevelt said that it is necessary to improve the status of the nation and this is only possible “when men hit the line of football hard” and he continued, “they developed into powerful leaders, ready to conquer the world and rule it well” (Jay 11). In the mid-20th century, Americans believed that sports and especially American football were “perfect mediums to create good American citizens” (Jay 11). Similarly, as Kathryn Jay puts it, "football

in the United States reflected all the positive values of the country-hard work, democracy, and the opportunity for individual advancement" (11).

Drawing a direct relationship between the masculine norms, belligerent attitudes, and sports, Gerald R. Gems maintains that at the turn of the 20th century, America was not involved in any war and young men in the country did not have a chance to prove their masculinity like their ancestors did before (15). Urbanization and peace manufactured "sedentary lifestyles," and with the growing effects of industrialization "middle-class men" took up "clerical roles or white-collar occupations that lacked physicality" (15). This shift from militaristic values produced a "threat to social balance and to domestic power" because of "the increasing feminization of culture" (15). Against this supposed danger of feminization in the second part of the 20th century, football filled the void covering the masculine and militant aspects, which had been neglected for decades. Therefore, as Gems summarizes, "sport became a very visible antidote as a surrogate form of war, particularly in the brutal football games popularized on college campuses and in high school leagues" (15). Even the president of the nation, Theodore Roosevelt, asserted that "the greatest danger that a long period of profound peace offers to a nation is that of effeminate tendencies in young men" (Jay 11).Therefore, football has become a likely substitute for the battle symbolism that has been used to interpret American culture.

Having such a widespread cultural significance, sports in general inevitably find their way into popular cultural representations of various sorts including literature. As Cocchiarale and Emmert maintain, American writers have frequently used sports and football, finding in them "a rich theme or trope for the representation and critique of American society" (xviii). Likewise, Ronald J. Meyers, quoting from *Metaphors We Live By* written by George Lakoff, argues that "fundamental concepts" such as rituals and battles can be powerful metaphors that reflect "values deeply embedded in our culture" (qtd. in Meyers 337), and "give enhanced meaning to our lives" (Meyers 337).

Considering American literature, one can easily remember examples of fiction and other genres, in which sports feature as an essential trope: Ernest Hemingway's homage to manhood through bullfighting sessions in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926); Bernard Malamud's depicting a mythical and supernatural interpretation of social problems

through the life of a baseball player in his novel *The Natural* (1952); In Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cockoo's Nest* (1962) R.P. McMurphy finally manages to create an impetus and mobility in the lives of patients by directing them to play basketball; the father in *Ragtime* (1975) by E.L. Doctorow finally finds happiness with his son for a single moment after the New York Giants' football game (Dougherty 3). Furthermore, A. Fletcher Cole argues that Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* (1925) makes use of golf as a signal of "social stratification" and "posits golf as a marker of success and social elitism" (75). Dougherty, about this matter, concludes that "writers have seen sports as a useful vehicle for cultural and epistemological analysis" (4). He then gives the example of William Carlos Williams' poems about baseball games and spectators and how Williams depicted "emblem for forces of repression" in "At the Ball Game" and "Spring and All XXVI" (4). Jack Kerouac also chronicles the memorable parts of his own life to make a profound analysis of the American nation in his autobiographical novel *Vanity of Duluoz* (1968). Matthew Kelly claims, by using football, Kerouac frames a story where "football in particular, becomes a proving ground, a way for young men to attain public recognition, self-identity, and worth" (180). He further adds "We [readers] literally see them [young men in *Vanity of Duluoz*] training for the war and metaphorically falling down and dying in the world's arena" (180). In Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Willy Loman relates his son, a high school football player, to the mythic Greek god Hercules, and Miller through this scene establishes a rapport between the God of prowess and the representation of the hero in American society: "[L]ike a young god, Hercules – … And the sun, the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? … and the cheers, when he came out - Loman! Loman! Loman! God almighty…. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away" (qtd. in Barlow 32).

Sports fictions unfold a great deal about the depth of the American psyche and demonstrate the moral codes of American society. The causes that form the values of American society can be found in different representations. About this, Higgs and Isaacs maintain that works of "sports fiction" may not "duplicate actual experiences" however, since they are meditations on the collective frameworks of social merits and virtues "they do expose American societal values inherent in sport" (56). Meyers then

concludes that “there is a ‘second’ or allegorical meaning to ritual, literature, sport, and games” (337).

This thesis also moves from a similar perspective and looks into how several cultural issues are re-enacted in three works of American fiction, namely, Don DeLillo’s *End Zone* (1972), John Grisham’s *Bleachers* (2004) and Dan Jenkins’ *Semi-Tough* (1972). The main argument of the thesis is that the stories these books tell about football are actually symbolic representations of wider cultural issues concerning the ideas of masculinity, race, and desire for immortality. Thus, the phrase in the title of this thesis, “symbolic battles” refer to the fact that the characters in these works of fiction and their struggles on and off the football field are manifestations of deeper-running social and cultural conflicts and desires and how they are negotiated. In the remaining pages of this introduction, I would like to delineate briefly the framework within which I will approach these novels.

The analytical approach of this thesis will involve discourse and narrative analysis. Working on the sub-textual readings of language and narratives, the approach will focus on “battle symbolism” and how writers utilize football to comment on and depict greater problems within American culture.A secondary, sub-textual meaning will be further sought whileexamining the discourse, conversations, speeches, contexts, scene transitions, and any communicative and narrative event in these novels of fiction to prove that authors use symbolic battles to express some deeper and neglected issues in American social and cultural stratifications. Each written representation, which delineates pictures from American culture, presents a different dilemma in the context of football. With this, this thesis argues that football is used as a representation upon which various symbolic battles are presented and elaborated.

End Zone: Symbolic Battle against Hegemonic Masculinity: The following section will establish the theory of hegemony in the USA, and how this hegemony brought along masculine norms to American culture. I will focus on the construction of hegemony from a social/gender perspective, and I will try to shed light on political/institutional hegemony.

Walter Ong argues that “human males” are similar to “males of other higher animals” in that they are “are biologically conditioned to feel that their gender identity is always

incomplete and at risk," and this feeling creates a condition where "they are perpetually driven to affirm and validate [their gender identity] through combat" (15). That is to say, "instinctively" males have a tendency to react to other males "either through complex modes of bonding" to make sure that other males are not a threat for their own manhood, "or through controlled and ritualized forms of combat" (qtd. in Giles 94), such as; fighting with other males. From a similar perspective, this comes to mean that in males, there has always been a feeling of anxiety and threat to masculine identity, and it is to these theories that this part now turns to Freud's castration anxiety and the Oedipus Complex.

An author that has been influential on the topic, Owen Flanagan quotes Freud in "Three Essays on Sexuality" and "Femininity," and argues that the terms masculinity and femininity borrow traits from each other until a male child develops the Oedipus Complex in order to seek the affection of his mother, and be like his father. Further, a male child fears that he will be castrated of his manly power by his father if he continues his love for the mother, hence; "castration anxiety" (64). This subconscious transformation into a symbolic father, the Oedipus Complex, does not necessarily mean that "the child could be learning any of a large number of different personal traits" (65).

Over time, nations have constructed certain traits for their citizens and this reserve of traits, transferred by social interaction and learning, is formed by "macro-events, such as wars," or "micro-events" (Meladze 89), such as social gatherings, local sports occasions. That is to say, there are only *certain* traits and characteristics "a given culture would assign more frequently to men than to women" (Flanagan 65), and this learning depends on the interaction between the male child and his social environment "in the ways the particular culture characteristically makes available to members of their sex" (65). From a psychoanalytical perspective, in nations with a history of constant battles, the macro-events that define typically male traits are historically formed by wars. Since childhood, therefore, what men learn from society, in order to seek affection from their *mother*, has been ornamented with masculine qualities, just as "a father" would possess. In other words, the lessons that the society teaches men nurture father-like masculine qualities and are guided by the need for the mother's affection.

Connecting Frued's theory to militaristic politics, Lloyd deMause states that the construction of hegemony was initiated by the subconscious belief where *nations* have been believed to possess "qualities of maternal beings" (qtd. in Meladze 101), hence the word: motherland. This belief produces bonds of "emotional attachment [to the country]" and makes the people of the country see their homeland as a "good mother object that protects" her citizens (Meladze 103). In return for this affection, people spread "the good mother representation" across the nation in order to "nourish shared fantasies of national potency and masculine strength" (deMause, "Seven Phases" 325-26). In other words, subconsciously, people spread their love of the motherland to assert their national power and masculine strength. From the subconscious to conscious level, this transfer of emotional attachment to and protection of the motherland has turned into a system of militarization in modern times, and in this case 20thcentury America.

Integrating Freud's theory of Oedipal affection for the mother and deMause's statements on military drive to develop love for the motherland, James Giles asserts that "sanctioned, even institutionalized violence … played a central role in the formation of the United States" (1). He insists that the USA was founded upon a "violent revolution" and with wars, such as "the Civil War and U.S. participation in World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the war in Vietnam," America has "continued and intensified the national legacy of violence" (1). However, this institutional and nationally sanctioned violence has not remained on the battlefields. It has spread through social, political, cultural and economic configurations of America. According to Victor Meladze, "the hyper-militarized character of the United States" has constructed a "need for continued war rituals" in order to create a system of hegemony. (89) This tells us that, both internally and externally, America has used violence to construct and assert a system of hegemony. In other words, the hegemonic masculine identity has been constructed through battles, and this process of proving one's self to deserve the love of the motherland is similar to the Oedipal stage in which the male child constantly tries to win the mother's love. Thus, on a different level of psychological perception, it is also important not to forget that the Oedipus complex becomes the barrier men try to overcome to conform and compromise with the socially defined masculine traits and identities.

Explaining how the hegemonic system translates into traits of masculinity, Arthur Redding states that "structural" or "systematic" transformation of violence "forms an integral ground of a dynamic system … a ballast of ideologies" (4-5) such as; patriotism and heterosexuality. These ideologies supported by violence "is what gives hegemonic structures stability" (Giles 6) because "at an unconscious level," says Meladze, "militarization and wars of containment, preventive and pre-emptive actions were masculinity and immortality projects" led by policy makers in America. (101) That is to say, the violence and militarization established in America have transformed into a system of hegemony that is believed to give America an identity of "masculinity."

Lawrence Kramer connects "ritualized forms of combat" to a specific sex, males, and states that "the male becomes the enforcer of culturally sanctioned violence and repression" (2). He further argues that American males define masculinity as "radically unambivalent," thus strong; and femininity as "radically ambivalent," thus weak (2). With regards to this difference, Kramer concludes that although Americans may deny it, there is a great amount of insecurity caused by the "ambiguity" and "ambivalence," (2) and further puts forward that most males hate and fear ambiguity and ambivalence because they have associated these traits with women and 'unmanly' men" (qtd. in Giles 95). Thus, hegemonic masculinity, initiated by men, dictates that men be straight[1] and simple, for males, subconsciously, do not have tolerance for "unmanly" behaviors which trigger their fears and anxieties; fears and anxieties subconsciously stemming from losing the love of themother. To sum up, hegemonic masculinity "embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it" (Connell and Messerschmidt 832).

However, these manly norms, or hegemonic masculine norms, are not uncontested areas. According to Lloyd deMause new generations produce new "psychoclasses" that are more independent from the traditional social norms and are loosely attached to the "obedience patterns of their parents" (318-319). In this regard, generational difference creates norm problems within the country, which means that a new generation of "psychoclasses" are again subconsciously sent "down the path," but to fight different

[1] "Heterosexual; following one after another in order, following each other without interruption" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/straight).

"sacrificial wars" (318-319). This new pattern of perception in the 1960s in America "included the blurring of behavior and norm, the homogenizing effect of the role concept, and its difficulties in accounting for power" (Connell and Messerschmidt 831). Although there are various other consequences of such "blurring," the major result of the moral "independence from parents" has been the exposure of homosexuality. Morin and Garfinkle assert that "the idea of a hierarchy of masculinities grew directly out of homosexual men's experience with violence and prejudice from straight men" (qtd. in Connell and Messerschmidt 831). Thus, hegemonic masculinity has also led to consequences where homosexual men had "ambivalent relationships to patriarchy and conventional masculinity" (832).

Judith Butler says, "gender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones which are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond" (22). This means that in gender relations, the most valued sexual orientation is seen as straightness. Other derivations, namely homosexuality, have been either disregarded or forced out of existence by pressure from the society. However, in the wake of these newly realized homosexual relations, queer theory comes to the fore as explanatory of the sexual aspect of these new "psychoclasses."According to Judith Butler, "the term 'queer' emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity" (18). In other words, the word "queer," which will be elaborated in the first chapter, stands in opposition of hegemonic masculinity "the status of force," and "straightness and unambivalance," that is, "stability and masculinity." With these qualities, "queer" has been transformed into a meaning that "has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult" (18). That is, for America, "queer" has come to signify all that the nation has feared and intentionally escaped from. Queers are accused of betraying their gender and sexual identity and humiliated in the social continuum. In this respect, queers have started to fight "the sacrificial war" against accusations, pathologizations and insults created by hegemonic masculine norms.

Moreover, from the perspective of sports, Messner asserts that "the enactment of hegemonic masculinity in professional sports" reproduces "steep hierarchies" that are embedded in American culture (qtd. in Connell and Messerschmidt 834).From this

perspective, "hegemonic patterns of masculinity are embedded in specific social environments, such as formal organizations" (839). Incorporating all these theories above into sports Connell and Messerschmidt explain that bodily contact sports, such as football, "function as an endlessly renewed symbol of masculinity" and it is important to analyze football to perceive "the violence and homophobia frequently found in sporting milieus" (833). Thus, as one of the leading formal organizations in the USA, football is one of the preeminent areas where gender and institutional hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity can be observed, and this is the domain where DeLillo portrays his criticism of the USA.

In the light of the theoretical discussions summarized above, the first chapter of the thesis will look into Don DeLillo's *End Zone* (1972), which was critically well-acclaimed at the time of its publication. With this book, DeLillo subtly grapples with the issues of queerness and the masculine-military context of football during the times of the Cold War. In order to do this, DeLillo creates scenes and settings in which it is necessary to talk about a possible homosexuality in football only secretly since hegemonic heterosexuality is a complementary component of football. Football is a catalyst into setting the tone for hegemonic masculinity within the American nation, and "within the masculinity literature," heavy-contact sports are generally portrayed as significant "avenues for males to construct hegemonic masculine identities" (Connell and Messerschmidt 835).

However, the novel not only depicts how this process of construction works but also questions the validity of such an assumed relationship between football and masculinity along with others, which reflect the mainstream ideology of American culture. Thus, Don DeLillo takes the liberty in *End Zone* to demonstrate that football and masculinity *do not always* prevail together. In *End Zone*, hidden motives for such symbolic battles are delineated and exemplified through characters and their mindset. Within this framework, the chapter will explore how hegemonic masculinity and the battle against it are portrayed in *End Zone*.

Bleachers: Symbolic Battle against Mortality: In the following section, the history of life after death, or life-continuity, will be traced. After showing how archetypal imageries and mythologies about life-continuity have changed over time, this section will explain how post-self theory is formed. Commenting on the representation of the hero in literature as a reflection of such changes and post-self theory, these themes will be connected to symbolic fights of sport-heroes and John Grisham's *Bleachers*.

Robert Jay Lifton argues that "we live on images" (*Broken Connection* 3). As human beings, we shape our images and transform them into "metaphors and models" (3). We are confronted with various images that are transformed into metaphors and models in life; such as, "God and the devil, dialectical materialism and the perfectibility of man, or libido and death instinct" (3). Regarding these images, Joseph Henderson, in "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," asserts that these images and the mythologies behind these images are in our unconscious mind because we are still able to retain our "symbol-making capacity that once found expression in the beliefs and rituals of the primitive" (107). This "capacity" has a vital connection for our psychological health, and as Henderson mentions, in a number of aspects of our life, "we are dependent" (107) on the reflections created by "such symbols," also "both our attitudes and our behavior are profoundly influenced by [these myths]" (107). Similarly, Carl Jung asserts that our "mythologies hold hidden maps to our psychic terrain- important 'hints sent to us from the unconscious'" (qtd. in Lifton, *Broken Connection* 14). As explained further by Jung:

> Beyond [the intellect] there is a thinking in primordial images – in symbols that are older than historical man; which have been ingrained in him from earliest times, and, eternally living, outlasting all generations, still make up the groundwork of the human psyche. It is possible to live the fullest of life only when we are in harmony with these symbols; wisdom is a return to them. It is a question neither of belief nor knowledge, but of the agreement of our thinking with the primordial images of the unconscious. They are the source of all our conscious thoughts, and one of these primordial images is the idea of life after death. (qtd. in Lifton, *Broken Connection* 15)

Therefore, "life-continuity" as "the archetype itself, as an inherited-instinctual image, becomes a suprahistorical truth, which we are unquestioningly to pursue" (Lifton, *Broken Connection* 17). That is to say, since ancient times our unconscious has been

shaped by myths and images although we may not realize it, we subconsciously try to attain life-continuity in the footsteps of these archetypal images and myths.

However, in modern times, with the development of technology, as Lifton maintains in *Broken Connection*, "something has gone seriously wrong with everyone's images and models" (3) especially when the matter has come to death. We started to feel threatened "by a new wave of millennial imagery – of killing, dying, and destroying" (3). Consequently, our images or models have failed to "address that threat" of death to cease our anxieties, and we have become "haunted by the image of extermination" by means of this modern age. As a result of this, we have suffered psychologically so much that "we have never come to terms with death and life-continuity" (5).

Elaborating more on the changing nature of modernity that has had a remarkable impact on our unconscious imagery, Anthony Giddens, asserts that "modernity introduces … changes in trust mechanisms and in risk environments" (32). This basically means "the self in late modernity" is made vulnerable by "existential anxieties" (qtd. in Vigilant and Williamson 13). The anxieties the modern age has brought "emerge from the globalizing tendencies of economies," and these tendencies erase or deactivate the "primordial and caring structures" which were once used "to build trust and inoculate against existential uneasiness" (13). The new system of beliefs brought along by modernity has defied the archaic images; thus, the meanings of symbols in cultures have changed, and with these changes, cultures of modern era have also had to be transformed.

As Lifton asserts, historically, cultures are created not out of denying or defying death, but rather accepting its existence, and with this acceptance human beings live in the unique awareness that they both die and continue. That is to say, we may not be able to imagine our own deaths, but culturally speaking, as modern age instigated, it is a significant "fallacy" not to think about the existence of death (qtd. in Vigilant and Williamson 6). From this cultural perspective, death and continuity of life have been examined and explained by many scholars. For Freud, "modern man has embraced to deny death and the fear of it at severe psychological costs" (qtd. in Lifton,*Broken Connection* 13-14). Emphasizing that our unconscious is shaped through archaic

symbols, Carl Jung explains these "costs" by saying that the more we escape from them, the more we suffer. In other words, by denying or deferring the fact that we will die, human beings are going against hundreds years of mythologies and primordial archetypes of our unconscious "which contain beliefs about life after death" (qtd. in Lifton, *Broken Connection* 14).

Discussing the construction of images, myths and imageries in the modern age in connection with our archetypal unconscious, Lifton proposes that "the inner life-experience of a sense of immortality," instead of denying or delaying to think that we will die, "may well be the most authentic psychological alternative to that denial" (Lifton, *Broken Connection* 13). This means that as modern day human beings, we still "require symbolization of continuity- imaginative forms of transcending death" (17). So, even though we are affected very much by the fact that modernity and technology have brought new changes in our unconscious, the archetypal imagery we need to follow in order to pursue a life-continuity still exists. As argued by Ernest Becker, death may create the death of the body, but the self, fed by the unconscious archetypal imageries and mythologies from the past, still strives to live symbolically, looking for a "cosmic specialness," or at times a form of "heroism" (69-70). Body, in a sense, becomes a medium of immortality for the self, which is believed to continue after death.

Therefore, post-self theory, which is shaped by Robert Jay Lifton, is not a transient popularity but "an appropriate symbolization of our biological and historical connectedness" (Lifton, *Broken Connection* 17). Under the scope of post-self theory, Lifton explains that life-continuity, or symbolic immortality, can be achieved in five different modes: "the biological, theological, creative (through "works"), natural, and the special mode of experiential transcendence" (18). Regarding post-self theory and its various modes of symbolic immortality, Lee Vigilant and John Williamson assert that "the knowledge that we will die forces us to confront and transcend our fears of finitude in symbolic ways, particularly through relying upon various modes of symbolic immortality," (2-3) and this "pursuit of symbolic immortality," is the summary of post-self theory. Lifton further puts forward that, post-self image "gives meaning to our existence by preserving our connection to others in material ways in this life, while ensuring our continued symbolic connection to others once the mortal coil is severed"

(qtd. in Vigilant and Williamson 3). Post-self theory, therefore, is a solution to inner anxieties created by the death imagery in the modern age and the unconscious will to attain life-continuity after death.

In connection to post-self theory and the representation of death and life-continuity in literature, Douglas Porpora states that "the study of heroes is important because heroes are one indicator of who we are and what we stand for… Overall, the pattern of findings discloses an unstudied dimension of cultural disenchantment" (Porpora 209). As a reflection of changes in cultural paradigms and social symbolizations, heroes of literary texts experience such similar transformations in representational works.

Evaluating the change in heroes from a literary view, Joseph Campbell in *The Power of Myth* explains how the hero of ancient days and mythic times has ceased to exist in current society. In our modern day, he argues, we have lost our mythologies that have guided our inner world, he says, "with the loss of that, we've really lost something because we don't have a comparable literature to take its place" (10). All that information which once "supported human life, built civilizations, and informed religions over the millennia" now has to keep up with modern age, and guide heroes through "deep inner problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage" (10). However, since we do not know "what the guide-signs are along the way, [we] have to work it out [ourself]" (10). That is, it is not primordial imagery which can explain modernity, but it is only us who can know what to do in modern days, and this brings a challenge on modern day people since we are taking a road not taken before.

In a later text, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell comments that "mysteries have lost their force; their symbols no longer interest our psyche" (360), emphasizing the individualistic struggle of ours and our heroes' against archaic symbols. The society that was required to support the ancient hero has shifted from group-based meaning to a focus on the individual. Campbell further comments that with the change in the mentality of the society, our heroes have changed as well. Campbell remarks, "the problem of mankind today, therefore, is precisely the opposite to that of men in the comparatively stable periods of those great coordinating mythologies which now are known as lies" (358). To rephrase the argument, the stories that were told about

heroism, love and country to picture an image of a hero in literature have lost their meaning in the modern age, too. The symbolic meanings that were once attributed to heroes do not connect to any modern day symbolism unless they are modified as well. "The center of gravity, that is to say, of the realm of mystery and danger has definitely shifted" (Campbell, *The Hero* 360). That danger the literary heroes face has become the losing the fight of the battle for life-continuity, an archaic symbol which, as a reflection of our society, we may have tended to forget in the modern age of change and technology.

Since heroes are representations of cultural archetypes, and since cultures are changing, so are heroes. With reference to this notion, in his article "The Heroes Are Tired," Richard Whitehall asserts that "the western hero, unaided by the supernatural, must now know for what he is prepared to die and his struggle has become, not as it used to be, against exterior forces of lawlessness, but more and more against some deficiency or blemish in himself" (18). Heroes are not fighting against giant serpents, multiple-headed monsters, or dragons; however, they are engaged in a more primordial battle. They are battling against their own roles, their own identities. They are trying to remedy their "deficiencies" and work their way through not to have any "blemish."

In this regard, Herbert Blumer states that "in the face of new situations or new experiences individuals, groups, institutions and societies find it necessary to form new definitions" (686). So, where do these modern heroes that can answer the expectation of the modern day America and form new definitions exist? According to Vigilant and Williamson, "organized sports, especially on university and professional levels, offer a unique arena to study the work of immortalizing the self. Organized professional sports offer a public arena where athletes can make history through extraordinary plays or by breaking longstanding records" (8). Thus, in modern American society, there is a shift to picture heroes from more advertised and popularized aspects of the culture; such as, sports. John Hughson argues that "with the advent and widespread availability of television, sporting heroes could actually be seen rather than read or heard about. Their prowess – display of expertness – became a matter of visible achievement" (86). In other words, among other popular areas of the culture, archetypal equivalents of modern culture are associated with heroes from sports areas. Hughson further explains that, "sporting heroes possess an 'historical sense' of their achievement and in some cases

this extends beyond the realm of sport to the cultural historical significance of sport in their time" (87). Therefore, it is not surprising to find athlete-heroes in cultural representations as a larger reflection of American society.

Michael Oriard, in *Dreaming of Heroes*, states that sports have an indispensible value for American culture, and they reflect "the best and worst in American culture, because it is at the center of American experience" (21). Oriard further postulates that athlete heroes reflect values that "are found in American folklore," and as athletes they are "heroic types [and] are myth-bearers in American culture" (qtd. in Crepeau 1). Relating the history of sports writing, Michael Oriard summarizes the transformation from athlete to hero as involving several stages. Initially, he states, Jack London set the primary themes relating athletes to heroes [in the second half of the 19th century], then Ring Lardner was the first author to use sport as a microcosm of American society [in the first half of the 20th century] and finally Bernard Malamud "broke out of the limitation imposed by realism [in the second half of the 20th century]" (qtd. in Crepeau 2).

As regards to these theoretical assumptions explained above, the second chapter will focus on post-self theory and representation of athlete-heroes in John Grisham's *Bleachers* (2004).Known as a writer of courtroom and murder stories, and detective thrillers, Grisham scrutinizes human behavior and the human psyche closely in a football environment in *Bleachers*. Grisham maintains that physical and mental resilience on the field is not enough; beside these, prestige and collective memory are preliminary steps to real "success." Football stands out as the most prominent element that forms collective memory in a small American town, and Grisham narrates spiritual journeys in which heroes strive to build their self-worth and their struggle to be remembered by the Messina society in order to live symbolically until eternity. In this chapter, one of the basic fears in the human psyche, that is fear of death and ultimately the fear of being forgotten, will be spelled out under the roof of a post-self idea. Analyzing the concept of post-self, I will explore how Grisham uses the context of American football context and its discourse to address the symbolic fight against death, against past and present: battle to attain a memorable post-self.

Semi-Tough: Symbolic Battle against Racism: In this section, I will try to shed light on the construction of black identity starting with the construction of white identity. Tracing the historical perception of blackness and how it has been made to support white supremacy, this section will move on to explain black stereotypes and the commodification of black bodies, and link the arguments to Dan Jenkins' *Semi-Tough*.

Stuart Hall states that "America has always had a series of ethnicities," and as a result of this, "the construction of ethnic hierarchies has always defined its cultural politics" (105). While this cultural politics has been defined, racism against black people has stood as a leading element that makes up the said "hierarchies." There are various components that make up this racist hierarchy, and one of the leading ones is "control over narratives and representations [at] the hands of the established cultural bureaucracies" (108). Regarding culture and representations, Ben Carrington, in "'Race', Representation and the Sporting Body,"[2] supports Stuart Hall by putting forward that "it is important then to view the process of representation as a primary site for the construction and constitution of identities, collective and individual, rather than merely being a secondary reflection of already formed social identities" (5). That is to say, in order to understand the existent racist hierarchy, we need to look at how the representation of black people has been constituted. This contrasts with accepting the existence of it without analyzing the formation of whiteness and the construction of black identity. To understand the matter extensively, first it is necessary to look at the issue of racism briefly from the perspective of whiteness studies and understand how white identity was constructed.

On the other side of the paradigm, or at the higher parts of "the ethnic hierarchy," white Americans have been in control of the power. Since 1607, when the first permanent English settlement was founded at Jamestown, Virginia, American white race of European descendant was "confronted with twofold problem," which had to be solved in order to secure a prestigious position in the new economic and social system they had been constructing in America. First, it was important to "secure an adequate supply of

[2] This paper is a longer version of an article which appeared in *New Formations* 45 (2001-2002) under the title "Fear of a Black Athlete: Masculinity, Politics and the Body."

work power," and secondly, it was crucial to "establish and maintain the degree of social control necessary to assure the rapid and continuous expansion of their capital by the exploitation of that labor" (Allen 3). Moving on towards new solutions to labor power, the need to secure the capital and the hegemony over social control, continental Europe's colonizing powers "did not employ Europeans as basic plantation workers" (3). In other words, white Americans created their own identity in opposition to other races, and especially black Americans. The white supremacist system had initially "drawn the color line between freedom and slavery and established white supremacy as article one of the Anglo-American constitution" (45).In other words, "Only European-Americans, as 'whites,' were thereafter to be entitled to the full rights of the free citizen" (45), which had placed them on the higher levels of the social, political and economic ladder, as thoroughbreds. Whereas soon-to-be enslaved races, the black race in particular, would be used as exploitation of body power in plantations and would be neglected when their rights are in question. To support this view in the social continuum, David Roediger asserts that "an appealing argument ran" which founded the connection between the white American hegemony and the degradation of black Americans, and that argument, created and supported by White supremacist is that "Blacks [are] unfit for freedom" (35), which can easily be said to mark the beginning of white superiority and black inferiority through racism.

Ronald Hall, who quotes from Michael Banton, defines racism as "the efforts of a dominant race group to exclude a dominated race group from sharing in the material and symbolic rewards of status and power" (104). To put it differently "a racist stereotype is a communal but unscientifically validated belief about the performances of out-group populations" (106-107). That is, in our case, for larger purposes planned by white supremacists in the higher levels of hierarchy, racism and racist stereotypes are used as medium of ignorance and disregard against black Americans, while foregrounding some other qualities of African Americans for the servitude to whites. As Ronald Hall maintains, "definitions of stereotype highlight certain aspects of African American men while completely ignoring others" (106).

Before analyzing these stereotypes regarding black Americans, it might be helpful to delineate the motives behind such stereotypes as these motives are the producers of black identity. Michele Wallace asserts that the difficulty of being a black in a white

gaze is initially catalyzed by the fact that "the very markers that reveal you to the rest of the world, your dark skin and kinky/curly hair, are visual" (40). That is, in terms of physique, the appearance of African Americans is one of the reasons for the racist categorization. African Americans are different in their skin color: they have black skin. This physical color difference is accompanied by some other "visual" qualities that are easily seen and can distinguish someone as African American, such as large nostrils and kinky/curly hair.

Historically speaking black man due to their physical strength and appearance "was at once acknowledged as a threat to systems of white supremacist patriarchy," and consequently, they "were denied the political and cultural authority that went along with this" (Carrington 11). Kaja Silverman further postulates that "the black male is seen to be the embodiment of hyper-masculinity – ultra violent and the ultimate manifestation of phallic power … therefore, a threat to the 'white male corporeal ego'" (31). Regarding this point of view, Stuart Hall in his article "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," also explains the derogation of black Americans by white supremacists and of European descent governmentality depends on the physicality and sexuality of black race:

> For the maintenance of white patriarchal hegemony it was … the symbolic castration of black men. This was achieved, primarily, by denying black men access to the central components of masculinity, i.e. patriarchal power and authority, and by reducing black men, politically, legally, socially, and often verbally, to the status of infants. (249)

This means that since white Americans of European descent believed that blacks were virile with more prowess, they saw African Americans as a subversive force to be controlled. In order to establish a system of control and surveillance, whites formed an identity to keep African Americans away and down from their own ladder of hierarchy and patriarchy. With this regard, several political and cultural ideologies and perceptions, which make up black identity, have been established by the white American governmentality.

Some of the unsubstantiated but flagrant assumptions that foster the construction of black identity are as follows: As Hegel postulated, "The Negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness, and if we wish to understand him at all, we must put aside all our European attitudes…nothing consonant with humanity is to be found in his character" (qtd. in Carrington 7-8). This comes to mean that "The Negro" is

not a human and does not have the physical or personality traits of a human being, and therefore cannot be perceived as a white, of European descent individual. In addition to this, WEB DuBois, in his seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk* asserts that white supremacy and governmentality has created an identity for black Americans depending on a "stubborn conviction about the black organism itself" (63). DuBois further comments that "the sincere and passionate belief that somewhere between men and cattle, God created a *tertium quid*[3] and called it a Negro, - a clownish, simple creature, at times even loveable within its limitations, straitly foreordained to walk within the Veil [of Race]" (63). Thus, "one of the central components to the emasculating discourses of white racism is an attempt to simultaneously dehumanise and sexualise the black male body, as an attempt to deny him his humanity" (Carrington 33-34). In other words, the black American is neither a human nor an animal but occupies a place in between, a physically and sexuality aggressive half-human-half-animal "Negro," and this "Negro" can be manipulated to the advantage of the white because the"Negro" has been made believed to have limitations due to his race.

Taking the discussions summarized above a step further on a representational level, *stereotypes* have become the medium through which these racist ideologies can be summarized and communicated. With these traits of black identity and perceptions that white Americans want to spread, we can say that, as summarized by Ronald Hall, "the universal perception of African American men evolved from a history of Western racism and stereotype" (104). Hall further comments that "[i]n reality, European Americans have relied on stereotype to call attention to racist beliefs that characterize African American men in a derogatory context" (106). The definition of the term, as Jeff Stone, Perry and Darley state, "stereotypes often confirm their own veracity and may do so implicitly such that perceivers are unaware of the stereotype's activation or use" (292), and such is the similar case for African Americans. Racist stereotypes about black Americans have become so embedded into the American culture that it is difficult to distinguish them from the facts that can be explored otherwise. Ronald Hall explains how a strong, powerful black identity is covered by assumptions and stereotypes as he maintains, "Europeans manufactured these

[3] "Tertium quid refers to an unidentified third element that is in combination with two known ones" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertium_quid).

stereotypes to secure their position in Western society and simultaneously denigrate Africans for purposes of subordination" (106). Therefore, stereotypes, in all stratifications of American social and political hierarchy have been used as weapons to "derogate" black Americans to the level of inferiority without even giving a chance to establish a just form of an identity.

The preeminent example of African American stereotyping is the perception of blacks "as strong but intellectually dull: 'dumb Black'" (R. Hall 105). Elaborating more into black stereotyping, Ben Lombardo asserts that there are "two distinct stereotypes" that can be associated with African American men: "The first is the brute. The second is sambo … The brute defined Africans as primitive, temperamental, violent, and sexually powerful, and the sambo defined them as child like" (qtd. in R. Hall 106). As previously discussed, black physical strength has been regarded as a threat to white patriarchal hierarchy. Therefore, from another perspective it is possible to see "the motivation for the "dumb Black" stereotype is inherent in the ability of African American men to threaten America's masculine male power structure" (R. Hall 114).

Ralph Ellison states in *Shadow and Act* that "the American Negro … whose social condition creates a state which is almost the reverse of the cataleptic trance: Instead of his consciousness being lucid to the reality around it while the body is rigid, here it is the body which is alert" (89). As can be seen, the hierarchical subjugation that relieves black Americans of their power simultaneously brought the physical qualities to the fore. With their so-called "animalistic" and "savage" power, black Americans were used as a medium for the manufactured superiority of white supremacy, therefore the African American historical past ornamented with physical work and the medium for white welfare have created a similar stereotype: workhorse, which will be elaborated in depth in this chapter. As John Hoberman states regarding the workhorse stereotype, "awash in modern images of superlative black athletes and Mandingo style stereotypes of robust slaves, we find it hard to imagine that an apparent surplus of healthy black bodies has not always been a part of the American racial landscape" (11). This stereotype is also predicated on the fact that "the black (male) body has come to occupy a central metonymic site through which notions of 'athleticism' and 'animalism' operate" (Carrington 4). As a result of these perceptions and the scar that has been cut in the

psychic imagery of white Americans, the black body has been manipulated by the white power holders from plantation eras and to some extent, even today.

As I have mentioned earlier, racism discards a race also from "material welfare." "The black body have become highly valued commodities, whilst at the very same time within the formal economy, actual black people (alienated from the surplus sign-value of their own bodies) struggle to survive against the material conditions of global capitalism" (Carrington 26-27). That is to say, by not creating equal job opportunities and homogenization of job distribution, black Americans were also disenfranchised from the working and material income opportunities by white Americans. Material power naturally involves the authority to have a voice on representation and hierarchy. In order to keep black Americans back from climbing the ladder of economic welfare, white supremacy canalized black Americans into what appears to be an area of material wealth, but these areas are also controlled by the white upper hand. Ironically, as black Americans have been used as commodity themselves, they were shunned away from the opportunities of the very same economic system itself by "the forms of commodity racism that once marked the period of high Imperialism" (Carrington 36).

As regards to literary reflections, the construction of blackness has also been transformed into literary stereotypes, and these stereotypes have been depicted in literary representations. In books, films, even in sports, the inferiority of blacks were depicted with repressive qualities. "This is evident in the variety of stock characters portrayed in novels, plays, drama, short stories and films of and about that era" of slavery. (Ogbu 10) White Americans liked to believe that they were superior to black citizens, and white people did not refrain from showing this belief in "their treatment of Blacks' jokes, novels, short stories, drama and movies" (Johnson 100).

From this perspective of race relations and representations in the US, the third chapter will deal with *Semi-Tough* (1972) by Dan Jenkins. A long-time sports writer, Jenkins details his experiences and his views regarding the racist nature of football. Initially seen as a work of satire and comical fiction, *Semi-Tough* explores deep into the American social hierarchy. As it encompasses a wider spectrum of issues than just locker-room slang, *Semi-Tough* focuses on the Black Rights Movement after the 1960s to represent the relationships between white and black Americans and it portrays

symbolic battles of independence against symbolic slavery in football in the United States of America. In *Semi-Tough*, Jenkins looks into the racism that underlies the discourse and context of football, which is an accurate reflection of the rest of the social, economic and political power relations prevalent in the USA, almost a modern form of a ruthless plantation. Bearing the ethos and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s in mind, Jenkins wrote a work of fiction in which racism is revealed within the discourse of football. By depicting white and black athletes in contrast to each other, with his display of the mindset and the language of these characters, Jenkins reminds us that there is a symbolic battle for equality on the football fields for black people.

CHAPTER 1

SYMBOLIC BATTLE AGAINST HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY: THE QUEER in DON DELILLO'S *END ZONE* (1972)

The people play with terror and laugh at it; the awesome becomes a 'comic monster'

Mikhail Bakhtin from *Rabelais and His World*

This chapter argues that in *End Zone* Don DeLillo portrays the American fear of queerness and challenges the values and assumptions of hegemonic masculinity in the world of sports. *End Zone* is not simply a novel only about football but also the story of a symbolic battle against masculinity in which characters try to make sense of social norms and battle against their repressed ambiguous emotions. Within the context of football, DeLillo criticizes the war culture of the post-WWII era and hegemonic masculinity, presenting possible homosexuality in football as an ironic contrast to the core values of the game and American culture in general. As stated by Thomas LeClair in "Deconstructing the Logos: Don DeLillo's *End Zone*," the novel is about "American life in its qualities of competition, male testing and bonding, racial relations, and war" (107).

End Zone brings out various aspects of college football of the post-WWII era, in which the novel is set. Don DeLillo creates characters who defy social norms in this war-crazed epoch of American history. The hegemonic idea is that sexual ambiguity instills fear and anxiety within the football circle, and queer players are deemed out of place since they do not fit into the masculine structure of the game. However, DeLillo makes use of the masculine-athletic context to show characters' struggle with their hidden ambiguous sexual tendencies and how they suffer because of it. *End Zone* creates its own battle against the hegemonic system by portraying characters whose traits, dialogues and confessions reveal more complexity about their masculine positions. Because of this, these characters can be read from different sides of the sexual spectrum: the traditional hyper-masculine athlete and the queer. Reconstructing a struggle against the conventional notion that football players are and should be

heterosexual, DeLillo persistently challenges the tacit assumptions behind the social demands regarding sexual tendencies in terms of male relationships in sports. With its popularity in the nation, football is one of the most mainstream and pervasive weapons to influence public perspective and opinion, and the intentional destruction of the core value, hegemonic masculinity, of football is of major importance.

In *End Zone*, Don DeLillo presents a group of college football players in an environment of male-bonding during the aftermaths of WWII when America is in the Cold War with Russia. The atmosphere of the country is filled with militaristic discourses and patriotism. Therefore, DeLillo depicts a tense environment where hegemonic masculinity and military ideas support each other. The coaches constantly belittle players and push them to their physical and psychological limits. The militaristic language and the masculine-military sports routines narrated in the novel add up to picture the battle mentality behind football. In addition, DeLillo portrays the promotion of the militarization by street advertisements inviting individuals to be armed. With continuous reflection on militaristic characters and violent nature of the game, DeLillo achieves to highlight the war ideology that was pervasive in America.

End Zone accounts for a single football season, chronicling the events, matches, characters, and coaches at a college named Logos, which is located in midst of the desert somewhere in West Texas. Gary Harkness is the main character and narrator, and we see the events of the novel through his eyes. After several drop-outs from respected colleges for various reasons, Gary ends up playing for Logos College. He loves the game of football very much and as the novel progresses, Gary develops an interest in nuclear wars and disaster scenarios. Gary's life in Logos College changes as Taft Robinson, a black player who has already made a reputation for his speed and agility, arrives at Logos to play for the Logos. Taft is reserved and even-tempered, and his relation to other players is limited or non-existent. However, Taft's closeness to Gary raises questions as they both appear to complete each other both physically, on the field, and emotionally, off the field. On another level, Gary only has one brief affair with a girl, named Myna.

However, DeLillo creates a sharp contrast to the decorum of the time. With his protagonist Gary Harkness, DeLillo no longer perpetuates the myth that football

expresses heterosexuality. In addition to his multiple implied feminine qualities, Gary is strongly implied to develop a feeling of intimacy with another male football player, Taft Robinson. Furthermore, DeLillo depicts Gary engaging in a symbolic sexual intercourse with another male, Major Staley. With his creation of a vehement opposition between football-war culture and ambiguous sexuality, and then deconstructing this opposition by his leading character Gary Harkness, DeLillo breaks down the barriers of hegemonic masculinity. While doing this, he portrays his characters in a symbolic battle against the war culture and hyper-masculinity in the American football context and discourse.

1.1. FOOTBALL AND WAR

The following part discusses the ways in which DeLillo deconstructs the militaristic traits that young males are expected to possess. This will be achieved through a thorough critical analysis of the political/institutional hegemony as discussed in the introduction and previous section.

Football establishes necessary grounds for the growth and stabilization of heterosexual norms which invade the masculine culture of American society. Leaving aside the economic revenue of football; masculinity, war, and gun-culture all thoroughly serve to justify the militaristic actions of America beyond borders. By making its people sympathize with American football terms and phrases like “throw a bomb” – when a player throws a long and successful pass; “cannon arm” – when a player can pass fast and with velocity; “a tank on the field” – when a player runs strongly and determinedly; “to blow away” – to signify a large margin defeat; “formation” – a term used in the military to show how troops are formed, likewise in football it is a term for predetermined line up of players; “blitz” short for German *blitzkrieg* – to send defensive players unexpectedly to the opponent’s line to disrupt the play in action, American culture uses football both as sport and a symbolic assertion for battle. As far as American culture is concerned, it is very common to witness such metaphors in colloquial language.

In his article “That Old Sports-as-War Metaphor,” war historian Jamel Ostwald, claims that the parallelism between football and battle necessities are similar on fundamental

grounds: they are both “organized actions,” they demand “group competition requiring a significant level of discipline and group training, largely performed by masculine youth who have the necessary combination of physical abilities, testosterone-fueled aggressiveness, and neglecting pain” (2012). In addition, the nature of the game is akin to war strategy and mentality, as they both are constructed upon the idea that “split-second physical group tasks need to be choreographed in an environment of physical and mental exhaustion, with a thinking opponent trying to upend your plans while implementing their own” (2012). Furthermore, as Ostwald explains that “gaining an advantage over your opponent on the playing field is about being able to read, bluff or directly overcome the opponent across from you” (2012) means that football and battle strategies which aim to take the enemy by surprise or to break either the defensive or offensive play of the enemy with unexpected stratagems have larger meanings both nationally and internationally (2012).

As previously discussed, the USA has created a culture in which masculine traits are mostly produced by war and battle culture. The leading traits are patriotism, “love of motherland,” and “unambivalent sexuality,” heterosexuality, straightness. Tracing the connection between football and the American cultural perspective on it, we come across reflections about war, masculinity and violence, which highlight the tough, regimented and militaristic nature of the game. Football players have been iconic figures like war-gods and battle-field commanders, while the discourse of both practices foregrounds male-bonding, victory, and self-sacrifice. Endurance to pain is the highest value by which a male proves his manhood. If a player is down, or symbolically dead, another one replaces him and the war continues. There is no such emotion as mercy or sensitivity on the field, where only the most robust, resilient and tenacious survive.

Regarding this, William Arens, in his article, “The Great American Football Ritual” explains how football symbolically reflects the reality behind the masquerade of the game. He maintains that football is “a male preserve that manifests both the physical and cultural values of masculinity” (77). As he points out that the equipment worn in football “accents the male physique” because with the help of the helmet, shoulder pads, ribcage protectors, the torso is magnified and strengthened. American football players, with their “exaggerated” looks are apparently in the mode of a battle.

DeLillo uses this historically valued war mentality to reverse it towards queerness, one of the nightmares of American society. In the novel, heterosexuality in a war context becomes queerness under the scope of football, the sport which is known to implement that very heterosexual culture itself. DeLillo breaks down the war and football context to create a symbolic fight against them. We understand that the idea of queerness and the military are shown as contrasts to each other as the two controversial themes in the plot. DeLillo portrays military tradition and ambiguous sexuality in disagreement, so that the reader can see how the characters actually live and feel in total opposition, and act in conflict with military conventions.

First of all, DeLillo uses coaches who become the symbol of military training officers that implement the ferocious tactics and military drills upon the football players of Logos College. The coaches in *End Zone* underscore the relations between the military and football. The rhetoric of the coaches features those of army manners and dictations. Coaches talk to players just like drill officers would talk to soldiers who cannot complete their tasks properly in the army. These talks are made up from the similar ideology that constitutes the core training values in an army: humiliation by profane language, exposure to mistakes in a degrading way and intolerance even to a slightest flaw:

> "Lee Roy, what am I talking about, Lee Roy?"
> "I wasn't listening, sir," Lee Roy Tyler said.
> "Typical," Veech said. "That's typical of the whole attitude around here. You people are a bunch of feebleminded shit fanners. You're lazy, you're self satisfied, you're stupid. In my considered opinion, you're a bunch of feebs. If you can't concentrate, you can't play football for this team. Awright now. What was I talking about, Hopper?"(DeLillo 56) … "Lee Roy, you're a dung beetle. Shit is your proper environment. You do nothing, that's what you do. You run your damn pattern" (56). … "If you had half a brain you'd be dangerous," Veech said. "Come on, let's get out of here before I hemorrhage"(57). … "Shitbird!" he screamed. "Shit, shit, shitbird. You got dumb feet, Conway. Messages from your brain must get clogged up somewhere around your kneecap. We got people ready to take your place, shitbird. Now you remember that" (57).

The hegemonic masculinity that the football context creates and the historical past ornamented by war memories in American culture are exposed in almost every scene, where DeLillo subtly creates a background filled with militaristic actions and words. To illustrate this remark about the novel, DeLillo writes from the mouth of coach Oscar Veech how physical aggression and violence are required parts of the game:

> "I want you to bust ass out there today," he said. "Guards and tackles, I want you to come off that ball real quick and pop, pop, hit those people, move those people out, pop them, put some hurt on them, drive them back till they look like sick little puppy dogs squatting down to crap" (DeLillo 28).

"[B]ust ass," "hit those people," "put some hurt" are all phrases of violence dictated by coach Veech. Likewise, the other examples of talks of the coaches somehow remind us of the talks of commanders or army chiefs before an operation in war. Tom Cook Clark is an assistant coach specialized in quarterbacks, and gives a speech to the team where his tactical procedures resemble that of a battle plan:

> What we want to do is establish a planning procedures approach whereby we neutralize the defense. We'll be employing a lot of play action and some pass-run options off the sweep. We'll be using minimum number of sprint-outs … We use the aerial game here to implement the ground game whereby we force their defense to respect the run which is what they won't do if they can anticipate pass and read pass and if our frequency, say on second and long, indicates pass … you have been drilled and drilled on this in the blitz drills. It all depends on what eventuates. It's just eleven men doing their job. That's all it is. (DeLillo 27)

The importance of the group work, or bonding, is underlined with war terminology, and the outcome of the play, or the operation, depends on the performance of the players, or the soldiers. The players are reminded of their long drills, whereby the automatism is heightened to a degree of perfection. This scene is also remarkable in the sense that the language of football and the jargon of military are almost fully integrated. By replacing the word "game" with "battle," this very same speech can also be made to a group of soldiers before a critical battle operation. Another example is when Coach Hauptfuhrer tells his lineman to "contain" and further continues in his commands to sexually abuse opponents: "Contain those people. Infringe. Infringe on them. Rape that man, Link. Rape him. Ray-yape that man" (DeLillo 130). The words "infringe," "rape" are medium of the construction of masculine-military identity.

Mercy is a feeling that training officers in an army try to push soldiers to get rid of with strict examples; for example, if an opponent soldier is weak and needs help on the field, it is strongly advised that weak ones be killed or left to die. Similar to this mentality, another example of how DeLillo sets a militaristic and merciless tone is when Chuck Deering – a player for Logos College, lies on the field helplessly after a tackle and the game just *continues*: "Deering didn't move. Two assistant coaches started shouting at

him, telling him he was defacing the landscape. He tried to get up but couldn't make it. The rest of us walked over to the far hashmark and ran the next play" (DeLillo 10). Not only is Deering left helpless, he is also reprimanded by coaches as he is "defacing the landscape."

Perhaps, in *End Zone*, one of the most obvious analogies between the army and football is when the head-coach Emmett Creed[4] instructs the whole team to act like "decent" individuals. Upon analysis of the symbolism involved, the name of the head-coach Creed refers to "Soldier's Creed,"[5] the traditional oath an American soldier swears. James Giles asserts that "the function of an Emmett Creed is to create a language that emphasizes orderliness while encouraging his players to sacrifice their bodies to pain induced through violence" (103). When it comes to fulfilling their responsibilities both on the field and off, as chiefs would tell the rookie soldiers in a boot camp, Creed says:

> Write home on regular basis. Dress neatly. Be courteous. Articulate your problems. Do not drag-ass. Anything I have no use for, it's a football player who consistently drag-asses. Move swiftly from place to place, both on the field and in the corridors of buildings. Don't ever get too proud to pray. (DeLillo 10-11)

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[4]There are various discussions on how to perceive the head-coach Emmett Creed: a God figure, who emphasizes order; or a Satan figure, who challenges players to bring out the hatred and violence in them? Stacey Olster puts forward that, "Coach Creed, 'a landlocked Ahab,' fashions individual players [from Cactus Wrens] into a Screaming Eagles team, thus [this change] has everything to do with bringing men close together through a system of rules and regulations that convey 'the illusion that order is possible'" (5). In addition to this, as François Happe maintains, DeLillo gives details about Creed with phrases, and he quotes from *End Zone*, such as "a landlocked Ahab," "warlock and avenging patriarch," "put a lonely little school [Logos College] on the map," "the name giver," "a reputation for creating order out of chaos" (157-175). With these readings, Creed is definitely a God figure. However, one also needs to consider Taft Robinson's reflections about Creed after Taft decides to give up football, "He [Creed] was part Satan, part Saint Francis. He offered nothing but work and pain. He'd whisper in my ear. He'd literally whisper things in my ear" (DeLillo 226). Unlike the other coaches, Creed does not yell or even raise his voice, Creed always "whispers." Also, he "observes the training sessions from a wooden tower specially built for him and leaves it to his *seven* assistants to do most of the talking with the players" (Happe 164-165). With thermonuclear war and death terminology embedded in the novel, and considering these facts with the assumption that Creed's seven assistants might be a reference to seven deadly sins, then Emmett Creed is a Satan figure.

[5] "Soldier's Creed is a standard by which all American army personnel are encouraged to live, and it goes as follows: 'I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade. I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself. I am an expert and I am a professional. I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat. I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life. I am an American Soldier'" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soldier's_Creed).

In addition to using coaches as symbolic representations of military culture, DeLillo portrays similarly militaristic and inhumane scenes where even death is normalized, just like on a battlefield. Brutality of football is set as a tone of violence when players get hurt but the rest of the team continues in their militaristic robotic routines: "When the play ended a defensive tackle named Dickie Kidd remained on his knees. He managed to take his helmet off and then fell forward, his face hitting the midfield stripe. Two players dragged him off" (DeLillo 35).Another illustration is when a player named Cecil Rector is knocked unconscious because he has a dislocated shoulder. However, the game continues as if nothing has happened:

> Cecil Rector, a guard, came toward the sideline and Roy Yellin went running in to replace him. The trainer popped Cecil's shoulder back into place. Then Cecil fainted. Bing strolled down that way to have a look at Cecil unconscious. Vern Feck, who coached the linebackers, started shouting at his people. Then he called the special units on to practice kick return and coverage. Bing headed slowly up to the 40 yard line. He kicked off and the two teams converged, everybody yelling, bodies rolling and bouncing on the scant grass. (DeLillo 34)

Cecil is unconscious after his shoulder is popped back into place; however, the war routine still continues as it should on the field.

In another scene, because of exhaustion or dehydration, one of the players falls on the field during the end-of-practice laps. However, the training just keeps going without giving the smallest consideration to help the weak as the football mentality suggests: the weak stay on the ground and the strong keep walking: "It all ended with two laps around the goal posts. Lloyd Philpot Jr., a defensive end, fell down in the middle of the second lap. We left him there in the end zone, on his stomach, one leg twitching slightly" (DeLillo 10).

But perhaps the most disturbing description of vulgarity in the novel is given when a group of players kill an opponent player during a gang hit, in which Gary Harkness is also involved. However brutal the example may seem, DeLillo neutralizes the murder by showing it as a routine part of the game: "Then, in a game against the Indiana freshman, I was one of the three players converging on a safetyman who had just intercepted a pass. We seemed to hit him simultaneously. He died the next day and I went home that evening" (DeLillo 21-22). It is also important to note here that the

monotony of actions, as if the death of a player is something usual and ordinary, serves to underline that just like in battles, casualty is also a natural part of the game.

Upon consideration of the previous examples, it is of significance to highlight the scenes and the characters by which DeLillo deconstructs the mainstream ideology of war mentality and heterosexuality. Zapalac is a character who, despite only appearing for a few pages, also defies the hetero-military concept pervasive in American athletic culture. The reader is introduced to Zapalac's opinions regarding the USA being a violent country as he has a picnic with Myna and Gary. As well as being a lecturer on science at Logos, Zapalac criticizes the pro-military sentiment the American government has spread throughout the nation: "I'm afraid of my own country. I'm afraid of the United States," says Zapalac meaning the violent and destructive tendencies of his country: "If anybody kills us on a grand scale, it'll be Pentagon. On a small scale, watch out for your local police" (153).

Furthermore, Zapalac mentions how nobody in fact wants to join the army, and in fact everybody would feel like acting "gay" just to be discharged of military duty. As Zapalac says, "But when the true test comes, I'll probably go running to a beauty shop … I'll get my hair dyed blond so everybody will think I'm one of those small blondie boys with that faraway look in their eyes" (DeLillo 154). Consequently, with all these revelations and confessions, Zapalac makes one final striking comment about how American militaristic nature has lost its meaning and has become pathetic: "Uniforms, flags, battle hymns … A nation is never more ridiculous than in its patriotic manifestations" (154).

Secondly, as the greatest contribution to the unconventional traits of Gary, his anti-war point of view is subtly reflected as Gary's implied ambiguous traits as well. DeLillo tears down patriotism and militaristic values of America through the portrayal of Gary's implied homosexuality against the necessities of war culture. In a self-revelatory talk about what coaches say and tell players to do, Gary criticizes the militaristic system and patriotism after Bobby, his teammate, remarks that he is ready to put his life on the line for the team and his country. Gary remarks "[P]erhaps it was easier to die than admit that words could lose their meaning" (51).Gary rejects the idea, just as he could reject

heteronormative traits and conventions of the society. According to Gary, the tradition of dying for one's country is no longer relevant in modern times:

> But Bobby had this loyalty to give, this eager violence of the heart, and he would smash his body to manifest it. Tradition, of course, supported his sense of what was right. The words were old and true, full of reassurance, comfort, and consolation. Men followed such words to their death because other men before them had done the same, and perhaps it was easier to die than admit that words could lose their meaning. (51)

We are shown that Gary is ideologically indecisive about the war culture that is spread throughout the nation and cannot make any sense of it, and this makes it easier to interpret and follow the physical and behavioral hints, which I will elaborate at length in the second part of this chapter. Gary does not follow the mainstream norms and is capable of defying social expectations of men in a variety of ways.

Another example that sets the tone of military underpinnings of the 1960s and 70s in America is the military warning that is visible almost everywhere in Gary's hometown where everybody is invited to be prepared for war. Gary's father advises Gary, at times of challenge, he should "Suck in that gut and go harder … Backbone, will, mental toughness, desire – these were his [Gary's father] themes, the qualities that insured success" (DeLillo 16). The construction of military environment around Gary's youth years is punctuated by the famous quotation, whose origin is attributed to Joseph P. Kennedy, the father of John F. Kennedy: "WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GET GOING" (16):

> Back in my hometown I took a walk one morning and I kept seeing the same word everywhere I went. Store windows. Leaflets in the street. Advertising space on the walls. I kept seeing it for about two weeks. MILITARIZE. It was everywhere – printed, written, scribbled, chalked on walls. (159)

Similarly, "In the late spring, a word appeared all over town. MILITARIZE," (DeLillo 20) to which Zapalac reacts, "'I would have gone into hiding,' Zapalac said. 'That kind of word, I would have taken food and water and gone into the mountains" (159). However, during the time when this public message hits the street in his hometown, Gary has *other* personal issues. Gary's first infatuation with the army, war and death

seems to have revoked his real "sexual" feelings. Although he cannot name it exactly at the time, his elusiveness from university and his studies is implied to stem from the feeling that he does not subscribe to communal values anymore. In short, Gary belongs, as I have mentioned earlier in Melazde's idea, to the new "psychoclass" of the American male who is loosely attached to the "obedience patterns of their parents."

Gary's enthusiasm and sympathy for death in his previous university before he quit has brought him close to an emotional death followed by an enlightenment that Gary is actually *not* the person he thinks he is, which he cannot confess. Continuing on the same theme, in one scene, where Gary ceases to communicate with his parents, he says, "They [Gary's parents] concluded that I was dying of something slow and incurable and that I did not wish to tell them in order to spare their feelings" (DeLillo 19-20). That "something" his parents think Gary "was dying" of is hinted to be his realization of his ambiguous sexuality. During his self-interrogation period, when Gary quits, returns or travels back and forth among different colleges, he questions himself as he learns more about war and destruction: "What was wrong with me? Had I gone mad? Did others feel as I did? … [t]he rationality of irrationality … I became more fascinated" (21). What is it that Gary "feel[s]"? Why does he call it "madness"? Is it madness because he does not feel militaristic, or some unconventional sexual preference has taken over his body? These confrontations that "fascinated" him and such questions do not have satisfactory answers. However, we are pushed to think that Gary is not only growing up, but reaching an understanding towards his hidden identity as an anti-militaristic man. The more he contemplates and learns about war and battlefield, the more he discovers his own fear. Consequently, this exploration comes to an end when he becomes sure of his feelings, at Logos College. Gary stops wandering around, because we are purported to think that he has finally encountered his real self. Consequently, Logos happens to be his ultimate stop, his last university.

Perhaps the most striking example that DeLillo uses to deconstruct the military-hegemonic masculinity discourse is the implied homosexual bonding between Gary Harkness and the lecturer of warfare at Logos College, Major Staley. Staley, being a major in the army, and Gary, a football player, are traditionally perceived as resilient symbols of masculinity. However, DeLillo symbolically depicts them as a representation of another layer of closeness that is implied to be homosexual.

Major Staley is a lecturer giving courses on battles and warfare in Logos College Royal Officer Training Corps. From the beginning of the novel, Major Staley talks about family life and how his family will move in a short time to get together with him. In a conversation with Gary, Major Staley asserts that he has a family and kids in Denver, Colorado. Staley says his ‘‘[w]ife and kids are still up in Colorado. I sure as hell miss them. I hope to have them down here real soon now. Our house should be ready in ten days” (DeLillo 74). However, that house and the maintenance in it never finish and his family never joins him. In other words, as the novel unfolds, there exists no sign of Major Staley’s family, and family is the ultimate proof that he is a traditional, straight, American soldier. The second time that Gary meets with Staley is in a motel room and it is right after his failed sexual encounter with Myna in the library. Gary thinks, ‘‘I wondered why we were meeting in a motel’’ (209). Another fact contributing to the ambiguous homosexuality of Major Staley is the fact that he is staying at a local motel, which is a discreet place for a queer rendezvous, or as Harvey calls it “a traditional site for surreptitious homosexual trysts [*sic.*]” (104).

Towards the end of the novel Harkness meets Major Staley to play a game of war, the game that can be played by the two foremost macho individuals in the nation to the greatest and the most masculine extent possible: An American soldier and an American football player. However, ironically, the reader is made to realize that this war game is not an emblematic game. Major Staley talks in a sophisticated manner and guides him through the complications and tactics of “the game.” Metaphorically speaking, Major Staley is touching the body of Gary and he lets Gary touch his own body:

> The major went through this scenario very slowly. He referred to his maps at least ten times, showing me the precise locations of certain countries, cities, military bases. Often he paused during these map readings as if waiting for me to comment, perhaps on the subtle geographic patterns he had devised for the various conflicts. […] I was hardly a competent enemy. I had no experience in this sort of thing. (DeLillo 212)

It can be argued that this scene can be read as a “sex” game. The two characters after their secret get-together in a remote motel room engage in a game that suggests sexual intercourse which on the surface appears to be a war tactics review. However, words like “precise locations,” “military bases,” “subtle geographical patterns” all signify that there is another more intimate game proceeding between Gary and Major Staley. Gary’s

being an amateur of the implied male-to-male closeness is pictured through phrases such as "hardly a competent enemy," "no experience." The war-sex game combination continues and is completed with the following paragraph, as Gary tells us that:

> At length we began. It took only twelve major steps or moves to complete the game yet we were at it for more than three hours. It was the strangest thing I had ever taken part in. There were insights, moves, minor revelations that we savored together. Silences between moves were extremely grave. Talk was brief and pointed. Small personal victories (of tactics, of imagination) were genuinely satisfying. Mythic images raged in my mind. (DeLillo 213)[6]

Regarding the scene, Michael Howard states that Herman Kahn in his book *On Thermonuclear War*, "presents us with an escalation ladder with 44 rungs … military confrontations, demonstrations of force, local nuclear war, exemplary attacks against various types of target, counterforce attacks, slow motion counter-city war to, ultimately, 'spasm' or 'insensate' war" (25). Also, in an interview, Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi states that Herman Kahn dubs nuclear warfare: "war-gasm" saying that "in a real sense you people don't have war plans, you've got *war-gasms*" (238). Therefore, DeLillo is making an analogy between the content of nuclear war and the steps of a sexual intercourse, but unlike in Kahn's, with 12 steps instead of 44. Therefore, it is possible to relate this scene not to the escalation to nuclear war, but to the steps to orgasm, escalation of emotions from foreplay to climax.

The end of the description of this ambiguous war-sex game originates a symbolic climax with words like "victories," "satisfying," which the reader fails to see in the intercourse between Gary and Myna. DeLillo concludes the last words of the scene as "spasm response" (DeLillo 223), which is again evocative of a sexual climax. The metaphor that camouflages the sexually ambiguous nature of the game can also be traced back when those "twelve major steps" mentioned in the quotation are broken down individually. To give examples of the implied comparison of war orchestration

[6] According to Mark Osteen, Don DeLillo's *End Zone* is "intertextually embedded" to many other works of other authors, and "operates partly as a conversation with high cultural icons," and one of these figures was Herman Kahn, by whom DeLillo was allegedly inspired in the creation of *End Zone* (*American Magic* 2). In another article "Against the End," Osteen confirms that the idea of thermonuclear warfare and the war terminology in football used by characters in *End Zone* were based on a book written by Herman Kahn *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios* (1965). (156)

and the sexually suggestive acts of Gary and Major Staley, Gary mentions the following steps: "(1)Nuclear powered COMRUS submarines enter the Gulf of Mexico … (5) COMRUS explodes a one mega ton nuclear device high in the air over territory west of Brussels. […] (12) SIMcap dictates spasm response" (215).The words like "enter," "explode," "spasm" all attest that their meeting and game may have erotic undertones.

1.2. FOOTBALL, HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND AMBIGUITY

The following section will argue that hegemonic masculinity and its traits are challenged by the symbolic fight against them. These heterosexual traits defined the characteristic of the USA in the second part of the 20th century, especially when there was a possibility of a nuclear war against Russia. Citizens were expected to possess the qualities of a soldier since in a war atmosphere every male was believed to be a potential soldier. Therefore, the norms created by the war culture; such as, heterosexuality, simplicity, straightness have become hegemonic. However, by using the football context, DeLillo opposes these norms of heterosexuality, and he creates an atmosphere of "ambiguity," which conflicts sharply with the American masculine-military identity.

As previously discussed, ambiguity challenges the hegemonic ideal of straightness and simplicity, and DeLillo challenges the hegemonic ideal in gender relations. By creating sexually ambiguous, "queer" characters, and insinuating homosexual relationships between them, DeLillo uses the context of American football to deconstruct the hegemonic heteronormativity of gender relations. Accordingly, the first part, where hegemonic masculinity has been analyzed from political/institutional perspective, the second part will shift the focus slightly and concentrate on the gender relations of hegemonic masculinity, centering on ambiguous sexuality, and implied queerness.

Regarding the connection between football and sexuality, David Kopay and Diane Young suggest that football is "a real outlet for sexual energy" (11, 53). However, this "outlet" which may lead to male bodily contact is read as *normal* when, for example, players get together in what is called "huddle," during which they hold hands while the plan for the upcoming play is being announced. They also mention the free-spiritedness of football rituals and how "intimacy" of football players have never been seen as acts

of homosexuality, such as “being able to hold hands in the huddle and to pat each other on the ass if [they] feel like it” (57).

On the other hand, according to Dundes, from the larger perspective of heterosexual norms, such behaviors can also be interpreted as an “overt show of homosexuality [*sic.*]” (87). Similarly, Jeff Hearn says that “sport holds out the prospect of intimate, touching, homo-social, and indeed homosexual relations between men,” and further continues, “dominance” is portrayed over “tests of manhood,” and these tests of manhood lead to on-field football actions (1749-1751). As a component of this argument, however, William Arens also underlines the irony of homosexual and heterosexual battle: appearance versus behavior: “Dressed in this [combat] manner, the players can engage in hand holding, hugging and bottom patting, which would be disapproved of in any other context, but which is accepted on the gridiron without a second thought” (79).

Growing up from childhood to manhood under heterosexuality brings along difficult experiences and dilemmas. First of all, young American males are constantly being instructed to be reserved, especially when it comes to showing positive emotions, such as affection and compassion. In other words, the society expects young males to conform to heterosexual values. All young males are mandated that demonstrating hatred for other men, especially in team sports, in this case football, is acceptable; however, any slight innuendo of intimacy for a male is immediately dubbed gay. Hardin puts forward his idea about such dichotomy; “It is not conscious, but in a society that is so afraid of men expressing affection for other men and is so homophobic, there needs to be an arena where affectionate gestures between men can be redefined and thus expressed. Enter Football” (32).

“From grade school on, the curse words on the football field are about behaving like a girl. If you don’t run fast enough to block, or tackle hard enough you’re pussy, a cunt, a sissy,” states Kopay and Young about the gendered humiliation and differentiation in football. (50-51)However, ironically, football stands out as the sport that requires bodily contact among males. From the start until the end of every play, players are in contact with each other. The fact that football represents heterosexuality and constant physical contact contradicts this heterosexuality produces a dilemma, which can only be

disregarded or justified on the field of football. That is, only when the brutality and the violence shown to other males are at extreme levels can male-to-male intimacy or touching be read as *not homosexual*. In *Male Ego*, Willard Gaylin writes that, "any male affection, even freed from homosexual desire, may only be acceptable on a field of battle as brutal as a football [field] can be" (201). Therefore, Gaylin argues that "only the brutality of the game can permit the intimacy that accompanies it …[because] contemporary culture is so homophobic that only within the context of brutality can intimacy be shown" (qtd. in Hardin 35).

While discussing how *End Zone* challenges heterosexual norms, it is necessary to elaborate on the ambiguous relationships between football players and women, and between other teammates in the novel. From this point on, this section will try to show how these relationships are reflected. While doing this, the clues and innuendos that lead to the sub-textual message that Gary is "the queer in the squad," a phrase that DeLillo repeatedly uses in *End Zone*, will be underlined.

Logos boys are having troubles with establishing meaningful connection with women, especially the protagonist Gary Harkness, which initially indicates Gary's ambiguous sexuality. In one part of the novel, Gary Harkness and Bobby Luke observe two ladies going to their dorm rooms and they begin fantasizing a sexual dream started off by the way the ladies walk, by their gait. Bobby Luke immediately degrades the ladies as he says "gash" and then "snatch" (DeLillo 51-52) while looking at them. "Two girls left the administration building and walked slowly across the campus toward the women's dormitory. It took about ten minutes and we watched *all the way"*[7] (51). "Watching" is the only reaction they can physically show, nothing more. Thus, the female body for boys in Logos College is something beyond reach.

Failure in establishing connection with women becomes apparent even when Gary is daydreaming, "I thought of flaming limbs, a moody whore's mouth, hair the color of

[7]According to Kyle Rote and Jack Winter, one of the alternative ways of wording for scoring a touchdown is "going all the way" where one "scores" by going all the way. The phrase refers specifically to making a touchdown. On the other hand, "going all the way" in slang is also another nickname for having a sexual intercourse with someone (102).

bourbon. Quietly I sweated, motionless on the steps" (DeLillo 51). Just after this description Gary loses his concentration and tries to get back to the girl he has been daydreaming of. However, not only does he fail to keep up with his own dream where he is supposed to have imaginary intercourse like an assumedly *straight* young man should, but also the girl he portrays in his imagination this time is nowhere near sexy or attractive, looking more like one of his teammates in size: "I tried to get back to the girl again. It was a different one this time, roundish, more than plump, almost monumental in her measureless dimensions … The girl became the hotel itself, an incredible cake of mosaic stone. I continued to perspire quietly" (51-52). In this regard, let alone having physical intercourse with a woman, Gary cannot even maintain a proper daydream without losing the woman he has in his mind.

Gary's physical detachment from women is also portrayed; for instance, when Gary is on the sidelines during a Logos football game when he detaches himself from the reality he is surrounded by and begins to travel in time and space to find comfort in his imaginary world. Gary is still not able to sustain his dream with a so-called proper heterosexual love-making, no matter how "far away" he is from his surroundings:

> I felt sleepy and closed my eyes. I went away for a while, just one level down. Everything was far away. I thought (or dreamed) of a sunny green garden with a table and two chairs. There was a woman somewhere, either there or almost there, and she was wearing clothes of another era. There was music. She was standing behind a chair now, listening to a Bach cantata. It was Bach all right. When I lost the woman, the music went away. But it was still nice. The garden was still there and I felt I could add to it or take away from it if I really tried. Just to see if I could do it, I took away a chair. Then I tried to bring back the woman without the music. Somebody tapped my head and I opened my eyes. I couldn't believe where I was. Suddenly my body ached all over. (DeLillo 121)

"There was a woman somewhere," "I tried to bring back the woman" are all sexually incomplete statements that conclude the fact that Gary is nowhere near establishing physical closeness with a woman. Therefore, DeLillo implies that heterosexual intimacy, as a matter of fact, is not the type of intercourse Gary is looking for or successful at.

Gary Harkness' ambiguous sexuality best manifests itself in his relationship to his girlfriend, Myna. Gary at one point in the novel tells Myna: "You'll hate me for saying

this, Myna, but I think you're one of the prettiest girls I've ever known. Man or boy. Pound for pound" (DeLillo 62). Andy Harvey reads this compliment in a sub-textual way and concludes that "The allusion to locker room talk of 'pound for pound,' a reference normally of strength in relation to body weight, suggests that Harkness has his mind on that homo-social space and its muscular occupants" (104). "Pound for pound" is an expression belonging to pre-game speeches of coaches that call players to hustle and play the game with every drop of their blood, with every inch in their body, with every "pound" of weight they have to fight. Therefore, Gary implies that he sees Myna not as a lover, but as one of him teammates whom he can trust.

In another scene in the library, Gary tries to make love to Myna; however, as might be expected, he fails to do so. This library scene does not end in a climactic manner because they are interrupted by a bookkeeper. When asked by the bookkeeper about their names, Gary does not reveal his real identity and lies about who he truly is. He even adjusts his accent not to be recognized in any way, "'Robert Reynolds,' I said, slipping into my southern accent" (DeLillo 208). Gary depersonalizes himself by rejecting the reality that he is caught in a heterosexual sex act, which, according to Harvey, means "disavowing the affair altogether" (61).

Gary has affection for Myna who is not sexually attractive, and he describes Myna as follows:

> Myna owned half a million dollars and membership in a science-fiction book club. There, by most standards, her attraction ended. She weighed about 165 pounds. Her face had several blotches of varying size and her hair hung in limp tangled clusters. She bit her nails, she waddled, she never shut up. (DeLillo 61)

Myna is not a typical attractive female figure that a typical American football player would date. She is more like the size of one Gary's teammates proportionately. Thus, Gary's oppressed sexual tendencies and his status as a football player are comfortably reconciled in Myna. However, when Myna comes back from Christmas holiday having lost twenty pounds, Gary doesn't know how to react, and he loses interest in her, the relationship is over as Myna says, "Gary, I know you liked me fat but … I'm not just here to comfort you … I want other things now" (DeLillo 218). Intimidated by his repressed feelings and losing control of thoughts, Gary agrees with Myna's decision to end the relationship.

In addition to his incomplete thoughts and failed relationship with females, Gary's other effeminate traits can be read as hints of ambiguous sexuality. Firstly, unlike a typical American football player, Gary Harkness has a way of "describing" the events, situations and people from "a very sensual" and lyrical point-of-view (Hardin 41), which is traditionally considered to be characteristic of feminine behavior in a patriarchal society because sensual, or romantic, descriptions are detailed, therefore complicated and not straight. Gary describes even the most brutal and violent events in a sentimental way. One of the examples of this is when Logos College plays against Centrex, and Gary talks about a vicious instant during the game:

> I heard a lot of noise, pads hitting, men grunting and panting. Then it all came down on top of me. I smelled the turf and waited for the bodies to unpile. My rib cage was beginning to ache, a sense of stickiness, of glue. I felt quite happy. Somebody's hand was at the back of my neck and he put all his weight on it as he lifted himself up. (DeLillo 115)

This scene can also be read as symbolic of sexual intercourse when the wording is considered; such as "stickiness" (Hardin 41), "men grunting," "came down on top of me," "put all his weight on." The feeling of joy, almost to a point where he feels content with the symbolic intercourse, is overt in this scene, and Gary demonstrates a trait which can be seen as a sign of homosexual tendency in a football player.

Jeff Hearn argues that hegemonic masculinity is constructed through dominance over other identities. Therefore, for our case, what sports novels sub-textually depict, and expect the reader to understand is given through "the symbolic dominance of the feminized" (105).In relation to the symbolic dominance and sensuality of descriptions, during the game against Centrex, Gary talks about a play where he gets hit really hard and falls on to the turf. Hitting Gary, Mike Mallon, a defensive player for Centrex, does not get up off from him and stays on top of him, subordinating Gary to a symbolic "inferior" position, where Gary does not have control over the bodily contact:

> He [Mike Mallon] came down on top of me, breathing into my face, chugging like a train. I closed my eyes. The noise of the crowd seemed miles away. Through my jersey the turf felt chilly and hard. I heard somebody sigh. A deep and true joy penetrated my being. I opened my eyes […] I regretted knowing nothing about astronomy; it would have been pleasant to calculate the heavens. (DeLillo 125-126)

As Dundes suggests Mike Mallon is on top and approbates the position of dominance and Gary is under and assumes the position to be symbolically ready to be "penetrated" (80).Phrases such as "came down on top of me," "breathing into my face," "I closed my eyes," "the turf felt chilly and hard," "I heard somebody sigh," "A deep and true joy penetrated my being," "calculate the heavens" (DeLillo 125-26) all contribute to the symbolic message that Gary is "symbolically dominated" and he seems to enjoy this.

In his description of a specific moment during a football game, Gary says he becomes someone else when it comes to football, as he describes the way he moves on the football field, "I moved about *not as myself*" (59). These words point at the fact that Gary has more than one identity: The one that he shows and the one that he hides. The character that Gary refrains from showing in most social situations is hinted to be his queer identity, and this part of his identity comes to light when he plays or talks about football. Football becomes a catalyst for Gary to interact with the rest of his social surroundings, in other words, the football field ironically becomes a safe zone where Gary expresses his queer emotions through innuendos and symbols. As the scene continues, the language Gary uses gives the reader the picture of an almost amorous and passionate instant on the field:

> Everything was wonderfully automatic, in harmony, dreamed by genius. Cruising over the middle on a circle pattern, just loafing because the play was directed elsewhere, I got blasted for no reason by the free safety, Lenny Wells. I rolled over twice, enjoying the grass, and then got to my feet and patted Lenny on the rump. "How to hit, baby," I told him. (59)

"The evident sensuality which stems from the brutal action on the field implies that violence and violent hits make Gary happy," says Hardin (41). In other words, although Gary clearly signals that he is out of the game, "the play was directed elsewhere," and he was exposed to a foul hit and "got blasted for no reason," he does not react angrily or with equal force; quite the contrary, he feels very happy, and congratulates the hitter on his blow, "how to hit baby."

As a further example to Gary's sensual descriptions of football action, when watching a game Gary often comments on the beauty of the action. In a scene where teammates are holding a tackle practice, Gary, who is momentarily out of the game, observes his

teammates on the field and comments: "'Look at them hit,' I said. 'What a pretty sight. When coach says hit, we hit. It's so simple'" (DeLillo 33). In another scene, Gary talks to his teammate Jeffrey on the sidelines during the game, "I'm feeling happy," I [Gary] said. "Look at the arc lights, the crowd. Listen to those noises out there. Pop, pop, pop.[8] Ving, ving. Existence without anxiety. Happiness. Knowing your body. Understanding the real needs of man. The real needs, Jeffrey" (116). The phrases "the real needs," "knowing your body," "pop" also confirm that he personally favors and craves the physical contact: the grunting and hitting that the game of football allows for and the sensuality that it brings along.

Furthermore, while watching a game, Gary uses words of intimacy almost to the degree of a love-affair, which is very unconventional for a football player, who is expected to disregard emotions:

> In slow motion the game's violence became almost tender, a series of lovely and sensual assaults. The camera held on fallen men, on men about to be hit, on those who did the hitting. It was a loving relationship with just a trace of mockery; the camera lingered a bit too long, making poetic sport of the wounded. (DeLillo 92)

Phrases like "tender," "lovely," "sensual assaults," "a loving relationship," "a trace of mockery" emphasize the romanticism Gary draws out of the brutal action in football, which implies that brutality on the field stemming from bodily confrontation makes Gary see the game of football not as a means of violence, but as a medium of romanticism and sensuality.

In the continuation of the scene, DeLillo takes the romanticism to a different level and depicts the violence as a laughing matter for the boys. "We laughed at the most acrobatic spills and the hardest tackles and the meanness of some of it, the gang tackles and cheap shots. We laughed especially at the meanness" (DeLillo 92). As previouslydiscussed, it is claimed that DeLillo was affected by Herman Kahn's warfare

[8] Vance Randolph here explains this effort in sexual reading. Coaches motivate their players to "pop" all the time, meaning to inflict helmet damage to opposing players. The specific use of the verb "pop" strongly suggests defloration as in the idiom "to pop the cherry" referring to the notion of rupturing the maidenhead in the process of having intercourse with a virgin (9). Therefore, to "pop" the opponent might be to "damage" the player in a sexual way.

ideology. In addition to this remark, in her article "Comedy of the Unspeakable," Ghamari argues that in Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), Kahn treated the essence of nuclear warfare as "a laughable material," where "jokes and nuclear war" joined. (238) With this, Ghamari believes that Kahn shows the violence is a laughing matter. (237-40) Therefore, it is possible to take this analogy a step further and say, since he is apparently very much affected by Kahn's ideology, that DeLillo builds characters who also laugh at the violence as a way to make sense of the "meanness" on the football field as the microcosm of the United States of America.

Besides, DeLillo also uses other characters to contribute to the innuendo that he has created: Gary is not a typical heterosexual football player. During the game against Centrex, the archrival of Logos College, Gary recounts that one of the opponents whispers into his helmet as Gary lies down on the grass: "Nigger kike faggot. Kike fag.Kike.Nigger fag. Nigger kike faggot" (DeLillo 113). Gary's internal response is ''he was talking to me, or to Taft, or perhaps to all of us spread over the turf" (113). As Hardin here comments: "Gary hears a series of epithets, one of which is 'faggot,' and thinks they are directed towards him or Taft, or possibly the whole team" (40). However, what gets the situation tangled up is why Gary thinks these epithets might be directed at him. Gary is not Jewish; he is not black, so the only epithet left which he may take personally is "faggot" (40).

In addition to the analysis that DeLillo is trying to create a sexual ambiguity for both Taft and Gary, with another reading, the slurs, "nigger, kike, faggot," might be cast on Taft, not Gary. Taft is black, a "nigger." Anatole Bloomberg, who is a white Jewish player and Gary's roommate, tries to "unjew" himself throughout the novel. Towards the end Anatole learns about the death of his mother and, as Jewish tradition suggests, he paints a stone "black" and places it randomly in the desert outside Logos College. Considering Mark Osteen's analysis of DeLillo's constant reference to deserts as "the landscape of America," and deserts[9] being the recurrent symbol of wider communities

[9]"Deserts and motels: one prefigures the landscape after a nuclear holocaust, and the other reflects the terminal condition of American ascetic spirit … The desert is harsh, unforgiving and clean… For DeLillo deserts and motels are fictional end zones, places where plots end" (Osteen 146). Therefore, I claim that the title "*End Zone*" refers both to the American football field, as explained by Alan Dundes, "The 'endzone' is the final place where a team aims to reach in order to gain points - and/or with sexual reading- assert his virility" (80-81), and to the end of both time and space, as the reflection of decorum

in DeLillo novels ("Against the End" 146-47), the only black stone in the desert observed by Gary is the stone which is painted black by a Jew. Thus, while Anatole tries to "unjew" himself, he symbolically "jews" the stone by painting it black, which might only refer to one character in *End Zone*: Taft Robinson. Therefore, in addition to being a "nigger," Taft is a "kike," and as the rest of the series of slurs imply, he is a "faggot." "Faggot" might be Taft or Gary, either way, DeLillo maintains the sexual ambiguity he has been insinuating about both characters in *End Zone*.

As a direct address to the militaristic nature of football Derek Kreager maintains, "Rather than building socially competent young men and women, it is suggested, the conditions of contemporary athletics embed youth in value systems marred by homophobia, sexism, racism, and ruthless competition" (706). The scene where one of the coaches warns Gary about his behaviors also illustrates Gary's implied femininity and how the system tries to restrain Gary to conventional values, "marred by homophobia". Coach Rolf Hauptfuhrer, as the name suggests he can be seen as another symbol of military fascism in the football organization, and the name can be read as a playful reference to Adolf "the Fuhrer" Hitler, says: "Harkness, everybody knows what kind of reputation you brought down here … so keep in line. Just keep in line – hear?" (DeLillo 12). The "reputation" that Harkness may have "brought" to Logos College is open ended. He may be queer and the coaches may have realized this fact. Apparently, Gary has made such a name for himself that coaches feel the necessity to warn him that if he is a queer, he should hide and not show it: he must "keep in line."

As another trait of his sensuality, DeLillo describes Gary in *admiration* of the physical appearances of his teammates. Repetitive remarks about the physical appearances made by Gary reveal his love of male intimacy, and this also implies Gary's fondness for males. The first impression Gary has of Taft Robinson is put into words as follows: "Right away I [Gary] estimated height and weight, about six-two, about 210. Good shoulders, narrow waist, acceptable neck. Prize beef at the country fair" (DeLillo 7). In another scene, Gary describes the physical look of the Logos College quarterback in a rather feminine way: "Garland Hobbs strolled over to join us. He was tall and solidly

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and ethos of 1960s America: an apocalypse, as Osteen puts it a "verbal ground zero," where no meaning exists.

constructed, about six four and 215, good-looking in a blank way, faintly impressive, like a tall model. He had a quarterback's gait, slack and expensive" (54). In slang, "beef"[10] is defined as "penis"; also, as previously discussed at the beginning of this section where Gary is spurred into fantasy by the women's gait, again in this scene, he describes the "gait" of the quarterback, and also comments on his physique "like a tall model."

The implication that Gary is a queer becomes apparent also when Gary joins two of his teammates who have been in his room lying on the beds, "Chudko sat on my bed, facing the doorway, his right foot (extended to infinity) at a 45 degree angle to the door (when closed). I noted other angles, elevations, intervals, and then situated myself carefully on the chair by the window, between the beds" (DeLillo 70). While he tries to find somewhere to sit, Gary notices some "other angles, elevations, intervals" (70), which is very possible that Gary actually describes the arch of the male reproductive organ, and the relaxation time between intercourses.

In addition to the examples of Gary's implied feminine behaviors, his fear of beetles and his doing make-up before games might be of significance to strengthen the argument that Gary has qualities and characteristics typically identified as feminine, as intended to be displayed by DeLillo. While having a picnic with Myna, Gary sees an insect and jumps up to his feet, "A beetle moved across the edge of the blanket and I got to my feet and stood off to the side until it was gone. Myna looked at me. 'I hate sudden movements,' I said. It startled me for just a second. I didn't know what it was" (DeLillo 160). Being "startled" of beetles is a reaction generally associated with females, not men, and definitely not football players who are supposed to be fearless even against most atrocious hits and tackles on the field.

Furthermore, it is a customary practice that football players paint their faces especially under their eyes drawing a line for two main reasons: (1) to spread fear to the opponent as the looks are reminiscent of historical warriors (2) black paint is believed to attract sunlight to a degree therefore easing the vision of the player. However, Gary's way of

[10] "Beef." *The Abridged Edition of the Dictionary of American Slang*. 2nd ed. 1998.

painting his face seems more like applying make-up since he talks about the *shades* of black, as women and gay men are commonly portrayed as worrying about or paying specific attention to the shades of colors; Gary likes "lampblack" (DeLillo 39); he verbalizes the joy during his "painting" and how he "liked the idea of painting [himself]" (39). In other words, Gary does not worry about the idea of spreading fear; and he "like[s] the way it looked" (39).

In addition to Gary's traits and behaviors which connote hidden problems in his ambiguous sexual identity, from here on the *relationship among boys* will be subjected to scrutiny. As regards to this, Hardin explains the system of how American football was changed into a road map of hegemonic masculinity of American males. He states that football becomes "guidelines" to perform acceptable relationships with other men and "sanction [relationships] as 'appropriate' and 'manly'" (33). He puts forward that football, unlike many other sports, has a special function for the American heterosexual male: structuring "clearly a heterosexual continuum" (34).

Apart from the subtler hints about Gary's ambiguous sexuality, DeLillo more openly raises the issue of masculinity among boys, with the sentence: "There might be a queer on the squad" (DeLillo 24). However, the identity of the queer is never revealed since DeLillo purposefully leaves the matter unclear and ambiguous. For example; when Gary is taking a shower, his teammate Lloyd Philpot Jr. comes in weirdly dressed in red socks and a jockstrap, reminiscent of a male strip club dancer, and tells Gary about the rumor that "there is a queer in the team." When asked about the possible "queer" on the roster, Gary Harkness simply "drops" the conversation with Philpot Jr. and changes the subject immediately by insinuating the possibility that "there might be" some degree of man-loving within the Logos male squad and this is not that important to talk lengthily about. This scene also challenges the assumptions about the heterosexual nature of football: Two half naked football players are contemplating on the possible identity of a queer player, mentioning "the infiltration of a queer" (Giles 97), which risks the sanctity of the team. Gary here is evasive and ambiguous, and the language he uses is in complete contradiction with what might be expected from a masculine football player asked about a queer player in the squad.

In the scope of the relationship among boys, one of the striking sub-themes of the novel is that DeLillo implies a possible relationship between Taft Robinson and Gary Harkness. At the beginning of the novel, DeLillo forms "a past that is ambiguous for both players" (Hardin 39).Gary has an unsuccessful education history, during which he quits four well-known universities: Syracuse University, Pennsylvania State University, The University of Miami, and Michigan State University. He drops out of all four universities for different reasons: in Syracuse, he detains himself in his room with a friend from university and refuses to leave his room, thus gives up on his education and football there; whereas in Penn State, he quits football since he feels all that mechanization and repetition during practices is not enlightening and makes his life dull, which he explains by saying: "I tripped on the same step on the same staircase on three consecutive days. After this I stopped going to practice" (DeLillo 18). The following is a part of the dialogue with his freshman coach at Penn State, when Gary decides to quit the school:

> "You're saying that what I learn on the gridiron about sacrifice and oneness will be of inestimable value later on in life. In other words if I give up now I'll almost surely give up in the more important contests of the future."
> "That's it exactly, Gary."
> "I'm giving up," I said. (18)

In Miami, he falls in love with the idea of mass destruction, so he quits his education again: "I liked reading about the deaths of tens of millions of people. I liked dwelling on the destruction of great cities. Five to twenty million dead" (DeLillo 20). As the final case, Gary quits Michigan again when a player he hits in collaborative tackle dies on the field. As Hardin argues, "although none of these reasons is related to his sexuality, they do reflect a person who either has difficulty fitting in or being accepted" (39), which is also supported by the comment made early in the novel by Gary about himself: "I was a challenge, I guess: a piece of string that does not wish to be knotted" (16). With his sporadic timeline of education marked by a series of drop-outs and his intermittent participation in sports, Gary's past implies that he does not have a strong but rather an evasive character: "not wish[ing] to be knotted."

Regarding uncertain pasts, it is possible to underline similar examples about Taft Robinson as well. The scene when Gary asks Taft, "You could be at almost any school

in the country. Why would you leave a place like Columbia to come here? Who the hell would want to come to a place like this?" (DeLillo 25) is full of irony. As can be seen, Taft also has a history of quitting and he has come to play for Logos as well. Moreover, Gary complicates the issue of uncertain pasts even more when he calls his teammates and everybody in Logos College, including himself and Taft, "outcasts" and "voluntary exiles" in a desert(6). These remarks support the view that they have something they are trying to leave behind, or have been forced to leave behind. Although their pasts do not evidently mean that they have a "queer" (Hardin 39) history in their own separate lives, the reader is left to think that both Gary and Taft have left behind their past lives for questionable reasons.

When the relationship between Gary and Taft is considered, their asexuality is worth noticing. DeLillo depicts both young men as almost asexual when they are engaged in an interaction with their environment. Taft is not pictured anywhere in the novel at any situation where he is close to a sexual relationship. Not only is he depicted as a character that is indifferent to everything but the action on the football field, but also he is never involved in any of the games or activities among his teammates off-field. The only remarkable off-field activity we get to know about Taft Robinson is the time when he stays in his room as if he is in a solitary confinement, reading. Since sports participation is believed to increase adolescents' bonds to conventional society and reduce antisocial behavior, Taft's antisocial behaviors and his preference to stay alone suggest that he might have a "derailed" sexuality (Kreager 707). Moreover, the only exception to the asexuality that characterizes both men is the scene where Gary tries to have sexual intercourse with Myna but he fails to do so.

The implied relationship between Gary and Taft is further exemplified when the school's publicist, Wally Pippich, tries to create advertisements for the school's football team, he chooses two successful running backs for the headlines of sports pages. DeLillo's language here also insinuates almost a famous married couple of some sort, or a couple in a relationship. Wally Pippich says, "I conceive it. Taft Robinson and Gary Harkness. The T and G backfield. Taft and Gary. Touch and Go. Thunder and Gore." […] But Taft and Gary has a cute little ring to it. I know I like it and I may even love it"

(DeLillo 145). “Touch and Go,” “cute,” “nice little ring” are all sub-textual messages hinting at the questionable relationship between Taft and Gary.

Shifting the focus to language and warfare, David Cowart believes that “the jargons that turn up periodically in Delillo’s story illustrate a brutalization of language analogous to the physical brutality of football” (25). As another form of parallelism between Taft and Gary, the acquisition of jargons, the learning and “reading” of warfare terminology and the sharing of words between characters form a new experience for the characters. In this new experience, they symbolically test and solidify their perception of the violent world to which they are expected to adopt as football players. Reading and learning in *End Zone* is metaphorically transformed into an instrument by which characters, especially Gary and Taft, learn about their desire for violence, and with this desire their hunger for football grows simultaneously. Considering all the sexually ambiguous tendencies depicted throughout the novel, learning about different terminologies and transferring this vocabulary to each other, or even mentioning the experiences and feelings aroused during this learning period imply that characters really learn and “read” a new language, the language of violence as a cover for their ambiguous sexuality.

Moving on from this perspective, we understand that Don DeLillo is also making an analogy between the scenes where Gary reads about battles and mass destruction, whereas Taft, alone in his room, reads about mass destruction as well. In this sense, there is a great parallelism in their comprehension of the world around them where Gary reads about murders and annihilations, “I became fascinated by words and phrases like thermal hurricane, overkill, circular error probability, post-attack environment, stark deterrence, dose-rate contours, kill-ratio spasm. Pleasure in these words” (DeLillo 20-21); and where Taft Robinson reads about deaths, “I like to read about the ovens,’ Taft said … Atrocities. I like to read about atrocities. I can’t help it. I like to read about the ovens, the showers, the experiments … Atrocities in general with special emphasis on kids” (229). Cowart believes that “DeLillo goes to considerable trouble to develop parallels between the violence of war and the violence of football” (20). Such parallelism is to inform the reader subtly that Taft and Gary are paired in their deepest feelings, by which Don DeLillo tries to tell us that they both have the same feelings of fascination aroused by reading about death and destructions.

Also, the language used by both characters has to be analyzed in comparison with other characters in their team. Before getting into this analysis, it is important to contemplate that the "slang employed in the verbal dueling of the American male" is a strong expression to assert the manliness of the players, and in a normal American football environment, there is an abundant amount of slang and verbal dueling involved (Dundes 79). As for building a discourse for such manliness, DeLillo accurately portrays an environment in which sexual assaults, sexual slurs, even homosexual degradations are normalized. Repeated multiple times and in various occasions, even the strongest and the most derogatory curses lose their effect. That is, repetition of language causes words to lose their original meaning and intention.

Either as expressions of repressed sexuality in a locker room or on-field action or as homoerotic desire disguised as motivational instruction given by coaches, this discourse keeps going with multiple curses and obscene language. However, the language Gary and Taft use in their social circles is nowhere close to being profane or sexual. When the other football players are involved, DeLillo's narration is full of profane language, referring to sex and obscene acts. Yet, the absence of normative male homo-social linguistic elements such as verbal dueling, cursing, and references to sexual intercourse in scenes involving Gary and Taft support the assumption that they have ambiguous sexuality.

In addition to the representation of naturally occurring language in the male environment, DeLillo makes use of transition techniques to draw attention to a possible homosexual flare between Taft and Gary. For example; Onan Moley utters the possibility of a homosexual player on the team, "There's a lot of talks about a lot of things … There might be a queer on the squad" (DeLillo 24). As the conversation continues, Gary leaves the table, and sits next to Taft in another table, "Taft was sitting three tables away. I [Gary] took my dessert over" (25). DeLillo deliberately sets up such a transition as if to imply that the answer to the question is just across the table, which insinuates the hidden relationship between Gary and Taft.

In another example, the same transition technique intensifies the meaning that Taft is the one Gary thinks of when "fucking" is mentioned in a conversation. When teammates

Rector and Bing have a talk on one of their teammates' unexpected low performance, the word "fuck" is articulated in the conversation, "Are you asking me did they fuck?" (DeLillo 38). After this, Gary immediately comments on Taft, while Taft is carrying the football towards the end zone of the opponent team, "'There goes Taft again,' I [Gary] said. 'Look at that cutback. God, that's beautiful'"(38).As soon as the word "fuck" is uttered in the talk, Gary cannot help but speculate on Taft and the beauty of Taft's football skills on the field.

DeLillo uses the same transition technique to show that the scenes are not complete without the mention of Taft. In a cafeteria scene Gary has a fight and takes a punch in the stomach, "I sat down and tried to breathe. When I raised my head finally, Taft was just finishing his dessert (DeLillo 26); Gary breaks up with Myna, "Then I stared at my right thumb … I spent ten minutes learning a new word. Finally, in my gray corduroy trousers and gray shirt, I went down the hall to Taft Robinson's room" (220). Lying on the steps after the "Bang, you're dead" game, Gary says, "In time I opened my eyes. Taft Robinson was sitting on a bench not far away, reading a periodical. For a moment, in a state of near rapture, I thought it was he who had fired the shot" (32). When all these transitions and Taft's sudden appearances are considered, DeLillo reinforces the message that Gary and Taft complement each other.

Constant reference to sexuality suggests a homoeroticism that is never confessed and Gary's observations and depictions continue to suggest that there is a hidden truth which DeLillo reveals through Gary's stream of consciousness. On a psychological level Gary's constant referential description of Taft is an impetus for desire to play football. His motivation stems from his untellable affection for Taft. However, this unnamed desire ends in confinement for both of them: Taft Robinson in his cell-like room and Gary Harkness in hospital due to inadequate nourishment. At the end of the football season, we are informed that Taft no longer wants to play football: "Creed [the head coach] knows I'm not playing football anymore … I'm through with football. It was time to cut it loose" (DeLillo 227). After this news towards the end of the novel, in shock and dismay, Gary tells Taft, "There must be something we can do." However, there remains nothing they can do and in mutual solidarity they conclude the unspoken affair. Peter Boxall describes the scene where Harkness finds Robinson in his room:

> Working his way towards the poetic mystery that he represents, but as he finally faces him in the geometric centre of his minimalist cell at the end of the novel, the potential that is harbored in their encounter across the divide between the poetic and the prosaic, the sacred and the profane, America and Africa, seems to leak away. (43)

In order to provide a clearer perspective into "questionable relationships" among boys, it is important that we take the matter of ambiguous sexuality and implied homosexuality from Gary and Taft's story and apply it to the Logos football team in general.

Football is a game of war tactics and expression of power and physical strength. In order for players to keep physically and mentally resilient on the field, they have to connect and relate themselves to one another off the field as well. They have to share and create a unity of brotherhood where they can trust each other at any given time. This trust translates into life-saving or rescue actions on the battlefield where the game is played. Helping each other and finding each other on the field have roots outside where players share their physical space and spend time together in bonding activities and *games*.

In a review written by Joan Brumberg and Faye Dudden about Mark C. Carnes' *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*, they state that "male sociability consisted of doing things together, leaving little time for self-revelatory talk, the lodge rituals filled spaces with activity so that wordless male bonding could take place" (363-70). Thus, producing friendship for characters in *End Zone* requires little talking but abundant amount of physical contact and action. Through constantly playing games that require physical contact just like a football game, Logos boys can symbolically "practice" their physical strengths. As argued by Messner, with football, male characters practice this "displacement activity" (qtd. in Harvey 108), and "here men can enjoy the company of other men- even become 'close'" ("Friendship" 253).

Discussing examples of physical closeness from football mechanization, George Plimpton has described how the quarterback's "hand, the top of it, rests up against the center's backside as he bends over the ball – medically, against the perineum, the pelvic floor" (59), meaning how a quarterback places his hands under the genital organ of the

center[11] to receive the ball. "In football, however, it is safe to present to one's teammates" (Dundes 81), knowing that no harm will come and "since one can trust one's teammates, one knows that one will be patted [in his back]" (81). Here, Alan Dundes, is making a connection between the word "back" and close "friendship". He maintains that "end" is "backed up" or in other words protected by other peers or teammates. (81)[12]

Not only Gary but also other football players complain and feel empty in many cases when there is no football, because they know that they will miss those sensual feelings and friendship among the teammates on the field. Football and the physical contact of the sport have become an addiction and a substitute for heterosexual activity for Logos boys, a source of life that is impossible for them to do without. For instance, Gary's teammates Deering and Mast engage in a conversation feeling that their lives have no purpose after the football season is over until the next one, and they symbolically lose their enthusiasm to *live* when they encounter the fact that they have been left aimless without football in their lives. Billy Mast says "No more football. No more hitting. No more sweat and pain. No more fear … I can't believe it," as Deering responds in a similar fashion by saying "It's awful. I can't accept it. It's a bitch" (DeLillo 171).

No football means no male-bonding and no physical contact, which accordingly means that the outburst of accumulated sexual feelings has to be delayed. Also, for Gary, since there is no territory like football to express his hidden homoerotic desire implicitly, without football he fears that he might have to act them out *explicitly*: "I BEGAN TO WORRY seriously about the fact that the season was nearly over. There would be no more football until spring practice in April. Without football there was nothing, really and absolutely nothing, to look forward to" (DeLillo 150).

[11] "A player who lines up in the middle of the offensive line in front of the quarterback and is responsible for snapping the ball to the quarterback each play" (http://www.sportingcharts.com/dictionary/nfl/center-c.aspx).

[12]With a further study, it is possible to figure out that Dundes' linguistic connection comes from one of his other studies, "The Strategy of Turkish Boys' Verbal Dueling Rhymes," in which he insists that in cultures ornamented by battles, including Turkish and American cultures, males protect each other's backs as a sign of friendship; hence "arka-daş" (325-49), or back-peer.

One other foundational element of the novel is that athletes in *End Zone* are motivated by the fact that they are close together with their male peers in a "game" environment. As mentioned earlier though, this intimacy is more than just male bonding. The degree of addiction to always being together in playful and violent games has wider connotations than just friendship. By analyzing the true nature and hidden meanings of these encounters during the game and practice, one can conclude that these boys love touching each other, testing their sexual borders and connecting to each other in a violent environment. For an initial example, after a night out with friends, when the boys are on their way coming back to their dorm rooms, they organize a series of games; a combination of childhood street games and Olympics where they can freely reunite physically just like they do on the field of football: "We drove back to campus and held a drunken Olympiad in the moonlight at the edge of the football field, slow-motion races, grass swimming, spitting for distance" (DeLillo 13).

It is also important to note that the settings and the rules of these games are arbitrary and totally established by the players, who intentionally transfer their secret desires into these violent games. From a wider perspective, all of these games serve to fill the void left in their fantasy world. In other words, football players in Logos College are dependent on bodily contact and male bonding, with the absence of football when it is off-season, characters try to make up for the deprivation of closeness with different games. A game of this kind that appears initially in the novel is called "Bang, You're Dead":

> One day in early September we started playing a game called Bang You're Dead … Your hand assumes the shape of a gun and you fire at anyone who passes. You try to reproduce, in your own way, the sound of a gun being fired. Or you simply shout these words: *Bang, you're dead.* The other person clutches a vital area of his body and then falls, simulating death. (Never mere injury; always death.) Nobody knew who had started the game or exactly when it had started. You had to fall if you were shot. The game depended on this. (DeLillo 30)

From a player's perspective, dying on the field means losing the game, and as discussed previously, which places one in an inferior position where he cannot have control over any contact with the enemy. Later in the scene, regarding the shooting game, Gary

makes the following comment: "I died well and for this reason was killed quite often" (32). In male to male encounters, losing a battle or dying on the field is not something that someone can brag about as Gary does, which displays his willingness to assume a deadman's role in the game. Indeed, he has a lot of admirers among his football teammates since he successfully plays the deadman, where he does not have control over the action on the battlefield; and thus, he is constantly chased and hunted down, therefore "was killed quite often" (30). Gary never regrets dying on the field of play, which is ironic since losing is degrading to athletic masculinity, and it is not a moment someone wishes to remember with fondness and "affection":

> We were no longer alone and the game ended. But I would think of it with affection because of its scenes of fragmentary beauty, because it brought men closer together through their perversity and fear, because it enabled us to pretend that death could be a tender experience (32).

From Gary's perspective, this game "brought men together" and it definitely opened up new dimensions in the characters' worlds. The game also proves that these boys emotionally are close to each other since they are motivated by the same "perversity and fear" (DeLillo 32). When school opens, the "Bang, You're Dead" game ends because there are *other* people around. Terminating the game in the presence of other people, but playing this violent game when no one is around is another proof of what these male characters are capable of doing in their private male-to-male environment.

In another scene DeLillo verbalizes a scene of male bonding activity as an off-field activity:

> The throwing of the beer cans started half an hour after the party began. It went from there to fights, to mass vomiting, to singing and comradeship. A defensive end named Larry Nix kept punching a door until he busted through. There was a pissing contest with about twenty entries trying not for distance but altitude … It was the most disgusting, ridiculous and adolescent night I had ever spent. (93)

The male-bonding activities in Logos College know almost no limits in manifesting hidden identities. It is interesting to witness that football players show their secluded thoughts in the forms of aggressive and repulsive elements such as "punching," "vomiting," "fighting" in a game environment. By revealing even "the most disgusting, ridiculous" sides of their character, they symbolically purify themselves until they have

nothing to hide from their teammates, which creates an emotional bonding originating from physical action.

In addition to these games and activities, "snow football" is another game the teammates play when the regular football season is over. In Gary's description of this game which is full of physical clashes, the reader can sense that the players draw pleasure from "the noise and brunt" of their flesh and are aroused by the beaten and rugged attire of each other, a reassuring feeling that they can find nowhere else. This snow football game they play is a facsimile of the real football game in a smaller field with simpler rules. To illustrate these self-made game rules, Gary recounts that players are not allowed to fake the plays, or commit passing game, which are plays generally in real football made to fool the defense and avoid contact; however, in the snow version of football, these fake plays are discarded. Contact is a compulsory part of this game. A play in snow football does not finish unless players get hit, tackled or wrestled down. "It became a straight ahead game, tackle to tackle. We handfought and butted. Linemen fired out and the ball carrier just lowered his head and went pounding into the tense rhythmic mass" (DeLillo 187).

Football players, just like trained soldiers, feel the urge to keep their fighting and battling skills sharp. Just as a soldier constantly practices his shooting skills, football players also instinctively sharpen their game skills whenever they are together. This practice not only takes place as a form of tactical practice on paper, but more importantly as a physical contact that provides primal feelings out of pain and pleasure. Gary depicts the violent but *cozy* football collision over snow as follows:

> We were comforted by the noise[13] and brunt of our bodies in contact, by the simple physical warmth generated through violent action, by the sight of each other, the torn clothing, the bruises and scratches, the wildness of all fourteen, numb, purple, coughing, white heads solemn in the healing snow. (DeLillo 187)

[13]In addition to the analysis of how language is made use to address the implied intimacy between boys, the anxiety caused by silence has to be taken into consideration. In his self-revelatory talk, Gary says, "of all the aspects of exile, silence pleased me the least" (DeLillo 29), and further confesses, "The silence … it bothers me" (46). Silence appears to remind Gary of his subconscious thoughts or his past, which he is afraid to confront. That is to say, Gary needs the "noise" created by the contact on football field. This provides him with "comfort" and interrupts the silence.

Also, with another reading, the boys' desire of being "hit" is fulfilled in the absence of football, and thus they are healed in the "healing snow" (187): "Private battles continued until one man gave ground or was buried in snow. These individual contests raged on every play, each man grunting and panting, trying to maintain traction, to move the other man, to chop him down, to overwhelm him" (187).They wear no body protection, the ground is snowy, and as the game progresses, they forbid any play that allows a player to escape from body contact, as explained by Hardin, "one can see the attractiveness of contact within an environment that maximizes the need and pleasure of closeness. A man can maintain contact a little longer if there can be the justification that it is 'warmth' that he is seeking" (43).

Towards the end of the novel, when the football season is over, players try to release their energy by playing games with lots of physical contact and sexual connotations of disparaged homoerotism. "Higginbotham argues that when the football season ends and the players no longer have that outlet through which to displace their homosexual energies, their attention turns to other avenues of relief [*sic*.]" (qtd. in Harvey 105). For example, the scene where all the players line up to assault a blue dress can be seen as an expression of their sexual repression. The teammates get together and symbolically insult a woman by transferring its personality to the blue dress of a woman. Gary and his friends seek alternative ways of promulgating their repressed feeling of humiliating an opponent. In this case, the example is symbolically chosen, as Higginbotham argues, a metaphoric substitute for a woman: a blue dress, "a desperate surrogate for the sexual energy released on the football field, the dress exemplifies the players' need for sensual contact not with a woman but rather among themselves"(qtd. in Harvey 105). By attacking the dress in various ways, players think that they prove their manhood as they cannot help but cross the line of manners and morals in the absence of football. As Billy Mast sews the button to the dress, different players come into his room to physically assault the dress and its components. Gary reports on the reflections and statements of those players:

> Chuck Deering walked in. He did a dance step and then went over and sat on the windowsill … "Whose dress is that?" he said. "Is that Alia Joy Burney's dress? Let

> me put my head in there. I want to bury my head in that erotic material" … "I need the dress. Give me the dress. I have to put my head under the dress." (172) … "Let me at least lick the button before you finish sewing it. That's all I ask. If I can't put my head under the dress, at least let me lick the button" (174).Whose dress is that?" Butler said. "That must be Alia Joy Burney's dress. Hey, move over, Bobby. Plenty of room." … "I get first crack at that dress," Deering said. "There's a waiting line for that dress. My head goes under first" (175).

Among all the players present in the room where everybody tries to touch, lick or grab some part of the dress, there is but one who is not involved: Gary Harkness. His not taking part implies that he does not have the heterosexual feeling or energy to discharge on a female. However, considering the other ambiguous and feminine aspects of Gary's personality and thinking that Gary does not refrain from participating in other games where there is male-to-male contact, his staying away from this particular game, where female contact occurs, can also be read as an indication of his fear of heterosexual intercourse.

As a final thought, it is important to notice how Gary's perception changes as the novel unfolds. At the beginning of the football season in Logos College, he depicts himself as a "warrior" who is ready "to kill with impunity" (DeLillo 31), a soldier fulfilling his duties:

> Each day I added a new word to my vocabulary, wrote a letter to someone I loved, and memorized the name of one more president of the United States and the years of his term in office. Simplicity, repetition, solitude, starkness, discipline upon discipline … There was even pleasure in the daily punishment on the field. I felt that I was better for it, reduced in complexity, a warrior. (29-30)

He also states that "Football players are simple folk … football players travel the straightest of lines. His thoughts are wholesomely commonplace," (DeLillo 3-4) that is to say, a football player has to be "straight," a heterosexual; and "straight," following one after another in order, following each other without interruption. Constant reference to straightness in the novel sub-textually implies that the football organization, and from a larger perspective the USA, demand its players be "straight" in every way possible. However, towards the very end, Gary realizes the true nature of his country and of himself, and reaches the understanding that he is not a conventional American individual neither in his mindset not in his character: he drifts and he is not "pure," he is not "straight":

> As an athlete I have serious lapses. I don't play football as much as drift in and out of cloud blanks of actions and noise. I'm not a one-hundred-percent-in-the-American-grain football player. I tend to draw back now and again … I bullshit myself. (DeLillo 229)

By initiating a disparity in scenes where Gary's thoughts diverge from the mainstream attitudes of American society, DeLillo provides a sharp contrast to the values in the second half of the 20th century in America where morals of the time and society clash with those of the characters *End Zone*. However, characters somehow manifest their hidden sensuality and their contradicting perspectives against leading values of the system. It is impossible to dismiss the relationship between football and language that implies hidden messages towards homosexual understanding. In several scenes and conversations sub-textual "queer" meaning in language is substantiated, not arbitrary or coincidental. Be it about its context, or the hegemonic masculine values it tries to dictate, football becomes the medium through which characters are bonded, tested and manifest their hidden ambiguous sexual tendencies where they fight a symbolic battle.

CHAPTER 2

SYMBOLIC BATTLE AGAINST MORTALITY: POST-SELF in JOHN GRISHAM'S *BLEACHERS* (2004)

Thus the very existence of death alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantage of the Other. To be dead is to be prey for the living. This means therefore that the one who tries to grasp the meaning of his future must discover himself as the future prey of others… In this sense, to die is to be condemned no matter what ephemeral victory one has won over the Other; even if one has made use of the Other to "sculpture one's own statue," to die is to exist only through the Other, and to owe him one's meaning and the very meaning of one's victory.

Sartre from *Being and Nothingness*

This chapter will connect the discussions of the history of life-continuity and post-self theory to how sports and American football have become a medium of achieving symbolic immortality. Then, it will move on to summarize the systematic background for the analysis of *Bleachers* and adopt previously discussed arguments and theories of quest of after-life and representation of hero to the novel.

What we unconsciously fear is not to be deceased, but to be forgotten and erased from the memories of the people forever. Regarding this, Robert Spaemann says that human beings perceive death not as a transformation of "a mental substrate" but as an overall "threat to existence" (9). As the lives go by, what is left behind us is a mysterious question, as Schmitt and Leonard write, "individuals ponder the mark they will leave in time" (1088). People strive to leave an indelible trace so that they will be remembered relying on "the belief" that being able to live in the recollections of people also means to be entitled to immortality.

According to Howard N. Brown the reason behind leaving memories of ourselves creates a "belief in immortality," and this is because of "the apparent impossibility of constructing any rational scheme of *existence* without it" (50). This symbolic "scheme of existence" has meant more to mankind than any other success. By attaining "symbolic" existence, human beings have heightened the feeling that although the body is delivered from the burden of flesh, they will still be "alive" in the memories of others

as symbolic "immortal" beings: "a reasonable end … to carry our own life forward into another state of being" (Brown 52).

As previously discussed, Robert Jay Lifton, in his book *The Life of the Self,* extensively examines the term "symbolic immortality." He believes that the ambition to be alive even after death is a "prerequisite" (qtd. in Pisk 8) for mental sanity. He sees sports to be one of the ways "to achieve symbolic immortality," evaluating it in the category of "creative arts" inasmuch as "just as with art, literature and music, the sports achievements, results and records live on after their creators have died" (qtd. in Pisk 8). That is to say, a sense of dominance over death is achieved through sports results or championships. From this perspective, arguably fear of death is relieved on account of the fact that the "creators" of records assume roles of mighty beings and they continue to survive until eternity. Lifton also asserts that such achievement "gives meaning to our existence by preserving our connection to others in material ways in this life while ensuring our symbolic connection to others once we left this mortal coil" (qtd. in Pisk 8).

Similarly, striving to be remembered has been the aim of every sportsman due to the fact that it feeds a basic desire of the human psyche: immortality. As Jernej Pisk argues, beginning from the very early years of civilization and sports "survival by immortal fame" within a community of spectators and people "was highly appreciated" (7). The passion for immortality and the "agony" to attain immortality by sports can be traced back to ancient times. About this connection between "agony" and "immortality," Pisk tries to explain the birth of "agony" for "immortality" by explaining the origin of the word, "[t]he Greek word for *competition* was *agon*," (7) and he further elaborates on the social perspective, "[a]t that time *agon* was incessant need for external confirmation and recognition" (7). That is, from the ancient Greek perspective, dominating other rivals in a sports competition meant, "achieving eternal youth and equality with Gods" (7). "Agonizing" the present self for the sake of "post-self" is a medium for an everlasting remembrance.

It is necessary to underline that *symbolic death* and *immortalization* are terms that have become embodied in American culture also through sports, and football is one of these predominant factors. Failure in the field or not attaining solid recollection of

achievement in collective memory in the sports arena is synonymous with death. Michael Messner acknowledges the extreme forms of degradation of society in sports for unsuccessful results, and the ones who cause such results, meaning the underachieving sportsman, "a different person […] not even a person. He almost ceases to exist" (*Power at Play* 126). Donald Ball supports this argument and maintains that as much as a strong achieving sports person is cherished and endeared with gratification, the one with "failure" is "viewed" almost as "a deadman" by being accorded to the status of a "non-person" (730).

John Grisham's *Bleachers* tells the story of an ex-high school all-American quarterback Neely Crenshaw and his reputable late coach Eddie Rake. Crenshaw tries to reconcile with his past and struggles to secure his future. Although he used to have a great reputation in his hometown Messina, he feels his prestige is at risk due to his inability to continue his promising football career. On the other hand, Coach Rake is worried about his image after his death. Even though he has made a name for himself as the legendary Coach of Messina football, after the death of a high-school football player in his brutal practice, his reputation starts to suffer. Not sure of how people will remember them, both characters take a spiritual journey to face their pasts, convey apologies and try to build stronger relationships with their communities.

Bleachers reminds us that conflict is central to life in an American town where social culture, collective memory and football are important. After fifteen years since he left his town quietly, Neely Crenshaw, the legendary quarterback of the high school football team Messina Spartans, comes back to face his past. What makes Crenshaw come back to the hometown of his glory days is the death of legendary coach Eddie Rake. With other former teammates and the rest of the town, Crenshaw waits for the mournful funeral. Up until the occasion, he remembers the years of his youthand begins a journey into his incomplete past. During this spiritual journey, Crenshaw confesses how he really feels about his late coach Eddie Rake, his love life and town, his people and the game of football. Grisham evaluates retrospectively Messina Spartan football culture with depictions and storytelling in which his characters struggle both physically and spiritually to settle symbolic and real altercations and disagreements.

The social[14] world of football is profoundly exploited in John Grisham's *Bleachers*. All the components that formulate post-self ideology are consolidated within the novel to manifest a symbolic fight against mortality. In characters' developments and devolvement throughout their memories and events, which later generate their epiphany, Grisham uses football as a context for symbolic battles. Eddie Rake and Neely Crenshaw struggle between their success and failure, the gloomy atmosphere that is created in the absence of each other, their failed promises and what people say of them.

Conceptualizing all the arguments discussed above, in their article "Immortalizing the Self through Sports," which is also the roadmap of this chapter, Schmitt and Leonard translate the idea of "post-self" as "the concern of a person with the presentation of his or her self in history" (1089). They also maintain that the "essentials" that contribute to the formation of post-self "include the capacity of the self to interpret and anticipate, social worlds, personal continuity, sympathy or identification, biographical others, status passages, collective memory, and the presentation of the self" (1089). In this view, success on a sport field creates symbolic images about the individuals who accomplish them. Therefore, these individuals symbolically carve their names onto endless moments of eternity. On the other hand, with participation in sports and rational achievement in sports, communities form connections between athletes and their post-selves, which serve to be a concrete proof of immortal existence in the perspective of society. Lifton mentions that post-self becomes "man's symbolization of his ties with both biological fellows and his history, past and future" (*The Life* 31).

According to Schmitt and Leonard, the primary constituents which "foster the post-self" are "(1) opportunity for role-support, (2) engrossment through participation and communication, (3) comparison through measurement and records, and (4) recognition through awards and commemorative devices" (1093). My systematic adaptation from here on will follow these four sections of post-self, relating these steps to *Bleachers* and

[14] As quoted from the work of Schmitt and Leonard, "Immortalizing the Self through Sports," under the spectrum of "post-self" in the world of sports, "the society" is built through: "the nature of prestige, time, feelings about the self, the future self, the sociology of nostalgia, the impact of changes in modern societies on selfhood, biographical work, sub social worlds, role-identities, and symbolic uses of the dead in civil religions, advances in naturalistic inquiry, certain substantive areas (e.g., sociology of sport), and psychohistory" (Schmitt and Leonard 1089).

analyzing the symbolic battles to attain it. In the first part I will talk about "Opportunity for Role Support" concentrating on *self-identity* and *conflicts*. In the second part, I will shed light on "Engrossment through Participation and Communication," where I will focus on *engrossment* and *collective memory*; the third part will consist of "Comparison through Measurement and Records," and the final part that will complete the cycle will be "Recognition through Awards and Commemorative Devices."

Thus, this chapter is predicated on the theory of post-self and how athlete-heroes in a modern day American town fight a symbolic battle against mortality. John Grisham, by focusing on the characters found in an American football environment in *Bleachers*, aims to portray a symbolic battle to be remembered. By using American football as a setting and highlighting the symbolic battle of characters against their self-identities, and against the American society and its paradigms, Grisham appears to address the value system of modern day America. Grisham reminds us that, similar to those in ancient myths, the quest to achieve a sense of symbolic immortality still exists in contemporary society. Characters in *Bleachers* embark on a journey to fulfill this mission as they are portrayed to stage a fight against mortality and symbolic deaths.

2.1. OPPORTUNITY FOR ROLE- SUPPORT: SELF-IDENTITY AND CONFLICTS

In their joint article "Identities and Interactions," George McCall and Jerry Simmons explain "role-support" as "the expressed support accorded to an actor by his audiences for his claims concerning his role-identity … More intuitively, such a role-identity is his *imaginative* view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position" (65). In the light of this "imaginative view," characters in *Bleachers* endeavor a lengthy pursuit for their role-identities. In other words, characters in *Bleachers* put out a psychological and physical battle at times of "conflicts" and struggle against their "self-identities" enforced upon them by society. So, "Opportunity for Role Support" is mainly the journey through which athletes try to define their "self" and their "roles" in society and in history (Lifton, *The Life* 33). Consequently, "Opportunity for Role-Support" becomes the stage where *Bleachers*' main characters set off to move closer on their memories and mistakes, simultaneously striving mentally

and physically for their prestige, as they believe their names are not stable and secured for a memorable post-self.

Under the light of the information above, it is necessary to examine the struggle the main characters go through to develop their "roles" and "self-identities" during "conflicts." Conflict here is interpreted both as a conflict between the individual and other individuals, or between the individual and the society. Conflicts come in different shapes and forms in the sports world. The conflicting nature of sportsmen does not only stem from the innate characteristics of the individual, but can also be determined and caused by the mismatch between the ideas of the character and the expectation of the society. These conflicts occur when it comes to the point that a certain character develops an emotional dispute with their internal and external selves.

The first example of the conflict between role and self in *Bleachers* is the example of Eddie Rake. However, before scrutinizing his conflict, it is necessary to see how Grisham portrays this character. Eddie Rake is the creator of the football tradition in Messina. He has raised many "soldiers" over the years with which he has certified his immortality by battling for multiple championships. The most compelling evidence of this is when he is in the press, and even nationally his success has been recognized: "That was the title of the [newspaper] story – 'Eddie Rake and the Seven Hundred Spartans'"[15] (Grisham 39). Furthermore, Eddie Rake being "always the master motivator" (34) has created a convention where even after years not much would change from what he has built in the Messina football tradition. In a way, Eddie Rake has solidified his "post-self" through his system which has always brought him success. Symbolically speaking, while Rake is training "football soldiers" on the field, unintentionally his prestige and training methods become pervasive and ironically he raises "soldiers" for real battles as well.

Yet even in the face of real death, one of his ex-players, now the sheriff of the town, Mal Brown, shows courage to survive just like he is trained to survive by Rake on the

[15] Firstly, the usage of the name "Spartans" is of value for the general theme of the novel: fighting for symbolic immortality. Spartans were also historic myth bearers of the Greek descent who were believed to be a warrior society. Spartans, as myths tell us further, brought Greece to the highest of its power by defeating the city-rivals, and Spartan soldiers went through rigorous education, military training and socialization program to attain symbolic immortality and equality with Gods. (www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/sparta)

field of football. Such substitution is narrated in Mal Brown's war experience in Vietnam. In the following example, Mal Brown identifies himself with his coach through survival techniques and strength and manages to cling to life during a Vietnamese attack after which he *becomes* his coach as if reaching out for a divine being.

> Rake. Eddie Rake. When I was hangin' on for my life, under that boat, I didn't think about my momma or my dad or my girlfriend, I thought about Rake. I could hear him barkin' at us at the end of practice when we were runnin' sprints. I remembered his locker-room speeches. Never quit, never quit … I saw two of my buddies lying on the deck, burnt black. I was in shock and finally passed out. They told me later that when they asked me my name, I said, 'Eddie Rake'. (Grisham 120-22)

After his "compulsory" retirement, Rake starts to question his legend and legacy. Here, at this stage, just as he has believed that he has won a symbolic life-continuity, Rake starts to ask questions about his methods and techniques of coaching. Consequently, he finds mistakes in his behavior during his coaching years and tries to come to terms with his past. Only if he forgives himself and reconciles society to his questionable line of coaching will his legend bear a chance of continuity. All throughout his life, Eddie Rake has believed, as George Merrill summarizes, that football is a "game [that] demands self-control under the most intense excitement; that it trains the judgment in quick and accurate decision; that it cultivates observation, gives power to detect, remember, anticipate, interpret and thwart the plans" (759). For the sake of championships and state titles, basically for instruments and remembrances that will secure his "post-self," Eddie Rake applies "strict, regimented and militaristic drills"; he has a "vast repertoire of harsh conditioning methods" (Grisham 31). One of these is what is known as "the Spartan Marathon":

> The Spartan Marathon was an annual torture run created by Rake to inaugurate each season. It was held on the first day of August practice, always at noon, for maximum heat … The format was simple: you ran until you dropped. Twelve laps were the minimum. Any player unable to complete twelve laps would get the chance to repeat the marathon the next day, and if he failed twice then he was unfit to become a Messina Spartan … Rake prowled from one end zone to the other watching the runners, barking if necessary, disqualifying those who moved too slow. Speed was not an issue, unless a player's pace became a walk, at which point Rake would pull him off the track. Once a player quit or passed out or was otherwise disqualified, he was forced to sit at midfield and bake under the sun until there was no one left standing. There were very few rules, one of which called for

> automatic ejection if a runner vomited on the track. Vomiting was allowed and there was plenty of it, but once it was completed, somewhere off the track, the sick player was expected to rejoin the run …Of Rake's vast repertoire of harsh conditioning methods; the marathon was by far the most dreaded. Over the years it had led some young men in Messina to pursue other sports, or to leave athletics altogether. (Grisham 29-31)

Another "method" used by Rake to train his players for his success and prestige is what is known as bleachers.[16] In this method basically players are supposed to run between bleachers with full sprint until their lungs or legs give out. "Number two on the list of dreaded tortures, just behind the Spartan Marathon, was the assault on the bleachers. Every player knew what it meant, and when Rake yelled, "Bleachers," half the team wanted to quit" (Grisham 61). Although disputed greatly, Rake wanted to raise kids with physical and mental prowess in order to prolong a habit of winning. Following his retirement, in view of his aforementioned training system, Eddie Rake has simultaneously continued his symbolic battle until the day he is committed to the ground.

Moving back to Rake's conflict, as I have mentioned earlier, Rake does not give up his coaching position voluntarily or due to failure, he has a "compulsory" retirement. As a matter of fact this compulsion has both stemmed from and caused multiple "conflicts." The leading example of the conflict that ignites Rake's interrogation of his "role" and "self-identity," and causes him to retire "compulsorily," is when Scotty Reardon dies during a Sunday practice. Scotty Reardon, a high school football player with the Messina Spartans, gives his last breath after Rake's brutal and long-disputed field conditioning practice. John Grisham depicts the mournful scene as follows:

> Scotty Reardon was a sophomore special-teams player who weighed in that August at 141 pounds, but, at the time of his autopsy, weighed 129. During the third round of bleachers, he collapsed between the third and fourth rows on the home side, and never regained consciousness. (Grisham 62)

This scene can be analyzed initially from what Hughson has said about heroes: "the 'exaggerated veneration' of the hero can lead to the abnegation of human responsibility and, at the very least, profound disappointment for the hero-worshipper once the

[16]*Bleachers* is a double metaphor that John Grisham devices which refers both to the harsh training drills by which Eddie Rake creates champions, hence the game of football; and bleachers stands surrounding the field where fans watch the games; hence the society. In between both meanings, "the game of football" and "the society," "post-self" is constructed, which explains the title of the novel.

fallibility of the idol is eventually revealed" (85). That is to say, the event also ignites the conflict that has broken out for the sake of human life safety in Messina. Frustrated with the incident, half of Messina demands that Rake be expelled from the head-coach position and sentenced to severe punishment while the other half thinks that Scotty Reardon was not good enough to be a Messina Spartan anyway. The death of Scotty deserves to be analyzed due to the fact that it is the very conflict that is the catalyst for the self-interrogations of Rake, who now is troubled with his image and prestige, in short, worried about his "post-self." Although Rake has believed that he has been implementing an accurate and meticulous philosophy, he has turned out to be the leading agent and originator of Scotty's death. As explained by Merrill "[Football] is a 'manly' game. It is not a game for boys. It is well known that the game prepares men for hardship, producing, through its severe training, fine specimens of manhood that can endure a good deal of battering without fatal results" (759). Henceforth, if kids like Scotty cannot "endure," it means that they are not "fine specimen." This is the point where the conflict becomes pervasive in the town and in the eyes of Rake since the issue is arguable on both sides through multiple perspectives: war and battle mentality on one side; humanity on the other.

Nat Sawyer, ex-player for Eddie Rake, tells the accounts of the chaotic division to Crenshaw, his old friend and ex-team-mate, who was away during the turmoil of the death incident. Sawyer says: "'A lot of people, including many of those who played for him [Eddie Rake], thought, 'Well, Rake's finally killed a boy.' But a lot of the diehards were saying, 'Hell, that kid wasn't tough enough to be a Spartan.' The town split. It got ugly'" (Grisham 63). However much criticism, indignation, resentment or appreciation the incident may evoke, its consequence starts a drastic change in the history of Messina and football. Eddie Rake, a legend, is removed from his coaching position. To put it in another way, Eddie Rake has started to battle against the society, who has been backing him during championship years. After this conflict, devastated by the loss of a young "soldier," Rake has worked to secure his prestige[17] until he has passed away. However,

[17] "Sport participants do not want to be remembered for their negative achievements. As with other forms of stigma, negative experiences in sport have the capacity to obliterate positive accomplishments" (Schmitt and Leonard 1097). As argued by John Hewitt, "in general, it can be said that the establishment of a deviant identity tends to negate all or most other possible identities in the eyes of those others for whom the label in question is treated as especially grave" (qtd. in Schmitt and Leonard 1097).

as Grisham summarizes the process of the rise and fall of Eddie Rake, "The glory days were gone. They left with Rake" (5). Therefore, opportunity for role support has lost its initial purpose of "support" and, for Eddie Rake, it has transformed into a battle of prestige and an inquest of "self-identity."

Another example of the conflict about "self-identity" is the character Nat Sawyer. Grisham makes a striking comment on the personality of Nat Sawyer just as the reader expects to find a tough and aggressive young man, a character of strength and endurance just like any other Spartan player: "In the tenth grade, Nat had tried playing safety[18] but he couldn't run and hated to hit … Few of Rake's players had been cursed with so little talent" (71). Subsequently, we are informed that Nat is a homosexual, an ex-Messina Spartan, who actually has never loved "hitting." In his conversation with Neely Crenshaw, Nat Sawyer explains how he is at peace with himself and how his journey through his "self-identity" has turned out: "'First male earrings in Messina, how about that? And the first ponytail.And the first openly gay downtown merchant. Aren't you proud of me?' Nat was flipping his long black hair to show off his ponytail" (Grisham 71).

As a matter of fact, the reciprocal support between Eddie Rake, after he is forced to quit the head-coaching position, and Nat Sawyer, after he opens a bookstore, propound similar "concerns about self-identity." Nat's primary objection is to obliterate the ignorance in the town, and Nat tries to succeed in settling into the football loving, masculine and heterosexual society. Although it may not be very possible to see an act of support for a gay ex-player from an ex-American football coach, since football is generally believed to be played by straight men, Rake gives full support to Nat, in his sexual choice and coming out as gay. Ironically, such attitude translates into mutual support when Rake embarks on a spiritual journey after the death of Scotty. This support is the center where their paths coincide. For their own personal agendas, the two characters work their way through for their post-selves by ensuing a symbolic war against society. In the very scene while he is having a conversation with Neely Crenshaw, Nat says: "I'm just trying to breathe some culture into this town" (Grisham

[18]A defensive position in football that lines up in the defensive backfield and is mainly responsible for passing coverage.

73), "Can you imagine me walking in with some cute boy, holding hands? They'd stone us" (76). It is also worth remarking that both characters, a ruthless ex-coach and a gay ex-player of his, find comfort and serenity on mutual grounds, in each other's presence. Nat says, "Eddie was my first customer. He encouraged me to open this place" (73) and Nat, ironically states that the encouragement for a gay person to open a shop from Rake was in the style of an American football, pre-game bravery speech, "[Rake] gave me the standard pep talk – have no fear, work harder than the other guy, never say die – the usual half-time rah-rah" (73). Nat's concerns about self-identity are plucked from obscurity and are eased by Rake. As Nat explains:

> Eddie was the first person here I confided in … He said he didn't know much about gay people, but if I knew who I was, then to hell with everybody else. 'Go live your life, son' he said. 'Some folks'll hate you, some folks'll love you, most folks haven't made up their minds. It's up to you' (Grisham 77).

On the other side of the relationship, in fact, Rake might be the one who actually "confided in" Nat during his inquiry of his "self-identity." Nat says: "[Rake] liked to sneak down here in the mornings for coffee" (74). This relationship is "unique" in such a way that "the interact brings about accomplishments, success and satisfaction" during their battle against the self-identities in the conflict against society. (Cockerill 16)

In addition to these examples, Neely Crenshaw, another leading character in *Bleachers*, a former all-American quarterback for Messina Spartans, habitually wonders about his past mistakes. His mandatory self-interrogations on his roles and self-identity leave him no space in his hometown that he has preferred not to come back to Messina. Knowing the burden to carry his post-self to eternity is only possible with achievements, Neely Crenshaw experiences a whirlpool of feelings of inadequacy as he has not fulfilled the expectations of the society after his injury, and become a failed hero fearing to be dubbed "a discomfiture." It is his injury that has risked his prestigious post-self and Crenshaw is never able to face this fact and that is why he has never come back to his town. After his star year at the university as a freshman, Neely Crenshaw experiences a brutal injury that terminates his career as a football player. This incident renders him unable to walk straight due to the ailments of the kneecap damage. The repercussion of career-ending hurt confines him to a barren domain where he possesses nothing but unfulfilled dreams. Crenshaw is depicted as hurt and lost in nostalgia as he remembers his past days: "The bleachers were silent now, waiting. He moved slowly down

the sideline, hands stuck deep in his pockets, a forgotten hero whose star had faded so quickly" (Grisham 8).

For Lifton, since life-continuity is also described in symbolic terms, the definition of death is not only a physical death; it can also have symbolic connotations. That is, as Lifton explains, there are other forms of deaths that can be experienced when a person is still alive. He argues that these experiences are equal to death and, in fact, these situations are "antecedents of death" which can even be categorized in "psychological and social disorders": *stasis*, *separation*, and *disintegration* (qtd. in Vigilant and Williamson 5). By *stasis*, Lifton describes a life "without a sense of purpose", not completing any work or not attempting anything new. By *separation*, Lifton frames the discussion where he explains "the loss of connectedness to a larger community or the loss of the love-connection to other human beings" (qtd. in Vigilant and Williamson 5-6), which can signify the causes for depression and other similar psychological disturbances. The last one is *disintegration*, as stated by Lifton, is "the absence of those ethical principles used to organize –or ground- human experience within a historical-cultural context," (qtd. in Vigilant and Williamson 5-6) which is the symbolic state of death where one lacks common grounds to integrate with society, thereby causing a person to experience a societal pathology.

Using American football terminology, Grisham portrays Neely Crenshaw as symbolically "incomplete,"[19] or in Lifton's terminology: "symbolically dead." In Crenshaw's case, it is possible to trace all three modes of "death antecedents": "statis, separation and disintegration." These are the catalysts of Crenshaw's conflict. Grisham devises a past in which Crenshaw has a knee injury that finishes his career, which makes him physically incomplete, or dead, and since he cannot play football to prove his role anymore, he has become emotionally incomplete. In fact, all throughout his life Crenshaw has been an "incomplete" man. Not only is his career incomplete, Crenshaw's university education is incomplete as well. When his prestige and fame starts to fade and creates a room for education, he does not pursue an educational career

[19] "Incomplete" is actually an American football terminology which is used to explain the situation where a passing play is not successful. "Incomplete" plays signal that there has been no gain on the field.

in college and decides to drop out. In addition to this, his love-life is another territory where he has become incomplete.

Crenshaw has preferred promiscuous flares rather than long and solid love affairs. Chasing sexual intercourse of a "high-voltage" (Grisham 146) caliber with "Brandy Skimmel aka Screamer" (146), Crenshaw eliminated the option of love, which towards the end of the novel he undertakes the endeavor to reclaim. However, this attempt to win back the heart of his high-school love, Cameron, is also incomplete. On the same grounds as the incompletion theme, Crenshaw's marriage life, which ends in a divorce, is also as catastrophic as an incomplete play at a crucial moment in the game.

In addition to this, "Ten years to the week after Screamer and I [Crenshaw] made our little road trip to Atlanta, my wife had the second miscarriage. A little boy" (Grisham 156). Due to two miscarriages of his then wife, he fails to become a father as well, which is another "incomplete" attempt for Crenshaw. Furthermore, his loyalty to his town or to his friends is almost at the threshold of abandonment and oblivion. He has lived his life like an exile, not able to conduct a reassuring bond; hence another incompletion of Neely Crenshaw. Therefore, this character can be regarded as dead, an incomplete, or a modern Sisyphus of the novel in which his attempts at every aspect and walk of life remain unsuccessful, concurrently, demanding an impetuous inception over and over again. From Lifton's symbolic death perspective, Crenshaw has experienced all "death antecedents: statis, disintegration, and separation" in which he has "no purpose to live [statis]… lost connectedness to larger community [disintegration] … and [experienced] the absence of ethical principles [separation]" (5-6).

These incomplete characteristic "deficiencies" and "blemishes," as previously discussed with reference to Richard Whitehall, serve to expose Crenshaw's multiple worries about his "role" and "self-identity." Crenshaw fears that his future is no longer bright and will not secure his name in the memories of the society. Although he had undisputable success in the past, he does not want to remember the days which made him a hero since they have ended in failure, "The Messina quarterback for three seasons. Over a hundred touchdowns. He'd never lost on this field. The games came back to him, though he tried to block them out. Those days were gone, he told himself for the hundredth time. Long gone" (Grisham 9).

Similar to Eddie Rake, Crenshaw's battle with his past, which was his safe haven, is now his battle against his future: post-self. In *Bleachers*, during his self-interrogation, Crenshaw remembers his past days, when he was wearing number 19 for the Messina Spartans, as he walks into the stadium after he gets back to town 15 years later:

> The roar of a long-ago crowd came back, a crowd packed tightly together up there, in the bleachers, with the band in the center of things blaring away with its endless renditions of the Spartan fight song. And on the sideline just a few feet away, he could see number 19 nervously warming up as the mob worshiped him. Number 19 was a high school all-American, a highly recruited quarterback with a golden arm, fast feet, plenty of size, maybe the greatest Messina ever produced. (Grisham 6)

Thus, not being able to sustain a favorable football career, a successful marriage or decent communication with his town and ex-team members, Crenshaw continues to fall apart at the seams since his post-self is now precarious.

As I have mentioned earlier, the theme that highlights the gap between social expectations and self-identity is "conflict." Another leading example for such conflict which dominates a remarkable part of the symbolic battle in *Bleachers* is the conflict between the coach, Eddie Rake and the All-America star player, Neely Crenshaw. Regarding this symbolic battle between Rake and Crenshaw, it is crucial to understand the interconnection between their coach-athlete relationship. Rainer Martens puts forward that "not all coach-athlete relationships are effective and successful," since coaches' undesirable approaches to players may lead to "inadequate relationships with their athletes" (29). This "inadequacy" in their relationship is the main cause for Crenshaw and Rake to grow apart. That is to say, "negative emotional feelings and expressions" such as "frustration, anger, jealousy, [and] distrust" (Cockerill 20) are other reasons that directly and indirectly lead to prestige loss for both conflicting parties.

There has always been a conflict between Eddie Rake and Neely Crenshaw. However, the fistfight that highlights this conflict is the most remarkable one. Crenshaw tells about the unspoken event, which is sugarcoated as the locker room "altercation":

> "We got to the locker room at halftime and waited for Rake. We waited and we waited, knowing that we were about to be eaten alive … He [Eddie Rake] walked straight up to me [Crenshaw], pure hatred in his eyes … He said, 'You miserable excuse for a football player.' I said, 'Thanks, Coach.' As soon as I got the words

> out, he took his backhand and backhanded me across the face.'… By instinct, I swung. I didn't know if he planned to hit me again … So I threw a left hook with everything I could put into it. Caught him perfectly on the left jaw, flush to the face" (Grisham 124).

After this event, it has occurred to Messina that there has been a long dispute and a feud of some sort between Eddie Rake and Neely Crenshaw. However, even after many years, if Crenshaw announces that he has forgiven Rake because of what has happened in the locker room, his search for prestige in the eyes of Rake supporters will be secured. The reason after all these years Crenshaw comes back to his hometown is because he accepts to deliver a eulogy at the funeral ceremony of the worshipped coach Eddie Rake. By forgiving Rake, Crenshaw will make peace with his inner thoughts and enhance his self-worth in the society. In the final part of the novel, Crenshaw speaks and comes to terms with his own feelings and past in public at Eddie Rake's eulogy, and this confession of his true feelings not only ends Crenshaw's search for "identity" and "role," but somehow eases his battle for his "post-self" in society:

> There is a question I've asked myself a thousand times, and I know that every player has struggled with it too. The question is, "Do I love Eddie Rake, or do I hate him?" … The voice began to crack and fade. Neely closed his eyes, bit his tongue, and tried to summon the strength to finish. Then he wiped his face and said, slowly, "I've answered the question differently every day since the first time he blew his whistle and barked at me. Coach Rake was not easy to love, and while you're playing here you really don't like him. But after you leave, after you venture away from this place, after you've been kicked around a few times, faced some adversity, some failure, been knocked down by life, you soon realize how important Coach Rake is and was. You always hear his voice, urging you to pick yourself up, to do better, and never quit. You miss that voice. Once you're away from Coach Rake, you miss him so much. (Grisham 176-77)

This scene above is important in the completion of the cycle of heroic monomyths. According to Campbell's (1968) heroic monomyth, "the hero is one who, in response to a call, leaves the familiarity of ordinary life to enter a sphere of transcendental conflict; in returning from which, the hero raises the level of ordinary life itself" (qtd. in Porpora 213). Tracing this monomyth for Crenshaw in *Bleachers*, after his leave from Messina, which is his ordinary life, to play football, Crenshaw returns with a desire to forgive. Therefore, Crenshaw shows that he has attained a transcendental virtue. He has experienced a conflict with his head-coach, which was mentioned as a locker room

altercation, and after this conflict, he has realized he has been engaged in a battle of symbolic immortality. As Porpora further states, "in the sacred plane, heroes personify transcendent ideals and transcendent visions of the good" (227). Thus, the confession of his true feelings and his forgiveness for Rake in the funeral eulogy has become the transcendent vision of the good for Crenshaw.

2.2. ENGROSSMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION: ENGROSSMENT AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

As previously discussed from a Jungian perspective "the human mind has its own history and the psyche retains traces left from previous stages of its development. More than this, the contents of the unconscious exert a formative influence on the psyche" (Henderson 106). Therefore, when evaluating post-self, self-identity and in parallel, the idea of immortality, it is not possible to exclude the social world, the spectators, the stadium, the customs of the town or the city in which American football is carried out and worshipped. Lifton argues that "post-self through the sport act depends on the nature of the social world in which sport acts are situated" (*The Life* 31). Accordingly, we can arrive at the second major component for my adaptation of post-self theory "Engrossment through Participation and Communication: Collective Memory."

Sports create a territory where members of the society and athletes meet to obtain their share of emotions and success. In other words, sports provide opportunities to become engaged, or "engrossed," in games as spectators or players. As explained by Schmitt and Leonard, to be able to attain divine existence, an athlete has to manage to affect all parts of the society, and carve a name so that his/her surrounding world can see. (1098) Therefore, the sports world and the society are submerged, and according to Erving Goffman members of the communities are "engrossed" in "sports social world" (345 – 47). As Louis Wirth maintains, a society can exist only if there is an interaction between individuals. (966) Therefore, engrossment is possible when sports worlds attract members "by (1) allowing them to participate in their activities for example: as spectators in the stadium" (Schmitt and Leonard 1094), or (2) as Tomatsu Shibutani stresses, by exposing them to their common perspectives through their diverse communication channels: "It is through social participation that perspectives shared in a

group are internalized," (565) for example; as listeners on the radio or as people talking about a glorious game, therefore including them into collective memory. Henceforth, members of the social world of sports actually participate in numerous formal and informal sport acts and are exposed to varied formal and informal communication channels.

It is crucial to internalize that fame and success have to be public and social for a memorable post-self. Hans Jonas maintains that "symbolic" immortality and "survival by immortal fame" has been very significant for athletes and spectators. He adds that fame and achievement that sporting act adduced along "must be visible, that is, public, to be noted and remembered as great"(qtd in Pisk 7). Therefore, the more public a sporting activity is, the more it is accessible to "engrossment through participation." In other words, if spectators or the community can publicly see success in sports and talk about it, then they are also "engrossed" in the battle of symbolic immortality as well.

Athletes are not the only ones in the search of victory against mortality through sporting success. The audience, the spectator, the school management, the family, etc. all seek *not* to reconcile with death by their symbolic existence with close kinships and family, or as friends or witnesses of historic achievements. Lifton argues that "[a]thletes are not the only ones who are immortalized for participating in memorable athletic performances. The fame or discredit that accrues to them may extend to their families and friends, [and] to their fans" (qtd. in Schmitt and Leonard 1089). Therefore, it is not possible to ignore the expansiveness of football and its ability to create collective memory. In its vast circle, the football world provides mutual chances both for society and athletes in terms of collective emotions and symbolic immortality through participation and communication, According to Schmitt and Leonard, "The athlete's post-self does not just extend to the biological line; it exhibits a much broader expansiveness. Athletic events, teams, places, and sponsors for example, are immortalized" (1089) as well even though there are no biological connections.

Generally speaking, if a sports act or achievement does not belong to a local or larger social world, which means that if it does not reflect upon collective emotions, dreams or achievements of some circle of people, then that act or achievement bears little chance of being paid attention to or stand the test of time as a means for immortality. By this

token, “Engrossment through Participation and Communication: Engrossment and Collective Memory” is where *Bleachers*’ Messina society is fully integrated into the act of football either as a participant, or as a fan. Such involvement, or as the theory suggests “engrossment,” creates a society with multiple channels of communication, and helps form collective memory. If sports did not nestle this much collectiveness only a few would praise or remember the amazing moments of legendary football players or games in the history of Messina Spartans. Consequently, “collective memory” becomes the “central locus” of post-self in this second section (Schmitt and Leonard 1100). Here in this paradigm, especially for Messina in *Bleachers*, football becomes the collective ground to which sportsmen and society transfer shared emotions that will eventually lead to prestige and symbolic immortality. The link between society and immortalization creates a preliminary step into collective memory.

Integrating people from “multiple sub-worlds” of society and different backgrounds, football in *Bleachers* joins thousands with common feelings, therefore creating the necessary grounds for collective memory, “[t]en thousand seats up in the bleachers, for a town with a population of eight thousand. The math had never worked. But they piled in from the county” (Grisham 8). In other examples; the people of Messina flock to the stadium in order to witness the beauty and the possibility of post-self within the creation of memories through football games, “they [spectators from the country] got their paychecks and bought their beer, and they came to town, to The Field” (8); a town closing shops altogether for the duration of a football game in order to witness the success, “[o]n Friday nights, the entire town of Messina waited for the gate to open, then rushed to the bleachers where seats were claimed and nervous pregame rituals were followed” (3).

For communities with integrated participation in sports with strong communication channels, it is a natural reaction to live along recollections of past games by recognizing and remembering great players. As stated by Herbert Blumer, sports are “a joint action”(qtd. in Schmitt and Leonard 1092), and “it includes actual and vicarious participation as well as conversations about athletic competition” (Schmitt and Leonard 1092). In *Bleachers* when Silo Mooney, a former teammate, and Crenshaw talk about a retrospective game, Paul, who is much younger compared to their age, comments, “‘I remember that game,’ Paul said. ‘I was in the first grade. Forty-eight to nothing’”

(Grisham 47). Although younger Paul remembers the game, this recollection forms a common ground upon which players of respective generations construct collective memory.

Also, in the next example, such remembrance takes place through different communication media. Grisham portrays these media where Paul pictures how communication channels still work in town for Crenshaw. Paul says to Crenshaw, "Walk in Renfrow's Cafe and Maggie still has that huge photo of you above the cash register. I go there for breakfast every Thursday and sooner or later two old-timers will start debating who was the greatest Messina quarterback" (Grisham 16). As we can see, old timers talking about past games and football events of Messina Spartans is an example of how communication channels are exploited to participate and get engrossed with others in the symbolic fight of existence. Another example as an illustration of "divine" sportsmanship and Crenshaw's recognition within elder generations is presented again in Renfrow's café as, Mr. Nunley, the patron of the place greets Crenshaw after years of absence, "Good to see you back here. You were the greatest" (55).

As an example of informal communication from the novel *Bleachers*, Grisham uses *word of mouth* or *telling* in most places, which, in fact sensibly, appears to be the most utilized and trusted way of transferring information in a small town. Although Crenshaw has not been to his native town and has not talked about his injury personally to anyone or how the knee injury has happened in detail, anybody to whom he engages in conversation knows and talks about the inauspicious knee incident and the late hit[20] that caused it. The examples of how some other characters react to the injury are as follows: Silo Mooney, a former teammate, "I heard later that you were great, and then you got hurt" (Grisham 27); Nat Sawyer, former teammate, "How's your knee?" he asked … Sonofabitch hit you late" (72); Mal Brown, former player for Messina Spartans and the currently the sheriff of the town, "'How's your knee? … 'What a cheap shot. You were clearly out of bounds'" (46). Word of mouth is so overpowering as a form of communication that Neely Crenshaw is fed up with being exposed to the

[20] A penalty assessed when a player makes significant contact with an opposing player after the play has ended.

fact he has had a serious knee injury, “How long would the town of Messina talk about the cheap shot that ruined his career?” (46). From a larger perspective, an injury is an omen for a physical deficiency, which in the end is a disadvantage for a fighter.

Another means of informal communication that generates the necessary grounds for collective memory is gossiping. John Grisham makes use of gossiping as a method of transferring information. This is a very common way of communication in a small-town American life, as Grisham underlines multiple times, “Lots of *rumors* over the years, which, as you know, ain’t hard to find in Messina” (127); “*Rumors* are always reliable around here” (72); “*Rumors* are like mosquitoes in this town” (150).

Grisham also spares those scenes where Messina Spartans’ veteran players and younger generation players meet up to have a chat about historic wins. This can be seen as an example of representation of the collective feelings and expansive nature of football in *Bleachers*. Since talks about glorious wins can gather different people of different ages, it is easy to conclude that Messina football has a collective and expansive nature. For example, the section where the final part of the championship game is depicted: Blanchard, a former player and still a fan of the Messina Spartans, summarizes the emotions in the stadium and the spectators, with joy and excitement, almost meaning to say that the atmosphere in the stadium has almost turned into a lunatic asylum after the win for championship: “The place was a madhouse, thirty-five thousand people screaming” (Grisham 112).

In a similar manner, one of the prevailing conventions in *Bleachers* in terms of participation, with Messina being a microcosm for the wider morale of American life style, is the unification of the town and the team with collective emotions. Grisham manifests the idea of collective memory when he depicts the scene where the East Pike championship game of 87’ season is reflected from both from players’ and the spectator side. About the East Pike championship game, Crenshaw says: “I was lying in the end zone, getting crushed by my teammates, telling myself that we’d just done the impossible” (Grisham 114). From the spectators’ view, watching the game from the stands, Randy talks about the same victory, “I was twelve years old, and I remember all the Messina fans were just sitting there, stunned, exhausted, a lot of them crying” (115).

Another illustration of the fans' engrossment with the team's success is when one of the championship games is harked back: "The final play of the miracle drive[21] was perhaps the most famous in all of the glorious history of Spartan football," Nat [Sawyer]: "The whole team was down there. Along with the cheerleaders, the trainers and half of the band," Mal [Brown]: "We thought you'd all gone crazy" (Grisham 113-15). Messina Spartans' players and the spectators in the stadium reciprocally pour out emotional associates, that is, frantic glory of winning. This also means that the spectators and the fans take these winnings and losses personally, and victories or defeats are "reacted to as own success and failures" because "through their simple connections with sport teams, the personal images of fans are at stake when their teams take the field" (Cialdini et al. 374). The abundance of scenes like this emphasizes the idea that Grisham purposefully uses such narrative techniques for engrossment via examples of collective memory.

To add another example to engrossment, in his description of town life and Messina football customs, Grisham depicts that the community is integrated into ritualistic show-off of a football season, which also fosters collective memory:

> In the window of every shop and store around the Messina square there was a large green football schedule, as if the customers and the townsfolk needed help in remembering that the Spartans played every Friday night. And on every lamppost in front of the shops and stores there were green-and-white banners that went up in late August and came down when the season was over … Nothing had changed. The large green schedules were the same every year-the games in bold print, outlined by the smiling faces of the seniors; along the bottom, small ads of all the local sponsors, which included every single business in Messina. No one was left off the schedule" (50).

The lines "In the window of every shop," "Messina square," "customers," "townsfolk," "the Spartans," "every Friday," "every lamppost," "green-and-white banners," "the same every year," "smiling faces," "local sponsors," "Messina" collaboratively initiate the fact that the town is gathered upon football with collective imagery everywhere.

Allen Guttmann attests that "sports can become symbolic actions" (*From Ritual*, 12). These actions can be started against multiple aspects of society. To be more specific, as much as a community can integrate itself with achievements, either by participation or

[21] "A play or series of plays that the offensive football team directs that can culminate in a score, turnover, or game clock expiring" (www.sportingcharts.com/drive).

memory, then the individuals of that society may also symbolically defy immortality. As I have mentioned earlier, nobody wants to be “a discomfiture,” since a community expects to witness success and achievement on the football field. At the times of failures, society also degrades into a position where they cannot engage into euphoria of winning, or joy of achievement. In other words, if a community does not witness sportsmen who defy immortality with success, they also become a discomfiture. With this, the town’s reaction to Crenshaw’s injury is also worth mentioning: “He was carried off in an ambulance and they wept in the streets of Messina” (Grisham 28). The statement that explains the mood of the town is “they [Messina town] cried,” which is also symbolically significant because Crenshaw, in the eyes of the collective understanding of the town, both Crenshaw and Messina are now “injured” in the symbolic fight against immortality.

2.3. COMPARISON THROUGH MEASUREMENT AND RECORDS

Hannah Arendt in her work *The Human Condition* argues that sporting events entitle individuals with grand privileges, “by their capacity for the immortal deed, by their ability to leave nonperishable traces behind, men, their individual mortality notwithstanding, attain an immortality of their own and prove themselves to be of a 'divine' nature” (19). These collections of “traces” and divine events lead to the third major title of the argument for symbolic immortality: “Comparison through Measurement and Records” (Schmitt and Leonard 1096).

Schmitt and Leonard postulate that the social world bears “multiple measurement channels” which can range from written works of statistics and records to fan judgments. In this sense, the football world also yields to the strengths of written works and numbers since achievement and failures of the sporting world are taken under written form. They continue that the sports world is “so dominant” in collection of events that it is “uniquely equipped to preserve its past” (1100). Regarding this, Barry Schwartz in his article “The Social Context of Commemoration” writes, “our memory of the past is preserved mainly by means of chronicling, the direct *recording* of events and their sequence" (377). In other words, human beings transcribe all events to “preserve the memory,” therefore making these memories immortal. (377) In support

of Schmitt and Leonard's argument of preserving past achievements with written forms, additionally, Eric Dunning accounts for the link between record and immortality in terms of comparison:

> What is a record in our modern sense? It is a marvelous abstraction that permits competition not only among those gathered together on the field of sport but also among them and others distant in time and space. Through the strange abstraction of the quantified record, the Australian can compete with the Finn who died a decade before the Australian was born. The record becomes a psychological presence in the mind of everyone involved with the event. (33)

When records are matter of discussion, Hughson explains his stance with the sporting records and states that records "provide a constant reminder of the past as participants and spectators are alerted by the holders of 'expert' knowledge when a new height is within reach" (87). In similar fashion he continues to elaborate the relation between the past and the present, "Accordingly, the past is used as an index of achievement to be exceeded, and measurement rather than aesthetics becomes the paramount concern of sporting performance. (87) It is a well-known fact that American sports culture is obsessed with record keeping and statistics. In addition to this, American sports followers have a distinguished tradition of prizing and showing gratitude for those who have achieved a great deal for the record-books. In a way, such a commitment is an apportionment of the feelings of immortality that such athletes have aroused among spectators, the audience or the nation. Mass media, communication channels all gather to cherish these mighty moments of immortal memory and immortal fame.

Guttmann insists that record keeping has a solid base in modern sports culture, "The unsurpassed quantified achievement, which is what we mean by 'record' in this uniquely modern usage, is a constant challenge to all who strive to surpass it and thereby to achieve a modern version of immortality" (*Games* 3). Adopting Guttmann's argument to American culture as a whole in terms of the "modern version" of immortality, in his article *Statistics in Sports*, Donald Gunthrie acknowledges that the reporting and analysis of sports and sporting activities involves the use of quantitative reasoning by more Americans than in any aspect of everyday life (1064).

Why is there a necessity for record keeping and measurement? What purpose do numbers and statistics serve in the context of football and post-self? Shibutani argues that individuals need to know "where they stand" in relation to others and they do so

through the social comparison processes (qtd. in Schmitt and Leonard 137). Record keeping and statistical comparison provide a ground on which sportsmen can judge themselves in order to assess their chances to achieve symbolic immortality (Pisk 5). Also within social worlds, "a person who is on his way measures his progress by comparing himself with his predecessors, not with outsiders" (qtd. in Schmitt and Leonard 137). Therefore, the athletes and the community rationally build an opinion of success and failure upon which they can judge the fate of sportsmen postmortem.

Henceforth, "Comparison through Measurement and Records" is the step where athletes and coaches are put side by side with their peers or predecessors in terms of their success and failures. Therefore, records and measurements are used to reflect on the symbolic idea of post-self on rational and mathematical grounds. In other words, this step is also important because records and measurement do not permit feelings or emotions therefore allowing rational evaluation of sportsmen. This rationality complements others steps (self-identity, collective memory etc.) of post-self in the symbolic fight for immortality in *Bleachers*; that is of records and measurements: "Ninety - four to nothin. Still a Messina record," from a conversation of Sheriff Mal and Crenshaw (Grisham 48); "Undefeated seasons in 1960 and 1961" (9); "Then in 1964 The Streak began, with perfect seasons for the rest of that decade and into the next […]The Streak was over. Eighty-four wins in a row, a national record at that time, and Eddie Rake was a legend at the age of thirty-nine" (9); "Other state championships followed, in 74, 75, and 79" (9); "Mal Brown had played in the mid-sixties, during The Streak. Eighty pounds and thirty-five years ago he had been a bruising tailback who had once carried the ball fifty-four times in a game, still a Messina record" (44).

All these examples above show that record and measurement are an indispensable part of social conversations through which people gather information about each other and about people with whom they have no acquaintance in order to judge a level of symbolic value of remembrance. In another scene, Crenshaw is in a bar with friends when a person from his hometown, Messina, comes up to him to announce some news, even though they have no mutual acquaintance. The stranger describes the record news with dignity as if implying that a new "immortal" is coming of age. The news is about the yearly Spartan Marathon, and the new sophomore kid named Randy Jaeger who

breaks the long overdue Spartan Marathon record: "Got a new record in the Spartan Marathon … Yeah, eighty-three laps" (Grisham 31).

The use of records and measurement as a sign for fostering post-self are not limited to these. For instance: in the scene where former teammates gather to visit another tremendous player Jesse Trapp, who is serving time in prison, Grisham introduces the character Jesse with the statistical, record lodged information which maintains the fact that the names between generations in football are likewise passed along with success by records, "They [Neely and his visiting crew] had played with him for one season … They had seen him fling heavily loaded barbells around the weight room. They had seen him set every Spartan lifting record" (132).

Furthermore, the failure of a team or even a player is actually judged by the records of statistics he has earned. Nat Sawyer is dubbed "the worst punter[22] in the history of Spartan football" (Grisham 69). The statement Grisham uses to describe Nat as a matter of fact harbors a fundamental fact about American football. The reason for the usage of the superlative "the worst" is rooted in the numeric indicator that proves Nat's failure, "His [Nat's] average yards per kick had set record lows" (69). This is to say, not only success but also failure is represented in numbers, which is to state that a player's future or his memory after death can also be shaped upon his failures as well. Therefore, failures are other aspects of post-self where measurement and record keeping dominate, because as I have mentioned earlier, failures are also the elements that decide the memorability of an individual, team or community.

In *Bleachers*, Grisham depicts Crenshaw as an "all-American"[23] player (Grisham 7, 79) In order to deserve this title, a player must be an achiever on the field, and has to be a role model for his team and his community both with his records and with his character and leadership. Consequently, he is the very first and only player to hold the title of All-American; therefore, in the name of Messina he holds an "immeasurable" position; that

[22] "A position primarily responsible for punting the ball back to the other team on fourth down in an attempt to pin the other team a significant distance down the field" (www.sportingcharts.com/punter).

[23]All-America team is an honorary team from any American high school or college sport composed of outstanding amateur players—those considered the best players their and their position—who in turn are given the honorific title of "All-America" and typically referred to as, "All-American athletes," or simply, "All-Americans" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-America).

is, he is “immeasurable” to other players before him and he is unique in that category. On the other hand, such a title makes him a public figure and holds him accountable to the society. By this record level of achievement, being an “All-American,” Crenshaw also becomes a public figure. The accountability granted to him by the symbolic power of the “All-American” title creates an unprecedented advantageous opportunity for “measurement and post-self.” In other words, Neely Crenshaw is the closest candidate to be remembered most in the town’s history of football, and therefore, a very strong individual to guarantee a place in post-self and in the collective memory of the community and the country. In fact, the conflicting battle of Crenshaw for his symbolic immortality starts after the “All-American” title, which surges the expectations of supporters, he has not been able to sustain the same level of achievements. Thus, the records he has broken, and the All-American title he has gained via his magnificent sportsmanship and achievements have all become a hindrance, or a curse, on his way to becoming a failed hero.

All in all, it is possible to say that John Grisham pictures scenes where we can draw direct connections between records and measurements and post-self. With regards to characters in the novel, records and immortality have a reciprocal relationship where each side is both the cause and the effect of the other.

2.4. RECOGNITION THROUGH AWARDS AND COMMEMORATIVE DEVICES

The ultimate and the fourth step of the systemization of post-self in *Bleachers* is “Recognition through Awards and Commemorative Devices.” Since “the social world of sport facilitates post-self by providing occasions, settings, and processes through which its participants can be remembered, eulogized, and endeared” (Schmitt and Leonard 1090), American football traditions fit perfectly into the ceremonious throwbacks of the eminent figures of American heroes and of the moments in the history of American sports. As Gerald Redmond asserts about the nature of awarding in sports, “The athletic awards have always had commemorative quality” (41). There are numerous occasions where sportsmen dedicate their flesh and soul to be entitled to

those awards, and to attain a worthy post-self for "remembrance, eulogy and endearment" (41).

Trophies, cups, national or regional titles, awards, prizes, ceremonies, eulogies, retiring of jersey numbers; naming the streets, fields, stadiums after prominent sports figures all "encourage fans to eulogize and remember the greats of yesterday" (Schmitt and Leonard 1096) and commemorate the athletic success and stature earned on the sports field. Prizing and praising sporting achievements, these objects and many other kinds establish a rapport between present and past. As William Goode explains, "the sporting world gives more awards, prizes, and honors than almost any other social world" (165). In the case of football, the number of trophies or titles granted is huge in number as well.

Why does the sporting world use objects like flags, banners, plates, trophies, titles to remember or commemorate a successful sports figure or team? Although the ultimate end is to immortalize the individual or the team, the dynamics behind this tradition of awards and commemorative device distribution are plenty. One of the theories, according to Maurice Halbwachs, is "physical objects renew the memory of past events" (129). Climactic moments in sports i.e. winning moments, record breaking moments, acrobatic or physics defying moments create emotional agents. Consequently, these emotional agents conjure memories when remembered, or as Norman Denzin puts it, "intense emotionality appears to stop time" (58), and these halts in time, which are associated with memories, are related to immortality and the idea of post-self in essence.

As much as visual devices or written accounts of sporting events are significant, feelings of such moments are also crucial to build a post-self. Lifton, in his work *The Life of the Self* claims that "some form of ecstasy" appears to be remembered at such moments, and these are *the* moments that are commemorated. Also, he acknowledges that such "experience during which time disappears" is "a distinct form of symbolic immortality that is entirely psychical and not dependent on historical continuity" (qtd. in Schmitt and Leonard 1099). He further adds in *Broken Connection* that "with inner forms in harmony, psychic reaction is intense and focused, and there is a free flow of psychic and bodily energy- all in the continuous present" (Lifton 34). Relating these

expressions to sports, we can say that since these feelings of euphoria and other emotions related to championships and victories are not tangible or concrete objects, in order to revive or restore those moments the sports world uses these aforementioned objects and titles that nestle symbolic immortality.

Furthermore, about the effects of awards and commemorative devices, Edward Shils argues that "monuments are a particularly important category of physical objects because they were intended to be traditions to future generations" (72). This corresponds to the idea that continuation of traditions for the upcoming community sets the scene of social and sporting codes upon which the next generation will be judged, compared or be challenged in terms of immortalization. The tradition of awarding and ceremonial thanksgiving is as pervasive in football as it is in almost all American sports oriented programs in communities. As Schwartz puts forward "collective memory is continued by awards and various commemorative devices," these concessions and endowments of commemorative devices serve to continue achievements (377).

From a larger perspective in terms of the size of the commemorative device, the symbolization of a sporting event, individual or team can be found in the name given to a school, stadium, a street. As Schmitt and Leonard argue "These 'collective monuments' as we label them, commemorate a group of athletes who have reached the apex of success in the same sport" (1069). Just as trophy cases symbolizing immortality in the corridors of most American high schools have a collective quality, individual monuments honor a single sports personality. These emotional reminders of post-selves in the forms of awards and other commemorative devices are given to sportsmen to capture and immortalize such abstract but unique moments. One sample that fits such explanations in the novel is when Crenshaw visits his former high school and accounts for the museum-like atmosphere of the prize section in the gym:

> At the center was a massive, and very expensive, trophy case in which Rake had carefully arranged his thirteen little monuments. Thirteen state titles, from 1961 to 1987. Behind each was a large team photo, with a list of scores, and headlines blown up and mounted in a collage. There were signed footballs, and retired jerseys, including number 19. (Grisham 82)

"[T]rophy case," "center," "monuments," "state titles," "headlines mounted in a collage," "signed footballs," "retired jerseys" are the objects that solidify the prestige for post-self within commemorative devices.

Awards and devices such as naming a stadium after an important football figure, giving trophies to the champions, or even death ceremonies and eulogies are all samples of physical immortalization in matter. They are palpable ways of life-continuity in materials and objects, and in written words. Either way, commemoration is the ultimate step to sustain a well-deserved spot in the hearts and minds of communities even after death. "[t]he Field," "bleachers," "Rabbit," "Maggie Renfrow's café," "Nat's Place" are all places and characters that are immortalized indirectly by the success and phenomenal achievements of Messina Spartans in the novel.

In *Bleachers*, at one instance, Rabbit, the caretaker of the stadium, rushes on to the field illegally during the game and hits an opponent player who is about to score. Coach Rake verbalizes the commemoration of this courageous act and immortalizes the tackle,[24] "Rabbit became a local hero. At the annual football banquet thereafter Rake awarded a Rabbit Trophy for the Hit-of-the-Year" (39).In another case, when Nat Sawyer scores a haphazard and accidental touchdown although his position unfurls no expectation of a score whatsoever, Rake commemorates this incident in a humorous way with, "The Ugliest Touchdown of the Year Award" (70).

As a further comment, Fred Davis puts forward that "individual and collective monuments, athletic sites, slogans, bumper stickers, pennants, T-shirts, baseball cards, and other artifacts preserve the collective memory in sport" (119). Such devotion to history of success is narrated in *Bleachers* as for one example with the description of Renfrow's café in Messina:

> The walls were covered with old football schedules, framed newspaper stories, pennants, autographed jerseys, and hundreds of photos-team photos lined in neat chronological order above the counter, action shots lifted from the local paper, and large black-and-whites of the greatest of Spartans. Neely's was above the cash register, a photo of him as a senior, posing with the football cocked and ready to fire, no helmet, no smile, all business and attitude and ego, long untamed hair,

[24] "A statistic recorded when a defensive player makes contact with an offensive player, forcing him to go to the ground" (http://www.sportingcharts.com/dictionary/nfl/tackle.aspx).

> three days' worth of stubble and peach fuzz, eyes looking somewhere in the distance, no doubt dreaming of future glory. (Grisham 51-52)

Also, the scene where Crenshaw drifts back to old days in college both exemplifies how Grisham utilizes the idea of deep emotions calling back ecstatic moments and how a commemorative device is used to reflect upon the symbolic battle against mortality. Maggie Renfrow's brother brings out a photo for Crenshaw to sign and while doing so the photo harkens Crenshaw back to his glory days, "The photo he had never seen before" was the item which creates emotional overflow that "Suddenly, he [Crenshaw] longed for those days" (Grisham 57). Not only Crenshaw but also the owner of the photo has the same unending rush of feelings, "Maggie always wanted you to sign this" confesses Maggie's brother because the photo is an object by which the owner can brag about and credit some degree of honor since it casts the times of a "bona fide all-American quarterback" (57).

The leading commemorative device for Messina is the example of "the Rake Field" (Grisham 4) for the memory of "the man who put the town on the map" (110). Eddie Rake's name is given to the town's stadium in order to "actively construct and reconstruct the remembered past" (Davis 115), and for "nostalgic recollections of previous events" (49). In *Bleachers*, the name of the stadium was changed to "the Rake Field" (Grisham 4) because in terms of appreciation and "recognition through awards" of endeavor and memories of great moments and feelings, the town of Messina feels indebted to Eddie Rake. After many years coming into the town, Crenshaw describes his old hometown as follows: "Little had changed. A Different coach, different players, different cheerleaders, different kids in the band, but it was still the Spartans at Rake Field [Home of Messina Spartans] […] and everybody nervous about Friday" (84).

Grisham, in *Bleachers*, also underlines the holiness of the Rake Field, where all Messina Spartan games are played. Rake Field, known as "the Field" (4), is a place of sanctuary for the town and the players:

> When he [Neely Crenshaw] played, the field had no name. None was needed. Every person in Messina knew it simply as The Field. "The boys are in the Field early this morning," they would say at the cafe downtown … No piece of ground was more revered than The Field. Not even the cemetery. (4)

In addition to naming the stadium after him, subsequent to his death, a proverbial and resounding funeral ceremony and a eulogy is held, which is likewise a method of granting an award or a commemorative device. Grisham describes the atmosphere that causes such a tribute to the unforgettable coach as follows:

> Messina mourned like never before. By ten on Friday morning the shops and cafes and offices around the square were locked. All students were dismissed from school. The courthouse was closed. The factories on the edges of the town were shut down, a free holiday, though few felt like celebrating. (153)

As a final thought, John Grisham makes use of winning as an equivalent to living, or surviving, therefore supporting the fictional reality that characters in *Bleachers* are going through symbolic battles against mortality to attain an unforgettable post-self. In order to portray that losing is death, and winning is life in football, Grisham makes use of another commemorative device which takes place rarely in the sports world: game dedication. The very following game, after the burial of Scotty Reardon, played by the Messina Spartans is dedicated to the loving memory of Scotty in order to honor the young man's endeavors and bravery:

> The real fans were there for the right reasons. The place was packed, as always, with complicated loyalties yelling in all directions. The players were pumped. They dedicated the game to Scotty, and won by four touchdowns. A wonderful night. Sad, because of Scotty, and sad because the Rake era was apparently over, but winning is everything. (65)

With the phrase "winning is everything" here, John Grisham merges the ideas of death and living with both realistic and symbolic meanings. On the other hand, Grisham also asserts that no matter how physical or symbolic the deaths might be, the essence for immortality, that is, a memorable post-self, depends on "winning." In the scene above, Grisham makes a tribute to how the spectators are engaged in spirituality but at the same time reflects upon the character of the football game: winning is the only drive that will keep sportsmen alive symbolically. As emotional as the scene is, the tribute game for Scotty also reveals the subconscious desire for triumph, as "winning" means moving a step closer to achieving an immortal post-self for both players and the fans.

So much loved by towns and communities from all across the States, almost to the point of an obsession, Grisham depicts that American football serves as a means of attaining symbolic immortality. With each success and record, a football culture is constructed, and the ones who contribute to this realm of success are praised, remembered and commemorated by society. As John Boodin explains, "The immortality of the individual and of the social group of which he is a part is … recognized to be reciprocal … he recognizes in the community his larger self" (196-197). As such, American football is a sport by which individuals defy mortality, fight against death and establish a symbolic life-after-death existence, which can be characterized as an imagery and symbolism of modern times.

Making a connection to the representation of athlete-heroes as previously discussed in the introduction, in *Bleachers*, Neely Crenshaw and Eddie Rake fit perfectly to Campbell's "monomyth of heroes" (*The Power* 101). They are loved by the society, they find themselves in a conflict, willingly or unwillingly they set out for a journey, fight a battle and come back with an elevated state of mind; "a transcendent idea" (101). Characters in *Bleachers* embark on a journey to fulfill this mission. However, they are portrayed as staging this fight against immortality. They are not fighting against monsters and dragons, but more personal demons and against more abstract concepts like losing and mortality. Inasmuch as the days have transformed the understanding of people, the expectation of the society from the hero-athlete has not changed: winning, still, is a must to be a hero, to be remembered.

The hero is connected to society and society is connected to the hero. Societal "ideologies and heroes go hand in hand and probably reciprocally influence each other," notes Barry Schlenker et al. (348)By depicting two heroes whose success is at stake in *Bleachers*, John Grisham aims to show that archetypal necessity of life-continuity is still in our unconscious mind in modern day America. By using American football as a context and highlighting the symbolic battle of protagonists against the American society and its paradigms, Grisham appears to underline the need and the perception of post-self in modern day America.

"Insofar as heroes are an embodiment of our values and aspirations, a personification of what we take to be "the good," who our heroes are reflect who we are, both individually

and collectively" (qtd. in Porpora 212). That is, similar to other hero myths which reflect our own identities and who we really are, the quest to achieve a sense of symbolic immortality still exists in our day. Crenshaw and Rake appear to both succeed and fail as heroes in their football environment. Either way, John Grisham aims to underline that the battle fought through American football is a symbolic one for the continuity of life; a battle for post-self, against mortality. In the new age of technology and materialism, the athlete hero is fighting for what the culture seems to lack: spirituality and transcendence of time and space; hence a post-self. It is possible to say that American culture is very much obsessed with winning so as to satisfy their collective unconscious and be a step closer to life-continuity. Taking all the theoretical discussions and assumptions into consideration, the reader can see John Grisham has preferred to use American football, athlete-heroes, and post-self to delineate a small American town as a microcosm of the larger society.

CHAPTER 3

SYMBOLIC BATTLE AGAINST RACISM: THE SPOOK[25] in DAN JENKINS' *SEMI-TOUGH* (1972)

One can't get along without domineering or being served. Every man needs slaves as he needs fresh air. Commanding is breathing—you agree with me? And even the most destitute manage to breathe. The lowest man in the social scale still has his wife or his child. If he's unmarried, a dog. The essential thing, after all, is being able to get angry with someone who has no right to talk back.

Albert Camus from *The Fall*

This chapter argues that in *Semi-Tough,* Dan Jenkins portrays the racist nature of America by using football as a symbol of cultural, social, economic and political battle of African Americans, who have suffered from discrimination in various forms in the USA. With reference to the argument put forward in the introduction, first, the historic background of racism and the construction of black identity will be highlighted. Then, I will provide detailed information about the black involvement in sports and connect all these in Dan Jenkins' *Semi-Tough*.

The limitation of black potential by white supremacy has penetrated into different aspects of the American social structure. The causes for this have roots going back to the times of the foundation of the nation. As Patricia Hill Collins maintains that "chattel slavery" established the system that constitutes the basis for the modern capitalist system. (55) In the plantation period, the purchasing and selling of the black people's body was commoditized. In addition to this fact, starting from the early days, slavery has always been a strict and oppressive medium for the white supremacist administrations and circles, yet this medium has changed forms going even further to claim black people away from human form and identity. (55) About this matter, Collins further insists that "dehumanizing Black people by defining them as nonhuman and as animals was a critical feature of racial oppression" (55).

[25] A powerful derogatory epithet used to degrade Americans of African descent.

Ben Carrington argues that "[t]he negative representation of the Other was vital in helping to legitimate the continuance of European slavery of Africans, and the violent acts carried out under the auspices of 'Western civilization'" (6). In other words, whites have become "civilized" by empathically imposing "violent acts" on black Americans in order to justify their racism. White supremacy and their supporters in America trapped African American people into social, political, residential, psychological, educational, cultural and economic shortcomings and dependence. When the dependence on white supremacy and decision-making were ripe enough, black Americans became susceptible to exploitation and manipulation. In the turmoil of the racist discussions and freedom struggles, the only way for blacks to cope with disparities and difficulties became sports, as sports were offered as an area for blacks to invade freely and reach their own salvation.

Jay Coakley in *Sports and Society* documents the participation of African Americans and white Americans in sports in relation with the general number of population in the nation:

> As per the U.S. Census Bureau, persons classified as African Americans (i.e., Blacks) constitute about 12.1% of the total population; European Americans (i.e., Whites) represent about 80%. Yet, according to the Center for Study of Sport in Society, 68% of players in the National Football League and more than 75% in the National Basketball Association [NBA] are Black. (qtd. in R. Hall 109)

This tells us that although the number of black Americans constitute a little over ten percent in the nation, they are overrepresented in the area of sport, which underlines the fact that sports have turned into an area where black athletes work for symbolic independence and victory over white hierarchies and supremacy.

Taking a look back at the early history of black involvement in sports, there are various racial aspects to be considered elaborately in terms of equality, black disenfranchisement and white dominance. As regards to this division, David K. Wiggins and Patrick B. Miller argue that enslaved or free African Americans were largely excluded from playing with or against white professionals. In other words, African Americans were separated from sports as well, and have had to battle their way into the fair and equal grounds "demonstrating" a sporting success and athleticism. (qtd. in

Brooks and Blackman 442) "This history reflects African Americans' use of sports as a mechanism for *demonstrating* their humanity, equality, or superiority to whites on the playing fields; and as a source of racial pride and a means to upward social mobility" (Brooks and Blackman 442).

John Hoberman argues that "the entrapment of African Americans in the world of athleticism is the result of a long collaboration between blacks seeking respect and expanded opportunity and white seeking entertainment, profit" (Hoberman 4). With flagrant representation of blacks as animalistic beings and the representational support of stereotypes including sambo, dumb and workhorse, it appears that black slavery has evolved from plantation times but has transformed into what seems to be an area of entertainment on the surface: sports. As Hoberman further continues:

> [Blacks] can endure physical stress … better than whites because they are toughened progeny of slaves – a eugenic fantasy shared by both whites and blacks. At the same time, countless black believe in their own athletic superiority sport has become an arena in which the athletic version of black male style is enacted for a mass audience whose ideas about racial identity have been shaped by years of emphasis on black physicality and its special qualities. (Hoberman 5-6)

However, even in this area where it appears that black Americans have the necessary qualities to establish dominance, white Americans intrude with the methods of control on African Americans by imposing stereotyping on black athletics. It is the representational media that help publicly legitimize the "biologising black performance via their constant use of animalistic similes to describe black athletes … [and they] are invariably described as being strong, powerful and quick" (Carrington 17). Contrary to these highlighted abilities, black athletes are also represented as the ones with the lack of leadership and thinking abilities on the field, "with unpredictable and 'wild' moments when they supposedly lack the cognitive capabilities" (17).Therefore, even on sports fields black Americans do not have access to higher levels of hierarchy where decision making takes place because – "unlike their white peers" black athletes are believed not to have the 'composure' at critical moments" (17).

On the contrary, white players with commanding abilities are placed more value in comparison to black players. This also validates another ugly truth: Although it is not

overtly and publicly acknowledged, the success of black players in an area created by whites has "profound effects" on "white male imaginary," which was one of the reasons white supremacists denied racism towards blacks in the field of football (Carrington 16). The sports adaptation of dumb Black stereotype which suggests that black players are not equipped with management and leadership skills appears to be an excuse to obstruct African American players' participation and penetration into the game. Therefore, the stereotype that black cannot fulfill certain demands of the game seems to be a way for white supremacists to protect their own dominance, which creates an environment of struggle and a symbolic battle for black Americans.

Ideally speaking, sports create parity among people. There are no barriers once the players are on the same ground. The rules, the conditions of the field, and other elements that make up a game foster equality. By equality and parity, sports also encapsulate connotations that are far reaching beyond simply fair play. As Kathryn Jay argues, "Sports sometimes seemed the only 'level playing field' in American society, a place where merit and skill outranked the color" (114). With sports, individuals with different racial backgrounds or particular ethnicity abide by the same rules and the same system from which no participant may exercise or withdraw a privilege. However, while this is perhaps an idealistic conception, the reality may differ. As Jeremy MacClancy argues, sports are not subject to the social continuum and current paradigms: "Sport, like the law, is supposed to be a 'level playing field'; however, there is a body of knowledge to suggest otherwise. Sport is another racially contested arena which is used as a 'ring to wrestle' for participants and policy makers" (qtd. in Hylton 7).

Similarly, Richard Lapchick, in his work *Smashing Barriers: Race and Sport in the New Millennium,* describes the ugly truth in the football sphere in America, where sports have also been used as an instrument of "oppression" over black people, and the importance of football in this circle is a determining factor. He says, "sports can be observed as a key tool in the subjugation of black people and the magnification of the place of 'race' as a major mediating factor within society" (45). That is, a racial struggle within society is likewise reflected onto the social relationships within sports. America and American football are no different when evaluated from this perspective. The American football team environment, where "Black" American players combat their

way into the traditionally “White” dominated sports world is a heartbreaking example of how sports can nestle so many injustices as a reflection of inequality that is pervasive in other parts of American society. Inasmuch as the talents of black players are taken for granted, they are psychologically and racially abused and humiliated in American football. In addition to this, Ben Carrington states that “the racial signification of sport” means that sports competitions stand as “more than just significant events.” As Carrington continues to argue “Rather, they [sporting events] act as a key signifier for wider questions about identity within racially demarcated societies in which narratives about the self and society are read both into and from sporting contests involving racial competition” (16). Viewed in such a relationship, the “racial signification of sports” for African Americans is definitely open to wider questions. Although American football speaks for its own record of success stories and prestige for people of different ethnic backgrounds, black people in particular, the tales of black athletes display bitter struggles.

Dan Jenkins’ *Semi-Tough* is a work of football fiction told from the point of view of Billy Clyde Puckett, a white character, who is commissioned to write a book while he actively plays for the Giants. Puckett records the events on the football field, during the turmoil of the Civil Right Movement in the 1970s and 80s America, in the locker room, out in the management lobbies, at the dinner tables of clubs and press owners, basically anywhere to provide a full record of perspectives and insights into the game of football culture in the USA. The events unfold as told from the point of view of Puckett until after the NFL Super Bowl game. Puckett, with his closest friend from childhood, Marvin "Shake" Tiller, play for the same pro team. Also, Big Ed Bookman becomes the character who symbolizes dominant white supremacy, and Jenkins uses Bookman to address the problem of racism, inequality and modern slavery. The novel takes the reader on a journey where the racist thoughts of real money-makers in the football industry are revealed from first person accounts. Although they play for the same teams with white Americans, African Americans are kept from reaching equal rights even in a football environment. Using Billy Clyde Puckett and Shake Tiller’s narratives and story-telling, Jenkins depicts the inequality African Americans trying to rectify. The black players are insulted with slurs and racial epithets cast by their own teammates and the coaches. In their own team environment, they are seen as the “coons” that need to be

silenced just because they speak about the inequalities out loud. Ironically, the only black player that is mentioned with positive epithets is the character is Dreamer Tatum, and this is because he is less of a black man with fewer savage traits, but more white qualities. With these, *Semi-Tough* guides the reader through the thin layers of social stratification in America, between white and black, between bosses and workers, between "workhorses" and "thoroughbreds" in order to portray the football culture and how this culture is transformed into fields of injustice and racism.

By this token, I will try to put forward the symbolic battle of African American sportsmen in Dan Jenkins' *Semi-Tough*, and I will also emphasize Dan Jenkins' reflection and exposure of racism to portray his criticism toward the American nation where the racism in the construction of black identity in the history of the USA still continues in the sports arena. The derogatory style of speech, the racial slurs and psychological pressure that are cast on black people are delineated throughout *Semi-Tough*. Jenkins pictures what appear to be a white dominant racist demeanor and discourse in the field of American football as a representation of a deeply rooted and a long overlooked problem of race within American society. As a matter of fact, in football, there *is* equality: racial inequality *is* "equally" dominant in football as it is in the rest of American society.

As a start, I'd like to reverse the linear scenario and start from the final scenes of *Semi-Tough*. The novel's climactic moment is the Super Bowl game. This scene connotes social, economic and political unity because the players, the coaching staff and the spectators gather under the American flag in the Super Bowl pre-game show. The Giants' head-coach Shoat Cooper talks to his team through the show organization prior to the start of the Super Bowl Game:

> Several hundred trained birds- all painted red, white and blue – would be released from cages somewhere and they would fly over the coliseum in the formation of an American flag. As the red, white and blue birds flew over, Boke Kellum, the Western TV star, would recite the Declaration of Independence. Next would be somebody dressed up like Mickey Mouse and somebody else dressed up like Donald Duck joining the actress Camilla Virl in singing "God bless America." And right in the middle of the singing, here would come this Air Force cargo plane to let loose fifty sky divers who would come dropping into coliseum. Each sky diver would be dressed up in the regional costume of a state, and he would land in the coliseum in the order in which state became a United State … when all things got cleaned up, Shoat said, United States Senator Pete Rozelle, the ex-commissioner of the NFL who invented the Super Bowl would be driven around in the stadium in

> the car … At the wheel would be Lt. Commander Flip Slammer, the fifteenth astronaut to walk on the moon. Finally, Shoat said the teams would be introduced and two thousand crippled and maimed soldiers on crutches and in wheel chairs and on stretchers would render the "Star-Spangled Banner" (Jenkins 137).

Jenkins depicts the patriotic sentiments that founded the country, equal distribution of rights and wealth by nationalistic features. He uses symbols such as "red, white, blue – American flag," "the Declaration of Independence," "God Bless America - the song," "Air Force plane," "NFL," "Super Bowl," "Lt. Commander," "the fifteenth astronaut," "crippled soldiers," and "Star-Spangled Banner." Even though the surface seems to communicate patriotism, the reality underneath has been formed by sheer manipulation of skills and black physical power. In the novel, we are exposed to the symbolic fight of black athletes against the system of discrimination, racism and manipulation in the world of professional football. Thus, by using such wording, Jenkins ironically reveals the darker side of America. The creation of a patriotic and equality-ornamented scene as such serves to highlight the issue of inequality underneath.

Semi-Tough forms a parallelism between football and real America where black people get their share of mistreatment, disparity and racism abundantly. In this sense, football becomes a camouflage and façade of the symbolic fight for equality. That is to say, contrary to patriotic and unifying symbols in the Super Bowl pre-game show above, there exist racial segregation and exploitation of black power in football created by the white society. In order to understand this connection between racism and American football, first we have to examine the social, economic and political battle against racism.

3.1. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RACISM

During the times of slavery, "black Americans were forced to undertake the most humiliating jobs and became involuntary minorities when they were enslaved by white Americans" (Ogbu 5). Similarly, Alex Haley insists that "for more than 200 years their rights and physicality were exploited and manipulated economically, politically, socially and expressively" (qtd. in Ogbu 5). In addition to this, they were tightly controlled by the white slave owners and this control ranged from the way they were

speaking to each other to doing the chores of plantations. “For example, they were punished for learning to read and write, where slaves were forbidden these activities” (qtd. in Ogbu 6). When they disobeyed these inhumane and derogatory rules and regulations, blacks were severely punished, or sold to work under worse conditions, or even killed to set a model for other black slaves to show what the consequences might be if other slaves did not obey the rules of the white owners. (Ogbu 6-8) As Barnor Hesse argues about the manipulative and exploitative approach of white dominant hegemonic society, “white governmentality served to reinforce and secure white power by the attempt to regulate, shape and affect the conduct of black people and communities through particular techniques of surveillance” (qtd. in Carrington 10).

On social and political level, it was difficult during the African American Civil Rights Movement to acknowledge any kind of equality in social manners or in laws for African Americans. “In the social domain; residential, sexual, social and school segregation continued. Black people were residentially segregated by statute, regulatory authorities and custom” (Ogbu 11). This predominantly meant that there existed either visible or invisible territories where blacks were not allowed, or were barely allowed by the consent of a white, which supports the racist and segregationist views that were vital at the time. In this sense, Charles Becknell argues that “White denigration” of African American social and cultural values started during slavery, stemming from “the myth that the slaves came from the ‘Dark Continent’ that had not produced civilizations like other continents” (qtd. in Ogbu 7). With insurmountable amount of pressure and punishment, “white cultural values, behaviors and speech were presented as correct or proper,” on the contrary, African cultural values, manners and speech were displayed “as incorrect and improper” (Ogbu 6).

Such inequalities in all walks of life cornered black American people to a point where they could only exist as inferior to whites. In other words, blacks were forced to live a life in which they had to accept the values and limits already created by the white hegemonic society. Catherine Starke also maintains that social discrimination was formed during the time of slavery and it continued afterwards: “the ritual of social interaction required Blacks and Whites to behave toward each other in certain prescribed ways” (qtd. in Ogbu 7). The social code of address and behavior degraded black Americans to the level of total servitude whereas white Americans were fixing

their firm ego boundaries. Starke comments more as she remarks, “The etiquette also required slaves to behave in a certain manner when he or she was spoken to by Whites. For example, the slave had to ‘‘stand attentively, respond politely, bow in servility to the extent, at times, of extreme evasion and deceit” (qtd. in Ogbu 7).

In her book *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* Patricia Hill Collins asserts that after the Black movement of the early 20th century, the most significant obstacle within the black community was “*economic* discrimination” (55-56). Black people were forced to take up more physical jobs and started to form a working class in the social hierarchy, in which they were left unattended and in poverty. As a result of hundreds years of economic discrimination, black people had no access to welfare or were withheld from the same level of wealth and welfare that defined the superiority of white communities. Fighting a battle against “privileged victimizers,” black Americans were “penniless” and “without assistance in a hostile environment” (Robinson 74). In addition to this, Collins postulates that Black people were “confined to the worst jobs … black men were relegated to the dirtiest jobs in industry, when they could get those jobs at all” (69). Just like in old plantation times, as Dash Leon mentions in his book, *Rosa Lee: A Mother and Her Family in Urban America*, those blacks who were descendants of “river” or “swamp” blacks kept working under poor conditions even after emancipation, and unlike these “landless group” of blacks, those with “physical skills” and “fortunate” ones had an access to job opportunities and lands created by whites (79).

The fact that black people work in low-income jobs has a straightforward response in Jenkins’ narrative. At the beginning of the novel, Puckett makes a statement about the general condition of black people that summarizes the perception related to working conditions of blacks: “I suppose we grew up thinking that a spook who could mow the lawn or get a job caddying had a better deal than most spooks could expect” (Jenkins 11). This remark can be read as lawn-mowing or caddying, jobs that white people are intended not to take up, is the highest “expectation” in black people’s segregated world in terms of economic welfare.

Looking more deeply at the causes and effects of economic inequality, in their collaborative study about segregation Iceland, John, Daniel H. Weinberg, and Erika

Steinmetz come to the conclusion that *residential segregation* has developed new forms of African American exploitation, "This overarching framework of disproportionately Black central cities and disproportionately White greater metropolitan areas produced new patterns of residential racial segregation" (63). "Under this logic, the dominant racist idea is that just as wild animals, and the proximate African natives, belong in nature preserves, for their own protection, unassimilated, undomesticated poor and working-class African Americans belong in racially segregated neighborhoods" (Collins 102).

In relation to ideas mentioned above residential segregation is also portrayed extensively in *Semi-Tough*. In many conversations, Black football players are explicitly or implicitly told to leave the "white" neighborhood because sooner or later they will turn that neighborhood into a dirty, savage "black" one. In the following scene Shake Tiller explains directly why being rich and living in a white neighborhood do not fit Black players in a locker room talk, speaking to Puddin Patterson, a black teammate, Tiller says, "Then you [to Puddin] can go buy a Cadillac and a big house and start fucking up a good white neighborhood- or whatever you guys like to do" (Jenkins 8). The phrase "fuck up a good neighborhood" is a direct example of racial prejudice. Puckett believes if "the Negro" intrudes into the neighborhood of whites, then that neighborhood is no longer worth residing in. According to Puckett, blacks moving into a "white neighborhood" can only be an invasion. Subsequently, with the advent of the blacks, white neighborhoods will eventually be "fuck[ed] up."

Moreover, in another example, Puckett says, "In Fort Worth, the spooks all lived somewhere other than where your friends did. They certainly hung out at different drive-ins" (Jenkins 11). The message is clear: "the spook" lived in places where "your" acquaintances definitely would not live; blacks are not good enough to be "our" [white people's] friends, therefore, we cannot or would not befriend them. Also, since black people are not qualified enough by white merits, they certainly do not hang around where white people would, not even in their "drive-ins."

Ironically, Jenkins portrays the resistance to such residential segregation and this is shown in the novel as if it was an act of ungratefulness or anarchist offense, such as

rioting. Puckett says, "Now I'm going to dismiss the property and rioting issues because poverty is nothing than a state of mind. And rioting as I have said many times before, rioting per se is not a concern to any of us who don't like spade neighborhoods in the first place" (Jenkins 199). By decreasing the issue of poverty and rioting merely to "a state of mind" and disregarding the economic discrimination behind these words show that black rights and concerns are undervalued. The phrase "any of *us* [whites] who don't like spade neighborhoods [*them*] in the first place" is a strong sign of discrimination and racist attitude that have been pervasive in the nation. Billy Clyde Puckett, an athlete, is using binary oppositions to segregate white American players as "us" and black American players as "them" due to the difference of skin color.

In addition to these, *social* discrimination is elaborated pervasively in the novel. The first component of social discrimination is the stereotype that stems from the so-called violent nature of black people. Collins states that "Black people were labeled as a source of problems not only to themselves but to their nation overall … Black existence was almost forced to become synonymous with the issues that are pervasive all over the country" (54). These "issues that are pervasive" are crime and violation of penal codes to attain economic equality from which blacks were methodically disenfranchised. "Identified as problems to their nation, to their local environments, to Black communities, and to themselves" (54), the black community was discarded from opportunities and equal rights, and they have been compelled to disadvantageous[26] positions when compared to white Americans.

As previously discussed, one of the stereotypes that have been created to limit black Americans is that they are "wild" and "savage." A modern interpretation of this stereotype is that African Americans have a tendency to commit crimes more easily. As a further comment, Collins argues that "black men were seen as being potentially

[26] "These problems or disadvantages include: median incomes that are one tenth that of white families; at least twice the unemployment rate as white individuals; earning only fifty-nine cents to every dollar earned by whites; thirty percent of African-Americans living in segregated neighborhoods; one-third of African-American children attending public schools where ninety percent of the students are African-American; and one-third of all African-American families earning an income below the poverty line. As a result, "whites tend to live an average of ten years longer than blacks, one-fourth of black males between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine are under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system (either in jail, on parole or on probation), and most black neighborhoods are saturated with crime, drugs, and poor schooling" (Eitzen 246).

violent, primarily a retaliatory violence against White men" (64).By this token, in *Semi-Tough,* it is the criminal nature of black players that is initially portrayed by Jenkins.

In one scene, Shake Tiller tells Billy Clyde Puckett that black people are troublesome in nature, and when those black people are reminded about certain laws in the country, they fight back with a primitive style of retaliation: "But I'll tell you this. The trouble with the world is not that a nigger can't get *in* a restaurant somewhere. The trouble is that a nigger can't get thrown *out*" (Jenkins 8). Moreover, in his introduction of Black players in the Giants, Jenkins footnotes a criminal record for almost every black player, which is to reflect the nature of offense and felony in black character: "Perry Lou's from Texas Southern. Perry Lou's older brother, Bad Hair Jackson. He got famous a couple of years ago for killing four prison guards at Huntsville" (89). In addition to this, in another description, "Jimmy Keith Joy is from Kansas State and Story Time Mitchell is a rookie from Perdue whose whole life got changed by football. In the spring of his junior year at Perdue, Story Time Mitchell got caught being a lookout on a grocery market holdup" (89).

Toward the end of the novel, Shake Tiller decides to end his football career and starts travelling. Having not heard from Shake for a long time, Puckett and Barbara Jane, a mutual friend, worry about him saying, "Barb and I were just about to become concerned enough about Shake to go back to New York and see if our buddy had been stabbed by a spook hooker" (Jenkins 173). In other words, the only inauspicious event that could ever have happened to a white American if not heard from for a long time is that he was subjected to a criminal act from a colored person: "stabbed by a spook hooker." To sum up; "killing," "market holdup," "stabbing" are the examples in *Semi-Tough* as a reflection of the criminal nature associated with African Americans. All this background information addresses the stereotype that black people are innately violent and criminals.

One other aspect of social discrimination of blacks is the stereotype that suggests blacks are good for entertainment. African Americans held a distinguished place in the nation as entertainers, however if they wanted to "go further into management, coaching or ownership," the results and the attitudes of white society change drastically. (Cornwell 1993) Blacks were forced to acquire entertainment abilities and had to show these in

order to put on a show such as dancing, minstrels, for white audiences in the past. As regards to this stereotype, Jenkins uses Billy Clyde Puckett to raise the issue of black people's role as a medium of entertainment for whites. In one scene, Puckett says: "And that's really no joke that you hear. They [black people] can solid fucking *dance*, I'll tell you that. Nearly everyone" (Jenkins 12). Further in the novel another example perpetuates such stereotype: in a small locker room argument with Puddin, Billy Clyde Puckett reinforces the stereotype about black players, "We tell Puddin to go play saxophone, or whatever it is spades do" (Jenkins 80). Puckett implies that "whatever spades do," it should be for entertainment. With these, Jenkins emphasizes the racist stereotype toward blacks by emphasizing the so-called entertainment abilities of African Americans.

Another perspective that intensifies racism and catalyzes the symbolic battle against white supremacy in American social continuum is *language*. Black players have been cast implicit slurs and degradation in order to be brought down to a submissive social position within teams. As Jay puts it, "No longer content with the opportunity for integration, many black players have grown angry at the regular slurs they faced … racist language from coaches and other players" (129). The type of language that targets black players is full of slurs and derogatory epithets. To understand the black struggle better, it is necessary to comprehend the essence of racial epithets. According to Christopher Hom, "racial epithets are derogatory expressions, understood to convey contempt and hatred toward their targets" (1), and "some epithets are particularly powerful in their derogatory force. For example; the view must account for how the word 'nigger' can be explosively derogatory when directed towards African-Americans" (2), and "possessing the negative properties ascribed to their race," the damaging, derogatory effect of an epithet is "directly proportional to the content of the property it expresses" (19). Thus, Jenkins purposefully reflects on the uncensored language used in the football world so that the reader can understand what black players have gone through. In *Semi-Tough*, white players use major examples of slurs and epithets about ethnicity in almost every conversation about a player who belongs to any other ethnic group: "spick" for players of Hispanic descent; "hebe" for players of Jewish descent; "chink" for players of Chinese descent; "wop" for players of Italian descent; and "spade," "spook," "coon" and "nigger" for players of African descent.

As an example of how whites use language to degrade blacks is when Shake Tiller makes a statement by emphasizing political independence and freedom within ethnic circles, which is an ironic message Jenkins that tries to communicate:

> "I think a man has a right to be whatever he wants to be," Shake said. "By that I mean if we've got any niggers who'd rather be spicks, then I say we ought to buy 'em some sombreros and guitars. On the other hand, if we've got any hebes who'd rather be chinks, then I say that's all right, too. But I also think a nigger can be a nigger if he wants to" (5).

As the symbolic controller of social power by being a white player, Tiller satirically consents that "a nigger can be a nigger if he wants to." Also, as can be seen from the point of references which Tiller mentions above, a black "can" go further to transform *only* into another minority or ethnic group at the most: "hebe" or "spick." With another reading, a "nigger" can be anything he wants to *but* "white." As an answer for these statements, meaning that Shake Tiller has no idea of being black in a white world, Puddin Patterson says, "Say, baby, you don't have *no idea* what it's like to be black, you dig? So how come you standin' up there layin' out all this jive?" (Jenkins 8).[27]

At the beginning of the novel, Puckett speaks about the language used in the National Football League, "I also use a few words like *hebe* and *spick* and some other things might not necessarily flatter a person's name and address, but actually this is how a lot of studs talk in the National Football League" (Jenkins 3-4). This statement basically validates the argument that racial slurs are frequently used, and it summarizes the whole attitude performed by white players trying to impose their superiority over other ethnic groups and especially over blacks. These discourses regarding "inferiority and superiority" may result in "amorphous racism that are difficult to detect but much easier

[27] That white society acting as if there was no racism in institutions and communities, or making exceptional acceptances into institutions by allowing those who are thought to be segregated is called "color-blindness" (Hylton 1-2). With color-blindness, minority or ethnic groups will not be able to start reacting against racism or segregation as there are some individuals already accepted into that community or institution in question. There are numerous examples in sports where some racialized groups have a higher level of acceptance than others and in some instances are held as exemplars of successful integration. "Color-blindness is a device that maintains dominant hegemonies and social hierarchies by regularly ignoring discriminatory criteria for inclusion" (1-2).

to deny" (Hylton 4-5); however, none of the characters in *Semi-Tough* "deny" or sugarcoat the racist wording involved in their language.

To illustrate the examples of slurs by coaches in the novel, in one scene Puckett describes the head-coach Shoat Cooper and how Cooper makes use of the tone of his voice, "He [head-coach Cooper] has got a slow, deep, country voice. A husky kind of voice, like somebody who just woke up, or like a deputy sheriff talking to a spook who forgot to park his pickup truck between the white lines" (Jenkins 45). As I mentioned earlier, white Americans have used "particular techniques of surveillance," and Dan Jenkins properly includes the surveillance of blacks by referring to a metaphor of policing: "a sheriff" who is speaking to "a spook" who cannot even "park [a] pickup truck" in order to describe the voice of his coach. This description is purposefully derogatory that it delineates the fact that black players are under racist pressure within the team.

In another example, head-coach Cooper makes a racist comment on a player named Bobby Styles who is from Louisiana State University, "'Bobby Styles is from LSU, where he was a running back.' … 'I don't see how you can be any kind of *coon* ass legend when you ain't got no *x*'s or *u*'s in your name'" (Jenkins 89). It is very derogatory that a head-coach speak in such a way about his black player. Despite the fact that no matter what the circumstances are a coach has to be unbiased and just, by head-coach Cooper's attitude, Jenkins underlines the disparity from the coaching perspective imposed upon black players.

The initial agent of comparison in terms of black and white nicknaming or titling is the differences between white and black players' epithets. In *Semi-Tough*, as a reflection of real-life football team jargon, while black players are often nicknamed with the most powerful derogatory epithets, white players are dubbed "studs" and "thoroughbreds." In order to juxtapose the difference, it is required to understand how black people are belittled with slurs in comparison to the epithets granted to white players.

As epithets for African-Americans are insulting, the epithets for white players are that equally complimentary: For instance: "stud" means "a group of animals especially horses kept primarily for breeding; a male animal kept for breeding; a young man : guy,

especially one is virile; a tough person."[28] Another name Jenkins uses for whites especially through the voice of character Big Ed Bookman, a white team owner and rich Southern businessman, is "thoroughbred" which means "bred from the best blood through a long time, purebred; thoroughly trained or skilled."[29] Therefore, "stud" and "thoroughbred" are the names given to white players, and in *Semi-Tough*, Puckett explains how the language used the National Football League is structured, "I also use a few words like hebe and spick and some other things might not necessarily flatter a person's name and address, but actually this is how a lot of studs talk in the National Football League" (Jenkins 3-4).

In another part, where Tiller and Puckett pay a visit to rich, white Ed Bookman's house, Jenkins again describes the scene from the eyes of Puckett, "When we [Shake and Tiller] got there, he [Bookman] made us sit down in the den, where we could look at his golf trophies and a stuffed animal heads and his frame letters from various political studs, who thanked him for being for America" (58). These "political studs" are the white people who control social systemization and money in the country. Therefore, they "deserve" to be referred to as studs, just like white football players who are in the superior position in the formation of a football team. In this regard, white studs on the field of football and political studs in the administration of certain systems are the product of the same supremacist point of view, and are eligible to be called "studs."

Also, from the white perspective, the usage of "stud" as an epithet is inevitably appropriate for the brain and the leading offensive figure of the team: the quarterback. As a matter of fact, the following sentence from *Semi-Tough* covers racial language and white supremacy all at once, "[I]f it wasn't the white stud quarterback who wanted another two million dollars, it was the *spook* flanker"[30] (Jenkins 3).To summarize, the "white" quarterback is a "stud," whereas the "black" flanker is a "spook." As a result, Dan Jenkins repeatedly pictures the assumed superiority of white society by reflecting on the language that controls the social standings among classes. In addition to this, in another scene, Puckett transforms the word "nigger" into an ordinary word by calling it

[28] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stud

[29] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thoroughbred

[30] "Flanker" is a playing position in the offense team in American football.

"just a word," which in a sense is a way of intentional negligence of the racism in football discourse. Puckett says "It's just a word anyway. Nigger, I mean. It's just a word some dumb-ass plantation owner made up one time by accident when he tried to pronounce nee-grow" (Jenkins 3).

There are also more examples in *Semi-Tough* where the point of reference is set to be the "white" standards for discourse. That is to say, "white" subtly becomes the agent by which the Other is compared in terms of economic status or sports mentality. In a locker room talk, Tiller says black football players must play like whites do, "Now if a nigger doesn't want to be a nigger in real life, that's something else. But I sure know several who can block and tackle themselves pretty damn white" (Jenkins 4). Blocking and tackling are two fundamental actions that football players are essentially expected to execute with great precision. With regard to this, black players, according to Tiller, are not showing enough heart on the football field; they can "be a nigger" in real life or not, but on the football field they have to stop acting like "a nigger" and start blocking and tackling like "a white." With this interpretation, we can see that being "white" is being good in sports; it is the point of reference that black players should keep up with or at least try to attain.

Furthermore, in another scene, Shake Tiller asserts that being "white" is the highest level of existence granted by God and it is the rank any person would wish for. "'I can't help it because the Old Skipper up there put some niggers in the world, Puddin' said Shake. 'I guess if we all had our choice we'd be rich, *white*, handsome'" (Jenkins 9). If there was a "choice," it would undoubtedly be "being white." In the same line, Dan Jenkins overtly showcases the so-called superiority of white governmentality representing "white" as the criterion by which the Other must be compared, "'Well, I'm not up here to talk about the world, 'Shake said. 'All I want to make clear is, a nigger who plays football can whitewash himself by knocking down more sumbitches than knock him down. And when he knocks down enough, he'll look around one day and find out he's rich and famous'" (Jenkins 8). The interpretation of this scene is important: if a black player can "whitewash" himself, then he will be able to attain the level of luxuriance and reputation which are predominantly subscribed to "being white."

In addition to social and economic segregation of black people, the *political* aspect of the symbolic battle is interwoven in the novel. “Because chattel slavery was clearly unjust, the threat of black resistance was omnipresent, and periodic slave uprisings illustrated that this threat was not unfounded,” remarks Collins.(57) These uprisings were another level of construction of black identity towards political independence. Similarly, with attention to these political activities, Kathryn Jay argues in her book, “Though most black athletes were neither civil rights activists nor black power enthusiasts, sports became the most visible arena in which the cultural tenets of black power were expressed. Sports were important symbolically” (115). As a response to the “symbolic importance” of sports and “periodic slave uprisings,” Jenkins uses white characters to formulate the attitude against the Black political movement. Puckett in one scene says, “The spook that didn’t raise any hell was O.K. with us, we thought” (12). That is, if black people “raised hell” for some reason, a reason which originates from disparity on social and economic opportunities, then that black person is a “problem” for the white circle.

Furthermore, in *Semi-Tough*, the locker room, “a site for civil rights activism and the assertion of black power” (Jay 129), is used as a place where political arguments are verbalized. In a locker room argument, Puckett makes the comment that favors the silence of black people on political grounds as opposed to protesting, because instead of protesting they must be “grateful” for the opportunity to play (Jay 121). Puckett says, “me and Shake never had anything against a spook of any kind - except for the ones which raise so much hell on the TV news … that it knocks off your favorite show because a network thinks it has to do a special on all the hell that's being raised” (Jenkins 12). Correspondingly, the ones that “raise” hell are only a problem for white people because their favorite television shows are interrupted or cancelled. By creating these scenes and ironic discourse, Dan Jenkins forces the reader to see how tiny the effect of the black political struggle in the eyes of the white society is, “it knocks off your favorite [television] show.” To put it differently, the political battle of the black communities is neglected.

The black player that symbolizes this political aspect of black protest is Euger. The whole team, including Puckett and Tiller, know that racial inequality is not something that Euger tolerates, “Euger is about the only spade on the team that you wouldn’t get

too funky with, in terms of race or anything. It's strange, too, because actually he's [Euger is] a lot lighter than the rest" (Jenkins 82). What appears strangely ironic to the white players is Euger's being "a lot lighter" in terms of tone of skin color but still being sensitive about the African American Civil Rights Movement, despite apparently having less reason to do so.

In addition to this, Euger's activism in the political struggle through football grounds is making white players and the management uncomfortable, "But Euger Franklin's been right there with every kind of spook movement that's gone on in the league. Like the white-shoe movement,[31] which was when all the spooks decided they would only wear white game shoes. Things like that" (Jenkins 82). In another example, with ferocious language and threat, Shake Tiller explains his hidden anger toward the Black Rights Movement that Euger leads in the team: "'Tell you what, Euger,' said Shake. 'When that big black tribunal takes over, your trouble-making ass is gonna be the first one they execute'" (83). Execution here means the selling of the player to another team. Seeing the movement as illegal from the white perspective, Shake Tiller is sure that all the blacks will be "sold" because, as Collins put it, blacks were not seen as human but have been treated as investments, thus "selling a recalcitrant slave was a better option than beating one to death" (57). Euger is first to be prosecuted owing to his political acts on the sports ground, which also ascertains the fact that football has become another symbolic battlefield where Black players have continued their struggle to attain equality.

3.2. THE BIOLOGICAL AND THE PLANTATION

The second part of this chapter argues that black biology and physicality have been used as a commodity for the advantage of white Americans. Explaining the historical beliefs about black traits and stereotypes, this section will move on to explain the racist

[31] In 1963, before the Sunday service, a white supremacist terror attack occurred on 16th Street Baptist Church, which predominantly had a Black congregation, in Birmingham, Alabama. With the explosion of a bomb, four little African American girls, who were wearing white shoes at the time of their murder, lost their lives. In order to commemorate the lives of the late girls, and support the Black Rights Movement which was ignited afterwards, black American football players wore white game shoes in football games. (http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/birmingham-church-bombing)

assumptions of black Americans in football. Taking cues from Dan Jenkins' narrative and language in *Semi-Tough*, the second part will also make statements on symbolic modern day plantation attitudes in football as Jenkins perpetuates the myth that African Americans are instruments to the welfare of white Americans. Black players, as workhorses, are believed to exist for the sole purpose of economic, social and cultural betterment of white Americans, the thoroughbreds. Jenkins portrays this system of racial discrimination in America as a modern version of ruthless system of plantations. Thus, in this system, African Americans fight a symbolic battle of freedom and equality in American football.

From a racist perspective, the biological athleticism of blacks, which created the racist "workhorse" idea, has far-reaching causes that go back to the origin of African American slavery. Long before the English explored Africa, the terms "black" and "white" had emotional meaning within England. Winthrop Jordan asserts that "before colonization, white and black connoted opposites of purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, and God and the devil" (qtd. in Collins 87). Regarding the biological level of blacks in comparison to whites, Georges Cuvier, who according to Stephen Jay Gould was considered in 19th century France "the Aristotle of his age," as well as "a founder of geology, paleontology, and modern comparative anatomy" (Gould 66), argued that Africans were "the most degraded of human races, whose form approaches that of the beast and whose intelligence is nowhere great enough to arrive at regular government" (qtd. in Gould 69). These lower "form" of beings in terms of biology were turned into figures that should be controlled by whites.

Mary Hickman asserts that as the money earned from "slavery and the slave trade increased," the idea of how to treat African Americans changed and "the concept of the African slave as a commodity, or at best, a *workhorse* began to emerge. On plantations African slaves were catalogued with livestock" (Hickman 19-21), and they were treated as animals "to be worked to the maximum with the minimum cost maintenance" (Hiro 2). Therefore, just like it was the case in plantationsin Antebellum America, modern day slavery has been imposed on blacks by this minimum cost-maximum gain equation.

Consequently, African Americans have been transformed into bodies doing heavy works, entertainment and "admiration" in order to fulfill a larger purpose dictated by white society. In addition to the physicality and "animalism" of the black, Fanon argues that the black man was reduced to "symbolize the biological" (167).As for their biological form, Carrington maintains, "blackness itself was pathologised as a deviant identity, and the black male was stereotyped, and subsequently mythologized, as a hyper-sexed, almost animal-like, entity. (6) He further comments:

> The black athlete is thus positioned as a site for voyeuristic admiration - the black male athlete is idolized for his sheer physicality but also controlled by a complex process of objectification […][this situation] once again renders the dangerous black male threat controllable to white patriarchy. (Carrington 34)

With regards to this idea, in sports, black people have done the "workhorse" jobs on the field and white people have controlled the physicality of the black, which in return brings the white a total dominance of ownership and decision-making in football. Controlling the black physicality and biology enable the white to control all sorts of circumstances in football world, including whom to sell or buy. In other words, once again black has been made "workhorse" by the "thoroughbred," yet this time on football fields instead of plantations by white franchise owners instead of plantation bosses.

Rejected as human by white society, black people have struggled their way into equality through sports with athletic abilities. Stripped of their human features and equal rights, African Americans have pursued a symbolic battle into the acceptable merits of white society, but ended up only what whites have permitted them to be: the biological.

Although seen as "inferior," black players have always been strong, agile and sleek athletes on the field of American football programs. There are many occasions where they are dubbed "workhorses" of a football team. In an American football team, player positions were spared, and players were selected for particular positions based on their strength and thinking abilities. Ironically, some positions that require commanding and critical thinking on the field were *not* presented to black athletes in the second part of the 20th century. Jack Olsen argues that the lack of black players in leading positions, quarterback position mainly, in American football teams can led to the conclusion that

black players were intentionally excluded from leadershippositions since they were seen less intelligent,[32] which he calls "rigid patternization of black athletes" (29).

As regards to this, in *Semi-Tough*, Jenkins also spares all the leadership and thinking positions for whites. The quarterback of the team is Hose and he is "white," the head-coach of the team is Shoat Cooper, who is a white American, and the only character that is depicted as the owner of a football team is Ed Bookman, who is a devout "white" Southerner. A similar example in the novel, the night before the big game, head-coach Cooper calls for Tiller and Puckett, two white players, to have a tactical and administrative conversation about the game: "He wanted me and Shake to go out in the hall with him and have a 'gut check'" (Jenkins 112). Dan Jenkins, in this scene, demonstrates the stereotypical approach that in the football world only white players have the necessary leadership and management skills. That is why, before the game, Coach Shoat summons *only* his white players to ask their opinions about tactical formations and defensive strategies. As the scene continues, there is not a single mention of a black player being consulted about his opinion for the game.

African Americans, as the stereotype created by white society suggests, lack the necessary skills and characteristics like assertiveness, determination and team spirit. Therefore, although athletically compelling and fascinating, black power has to be harnessed, "workhorses" have to be calmed or directed by "thoroughbreds." The examples in which Jenkins depicts the physicality and athleticism of black NFL players, yet with their allegedly lack of character, are multiple and striking in *Semi-Tough*. In one scene, Billy Clyde Puckett puts forward how a team *without* a white player leading them cannot even win a game against a weak opponent in the league. "They said a team with *seven spooks* could make the play-offs and a team with nine spooks could get to the Super Bowl. But a team with ten spooks or more couldn't probably beat Denver" (Jenkins 4). "Nine spooks" definitely gives a team a great physical edge, however having more than ten "spooks" in a team means there will be no white players to make

[32]"The problem extends to the lack of African-American representation in the coaching and administrative ranks throughout college athletics. Several statistics bear out this continuing problem. Of the 5,889 college athletic positions created for athletic programs from 1991 to 1994, only 10.1 percent were filled by African- Americans, giving them a representation of only 8.7 percent of the more than 29,000 positions available in 1994. African-Americans represent only 3.6 percent of college athletic directors and 4.9 percent of associate athletic directors" (*Blacks Gain in Sports Jobs,* New York Times, August 18, 1994, at B18).

the judgment calls on the fields to direct the team. Without the supervision of white players, that team will not even be able to beat Denver [Broncos].[33]

The mockery of black people's so-called lack of determination and assertiveness can be seen in the letter from Puckett's editor: As I mentioned earlier, Puckett chronicles the events leading up to the Super Bowl and this work is to be published as a book. When Billy Clyde Puckett does not give a satisfactory answer to what he might name his book, his editor Jim Tom retorts humorously by picking on black characteristics of "not being tough enough." Editor Jim Tom writes, "By the way, I have a title [for your book] for you if you haven't thought of one. I think you ought to call it *IfNiggers Are Tough, How Come You Never See One on a Motorcycle?*"(Jenkins 38).

In a locker room conversation between Puddin Patterson and Shake Tiller, Tiller makes comments about black inferiority pointing at their "laziness," and he emphasizes that football is just another area where African Americans exist with only biological skills. "Shake said, 'To tell you [Puddin] the truth, I'm not eaten up with any goddamn hundred years of guilt about you sumbitches. You're just guys to me. And athletes'." (Jenkins 9) Obviously for Shake Tiller, the only form of existence in the white supremacist gaze for a black athlete is just being an "athlete." Also, "hundred years of slavery" does not matter for Tiller, or rather he does not feel remorse for making a statement that intensifies the truth of enslavement, and remarks that blacks are biological "athletes." Puddin retaliates by mentioning white men's *lack of* physical skills and white racist history are symbolically related. Puddin says, "You cats know how much better ball you'd play if you didn't feel so much guilt?" (Jenkins 80). Here again, Jenkins depicts a white and a black player in contrast to portray a cultural message, as Othello Harris puts it, "[t]he real praise is reserved for white players because they have managed to prevail despite... their modest athletic endowment" (Harris 62-63). From a larger perspective, whites have constructed a racist history but they assumedly lack the physical skills; blacks are the others with athletic superiority but they have always been used as servants due to their physical qualities.

[33] The Denver Broncos was believed to be one of the weakest teams at the time when the novel was written.

Regarding the overemphasized biological superiority of blacks and their so-called lack of mental toughness, Big Ed Bookman says:

> Never give the ball to nigger on third and three when you're behind and need the yardage. Goddamn it, they'll dog it on you ever time. It's too bad they have been raised that way, in Africa and Brazil and Philadelphia and Detroit and everywhere, that's the way it is. One of these days when they've educated themselves better and shown some goddamn initiative at inventing things like – oh, I don't know, the offshore rig or the diamond drilling bit, or something useful - then goddamn it, you can give a nigger the ball on third and three.[34]But not now. (Jenkins 78-79)

In a tense situation like this, which demands self-confidence and bravery, Bookman says, "when you need yardage" those blacks will do nothing but disappoint you. "Never give the ball to a nigger on third and three and … when you need the yardage" (79).Jenkins portrays the belief that although they are physically competent, in the face of a difficulty, blacks are unlikely to manifest composure to stay on the field and keep on fighting.

Furthermore, Bookman continues to make statements with a racist discourse and ethnic humiliation, "I just wouldn't trust a nigger to make a big play for me any more than I'd trust a spick to fix a flat tire" (Jenkins 79). This final comment deepens the threat African Americans have been encountering in the football world, and substantiates the myth that blacks are *only* "workhorses" on whom one must not rely. The phrase "wouldn't trust a nigger" serves to explain that from a white pragmatic window, blacks are allegedly *not reliable* in terms of fulfilling a responsibility at critical moments.

In addition, Bookman passes another judgment on the black man's *inability* to take responsibility at breaking moments in the game: "We've got 'em now. They're on the ropes. You can see it. It's all over. The moment of stress has come and their goddamn niggers'll quit. Watch what I'm telling you" (Jenkins 193). In other words, Bookman claims that "niggers" will not be able to show character and thus the opposing team is going to win. This last quotation is significant in two ways: (1) Bookman highlights the stereotype that African American players have a tendency to quit against challenging

[34] "Third [down] and three [yards to go]" is a very critical situation in a football game. Since the team is on their last down [the third] to make a play, it is their last chance before the other team starts attacking. Moreover, although three yards does not seem to be much, under a stressful third down situation, it is not easy to gain.

odds, and (2) Bookman knows that winning or losing totally depends on the performance of Black players and the chances to beat the opponent are on the shoulders of African Americans.

The scene continues, "We're almost back in the goddamn contest. I just don't know how much character our niggers have got" (Jenkins 192). Similarly, the remark Bookman addresses here emphasizes the fact that the result of the game can be changed or determined undoubtedly by "niggers." With this quotation, Jenkins intends to draw attention to the idea that whites are certain about the athletic or "physical" side of the African Americans, on the other hand, what whites cannot know for sure is if blacks can show the composure and "character" that the game demands against hardships. Therefore, as can be seen from the examples, "the Negro" is again lessened to the level of workhorse incapable of showing determination; that is, they only have the biological power.

In *Semi-Tough*, the leading example of black athleticism that invokes fear and intimidation is Dreamer Tatum. "Dreamer Tatum is a rover back for the dog-ass Jets, which means that he plays a combination cornerback and linebacker and sometimes covers deep pass routine. He got his name Dreamer in college at USC because he put guys to sleep when he hit them" (Jenkins 17). Dan Jenkins purposefully depicts the black player Dreamer Tatum as a beast of an athlete, and then he develops this character with *less*[35] black qualities. Dreamer does not give up the game, he is diverse and a winner of the Heisman trophy.[36] Thus, Tatum becomes an ideal black player with no political involvement, and he maintains white qualities. Puckett keeps praising the qualities of Dreamer Tatum, "Dreamer deserved the Heisman the year he got it … And besides that, he's been All-Pro for three years" (17).

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[35] "One of the preeminent boxers of African American descent, Joe Louis' behavior out of the ring assured him a place of honor in white America. 'I kept my nose clean, and I acted like a gentleman, like an American,' Louis later recalled, adding that his public behavior 'made some whites begin to look at colored people different. 'That happened by design. Louis's managers had drawn up certain anti-Jackson rules for him -- never be photographed with a white woman, never gloat over an opponent, and never act with abandon in public. The rules made Louis appear as 'Bible-reading, mother-loving, God-fearing ... and *not*... too black,' as historian Jeffrey Sammons has put it" (Michael G. Long. Huffington Post, 2014).

[36] "The Heisman Memorial Trophy Award (usually known colloquially as the Heisman Trophy or The Heisman), is awarded annually to the most outstanding player in college football in the United States whose performance best exhibits the pursuit of excellence with integrity" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heisman_Trophy).

This is a unique allusion because in the novel no white character makes such positive statements about any other black player. At the end of the novel, although the Jets and Dreamer Tatum lose the Super Bowl game, Dreamer Tatum congratulates Clyde Puckett on his championship, "'You the champs, baby,' said Dreamer, leaving. "Scoreboard done said so"' (198) Afterwards, Puckett makes the following comment, "I thought to myself that Dreamer Tatum was some kind of a *stud*, all right, and I hoped I could have that much *class* when I lost a big one" (198). This causes us to think that with Dreamer Tatum, Jenkins aims a different message; that is, as long as a black player has the qualities of a white and acts like a gentleman, not like a savage, he will be appreciated and spoken of as "classy" and as a "stud," adjectives exclusively attributed to white players.

In addition to the discussions summarized above, it is now important to analyze the ideology of the modern day *plantation* in football arena. When plantation and white governmentality are taken into consideration in the context of football, the phrases automatically convert the head-coaches and team owners into "boss" figures: a symbol of racial torture on plantation. The analogy of the football field and plantation, and white team-owners and bosses, still persisted in the second half of 20th century.

Regarding all these theories, the resurrection or the silent survival of the plantation system within the USA is best summarized by Professor Harry Edwards:

> The result in both sport and society has been the establishment and perpetuation of what is in effect a *plantation system* of authority arrangements with Whites commanding a virtual monopoly on power and decision-making roles with a negligible proportion of token Blacks in mid-level junior executive positions, and with the masses of Blacks concentrated in lower echelon, relatively powerless production roles. (9)

As an example from real life, in his autobiographical book *Slave Side of Sunday*, aptly named since majority of NFL games are played on Sunday, Anthony E. Prior, a former NFL defensive player, points out the institutionalized racism in pro football, saying the problem is more than skin deep. Prior tells that the culture of white supremacy is really intense. Furthermore, African Americans in the positions of leadership aren't taken seriously. Prior notes, "I heard white coaches called '*boss*' like we're on a *plantation*" (45). Prior's example is just one of the various realities that continues in the world of

high-school, college and pro level football. Since institutional racism is often marked by its more "subtle incarnation" as opposed to the more overt expressions of behavior by individual actors (Hylton 5), football becomes a racist "incarnation" of what has been happening in the USA in terms of white supremacy and modern day plantation culture.

In *Semi-Tough*, the physical ability of blacks, which ironically makes them prone to slavery as elicited by many scholars, is intensified in various scenes. To illustrate, Big Ed Bookman, the white team owner and the symbol of plantation boss, knows very well that without eliminating or controlling the black players of the opponent team, his team cannot win the game. "Now the other side has a fast goddamn nigger, you've got to get to him early in the game. Hit that black bastard o good lick on his big toe and he won't run so fast" (Jenkins 78). Big Ed despises and humiliates black players by calling them "bastards" and "niggers," but he is also aware that not only in his team, but also in the other team, black players are the ones who will make the difference. Another example that justifies the black power on the field is when Bookman again comments while watching the Super Bowl game: "Big toe! Big toe! Somebody kick that nigger in the big toe or he's gonna beat us by himself" (Jenkins 182). Here Bookman talks about the "nigger" that scores points for the opponent team and jeopardizes Bookman's chance of winning the Super Bowl. If that black player can be defended or blocked, the Giants have a good chance of winning.

However, in the face of a failure, black players are the ones who will end up being responsible for the loss and remain only as disposable entities waiting to be punished by white owners. The following scene reminds one of the Antebellum plantations where those blacks who failed to run errands or complete tasks on time were whipped or punished because of it. Puddin remarks: "[B]ut you [Shake Tiller] sound like you think that if we don't win, it's gonna be the cats [black players] that fucked it up. You dig that?" (Jenkins 9) Jenkins portrays the fact that if there is a loss, it is because of "the cats," which underlines another inequality in the world of football.

In another example, the head coach Cooper speaks to his players on the team and encourages them to have a rest as he believes that black physical power is going to be the game changer in the Super Bowl. "Shoat said, You hosses get a lot of rest in these last few hours. I want them legs to have spring in 'em. It's gonna be nigger on nigger

out there Sunday'" (Jenkins 114). Coach Shoat is conscious of the fact that the equilibrium of winning-losing is the thin line that black players will draw, therefore he uses "nigger on nigger," meaning that black players will face the black players of the other team on the field.

More importantly, the phrase "nigger on nigger" is bound to be interpreted within a historic trajectory where black slaves were made to confront each other as a sport for gambling. As I noted earlier, black physique was a source of spectacle and admiration for white supremacy. Here, the phrase "nigger on nigger" is the direct representation of the Antebellum plantation tradition that forcefully made slaves fight with each other. In his article "To See Who Was Best on the Plantation," Sergio Lussana writes:

> Formerly enslaved with about seventy five others on a cotton plantation in Jackson County, Alabama, John Finnely recalled one of the few amusements he and his fellow slaves shared in their days of bondage. For "'joyments," remembered Finnely, "weuns have de co'n buskin' an' de *nigger fights*." Finnely delighted in his recollection of the slave fights he witnessed growing up in antebellum Alabama, noting that although the fights were "mo' fo' de w'ite fo'k's 'joyment," the slaves were also "'lowed to see it." According to Finnely, the masters of different plantations *matched their slaves by size and then bet on them*. Finnely's account illuminates a part of antebellum slave life that has generally been overlooked by historians, that of *organized fighting practices* and their role in the lives of enslaved men. (2010)

In the novel Big Ed Bookman proves the theory that blacks are permitted in the game of football for the purpose of supporting white prestige. The service is reciprocal and Bookman knows very well that without blacks no win is ever possible. As a reflection of plantation mentality, "workhorses" on the field are used as medium of attaining prestige and money for white team owners. In every chance he gets, Big Ed Bookman degrades black people and communities and despises their culture; however, when the matter comes to football, he knows most assuredly that he *needs* the skills of black players on the field. Manipulating the discourse to white supremacy's advantage, he says, "we've got *better* niggers" (Jenkins 126). Ed Bookman does not refrain from using derogatory language and slurs for people of color; however, when the stakes are high and the issue comes down to winning a game, Big Ed states that it is "his niggers" who are going to win the game, elevating them to a status of importance, which Dan Jenkins subtly weaves through the elements of racism and hypocrisy.

As previously discussed, Bookman appears as an accurate product of a racist "boss" tradition: "Big Ed always said Fort Worth wasn't such a small town if you looked at it a certain way. If you took all the Jews out of Dallas, all the niggers out of Houston and all the spicks out of San Antonio, Fort Worth was a pretty good-sized place, he'd say" (Jenkins 53). In this example, Fort Worth is the proper city to live and own a team; however, the only problematic part in this urban area is the necessity to clear out the groups that, as he implies, contaminate the territory. After this racist comment, Bookman continues to speak more of the symbolic "plantation" in the USA. Bookman tells the history of being a white "boss." "This country is great because of what the white man did with it. There wasn't a goddamn thing but savages around one time and they didn't know anything about schools or golf courses or any other goddamn thing" (Jenkins 54).

Dan Jenkins also depicts the xenophobic, racist and governmental perspectives that have haunted the American white elite class: Bookman says, "this country is great because of what *the white man* did with it" (54); he continues his summary of American history, "But the white man came in and kicked the shit out of the blacks and the browns and the yellows and made the world a decent place that smelled better and had johns that flushed" (54). As understood, bringing a so-called civilization into savage-like places correlates with the ownership of superior rights. Since African Americans and natives were "uncivilized," they did not deserve equality. They have instead been pushed down in the hierarchy, thus the whites have become "the boss."

> [Bookman] said that "God tried to turn it all over to mankind once and it just didn't work. A whole goddamn bunch of chinks and niggers got born, along with a whole lot of spicks and Mongol hordes. That pissed God off, he said. So God took over again and God's been trying to straighten it out ever since, without running his image" (Jenkins 122). … "While all of this has been going on, God has allowed some carefully selected people he could trust to get born and take rich and be able to run things" (122). … "It was the white man who invented the electric light and the airplane and the television and the air conditioning and every other goddamn thing worth having … If the white man had left it up to the black man or the brown man, we wouldn't have anything but a bunch of goddamn disease and lice and probably a hell of a lot of Communism … Kids today ought to look at the white man and stop looking at niggers and spicks. That's where they find out about done and screwing off" (54). … "Let me give you an equation that affects today's kids. One nigger plus one spick equals Communism and dope. It's all tied in together" (55). … It was the toast where Big Ed says that you come into the world naked and

> bare, or something, and you go through the world with trouble and care. Then he says you go out of the world you know not where. But if you're a thoroughbred *here*, he says, getting louder, you're a thoroughbred *there* (117). … "What's good for America is good for the world" he said. (117)

In addition to all the racist and supremacist remarks above, the term "thoroughbred," as mentioned by Bookman, is the key phrase that elevates the status of white above other ethnic groups or races. By being "thoroughbred," as Bookman mentions, a person's ancestors are known and blood relations are not questionable since a "thoroughbred" is pure in essence and breeding. In other words, as can be understood from the thoughts of Bookman above, "there is direct connection between breeding and hierarchy" (Da Cal 717). In contrast to black players' "workhorse" metaphor, white plantation and white supremacist identity are constructed under the word "thoroughbred" in *Semi-Tough*. With qualities of a thoroughbred, one does not only encompass his past, but also guarantees an unshakable prestige and hierarchy even for the "other" world after death, as Big Ed says above, "a thoroughbred *there*."

From a financial aspect of plantation system, when money is involved, Big Ed Bookman changes his rhetoric, and although his players are black, he avowedly states that they are exceptional: "[t]here are some goddamn exceptions to everything and as far as I'm concerned those boys are damn near as *white* as us because they have paid the price" (Jenkins 79). Black athletes who play for Bookman have "paid the price" because they have allowed him to earn so much money that they have been granted the title or decoration of being "white." Although there might be multiple interpretations to decipher what kind of price paying Bookman talks about, the fact remains that discourse and rhetoric are in the control of the white supremacist elites who can eliminate racism by comparing blacks to whites, and can create "exceptions" in any racist or anti-racist way they like. Symbolically speaking, in the context of the plantation, Big Ed Bookman "emancipates" his black players by granting them the prominence of being "white," as he believed "they have paid the price."

This can be read as a confession that validates the existence of racism towards the black community, and it is a methodical technique utilized by white governmentality under the incognito of football and the promise of freedom and welfare. "'The Bookmans' he said, 'went back a long way. God sent the first Bookman over on the Mayflower to help

get America started off right. The reason, he said, was because God knew that America would be able to get the rest of the shape up. Eventually. Like *today*" (Jenkins 122). As Bookman confesses, there is a huge resemblance between the economic system created in the past and still pursued today in the world of sports, especially in football. By this, Jenkins uses the words of Bookman to entrust the idea that the facts and financial hierarchies defined by the white men have not changed very much, and this openly suggests that blacks are engaged in a symbolic fight against racism through sports.

One final comment on the novel concerns the title "Semi-Tough." Jenkins uses the phrase twice in the novel, and they both are uttered in the context of American football and against an important opponent, "Shake … said 'Goddamn Billy C. Nobody ever said it wasn't gonna be semi-tough'" (Jenkins 115); "It's gonna be semi-tough, but we're looking forward to it" (142). "Semi-tough" symbolizes the white self-confidence and the idea that nothing is ever going to be extremely tough for the white: semi-tough, half as much tough at the most. Thus, Jenkins' title "semi-tough" summarizes the attitude of White Americans at the time. Even the most difficult task that may look impenetrable is only "semi-tough," not even tough. Being white, as illustrated throughout this chapter, means holding the cards in your hands. With the control of language, economy and social spheres, white Americans even have the privilege to belittle and underestimate hardships on their way.

In the past, the sole chance of survival for blacks was on the fields of plantations and under the command of white owners. However, unlike the historical context, this has transformed into the context of sports and football particularly. Especially since the 1920s, contemporary economic and social developments have canalized black youth to take up football as the only way out of their predicaments. They have been systematically cornered to play sports as to take the sole opportunity out of their "ghettos" or "hoods" where crime rates are the highest in the nation. Accordingly, football fields have turned into symbolic plantations. The stronger you are, the more agile you are; the more you will be appreciated by your "white" owner, or "boss."

With this regard, black players on symbolic plantations have been allowed to stay as long as the "boss" can make money out of them. While the blacks on the field do all the "workhorse" duties; white "thoroughbreds" – just like white cowboys who might be

compared to the watchmen in plantations –have directed and controlled the field. I argue that such metaphors were true and valid for American football games, especially in the second half of 20th century, where the white people held decision making and controlling positions; whereas blacks worked industriously to make a living, to stay alive, to not be sold to another white team/plantation "boss."

Dan Jenkins' *Semi-Tough* appears to be an indictment about stereotypes and the plantation attitude that existed in the second half of the 20th century. Regarded as a means of entertainment within White supremacist society, black community members were seen as flesh whose savage power was waiting to be exploited. Therefore, this modern slavery was not played out on plantations anymore but in sports arenas. Following this interpretation, no matter how modern the times may have become, black Americans were still perceived as "workhorses," and with this work of his, Dan Jenkins criticizes the brutal nature of racial hierarchy in the United States of America.

CONCLUSION

Sports were initially played to provide entertainment and to show physical and mental abilities. In time, the mentality of sports transformed into a new perspective and became a representation of competition and rivalry. Viewed from social and cultural context, sports have assumed the roles of instruments by which individuals or communities have instilled fear in their rivals and enhanced their prestige. In addition to these, sports have imposed hegemonic ideas or to limit people to certain norms and codes.

Although there might be remarkable variations, all types of sports require athletic and/or mental skills, especially competitive and contact sports. By this token, American football can be defined as a type of sport where the skills for achievement have to be sharpened and enhanced as well. Consequently, the efforts to display these qualities connect football players to a mentality that is similar to that of military. Just like soldiers in the battlefields, American football players also defend their territories and attack their opponents deploying military techniques and plays. Thus, as a direct reflection of an army structure, the game of football has produced a discourse and a context symbolizing a military battle.

American football has represented more ideas and symbols than any sport in the United States of America. It is referred to as America's game in various circles, and this reputation is deservedly earned. America adopts and demonstrates a war ideology both inside and outside the country. American culture of military is so pervasive that patriotic feelings created by the battles have become synonymous with being a true American. In order to support the armies and maintain patriotism, these emotions have had to be provoked by a surrogate catalyst. Thus, American football has become the area where these feelings evoked by battles could manifest themselves. Violence, brutality, masculinity, the protection of the homeland, attack, blitz etc. all serve to inspire a feeling of victory on a surrogate battlefield. Therefore, with its militaristic terminology, American football has been a substitute for battlefields and militaristic perspectives in America since the beginning of the 20th century.

Over time, American nation has witnessed the transformation of war mentality into symbolic battles in American football games. After the World War II, when the American nation began to reflect more on their social traumas, football has also become

a field to release emotions and express thoughts. Having already formulated a philosophy of war in its essence, American football has started to represent other battles in symbolic ways. These symbolic battles have been raged against various dominant ideologies and challenged the norms that control American culture. Ironically, America's game has turned into a reaction against America itself. With symbolic battles at its heart, American football has developed different subtexts and contexts waiting to be read.

Among many tropes that can be attributed to American football, three of them stand as the symbolic battles that directly address the American cultural problems. The first of these symbolic battles is against masculinity. Masculinity is revered as one of the core foundations of football. Athletes with masculine qualities, such as; violence, ruggedness, physical resilience, are considered to be suitable for football in which they will evidently be successful. On the other hand, femininity or queerness in football environment is a drawback for the sport and athletes, since football is built upon hyper-masculine ethos of the time, and hetero-normativity is seen essential. As a consequence, football players who do not feel or think as hegemonic masculinity dictates them to are engaged in a symbolic fight against their sexual tendencies and the norms of the system in an American football team environment.

Secondly, the term post-self can be described as the prestige or the memories someone leaves behind after death. In other words, by post-self, an athlete can symbolically stand the test of time against mortality. Just like other sports, football is another medium to attain prestige. Chronicled records and the emotions aroused during the games are unforgettable. By the records and sentiments evoked in football games, both the athletes and the public achieve success and psychological purgation. In the long run, these successes and the purgation translate into a post-self by which mortality is defied. That is to say, the athletes and spectators reach a status of symbolic immortality. By this token, the reputation established by football is assured by the collective memory of the public and the commemorative devices that underscore these achievements. Thus, football players fight a symbolic battle to acquire a symbolic immortality with a prestigious post-self.

The last prominent symbolism that American football reflects is the struggle against racism. Although the situation is different today, from the plantation period in the Antebellum South until the end of the 20st century, black Americans were discriminated unfairly by white Americans. The discrimination ranged from social to political, economic to athletics, limiting African Americans to be obedient servants of the White hegemonic society. In a cultural view, African Americans were not allowed to speak as white did; economically, the jobs that were suitable for blacks were always the worst ones. In athletics, black physical power was also controlled under sports, especially in football. The physical superiority of African Americans was deftly manipulated to make money or was transformed into a means of entertainment. Almost two hundred years after the plantations, white Americans were again using African Americans as symbolic workhorses on football fields. In return, as a strong response to social movements of the time, football players fought a symbolic battle into equality on sports grounds. Thus, American football has become an inspiration and a symbolic battlefield where African Americans performed symbolic battles for equality against white Americans.

As forms of representation, though rarely studied in the American literary canon, sports fiction is as highly expressive of cultural matters in America as any other form of representation. Under this perspective, although they are rarely taken into examination, the works of American football fiction have carefully produced plots and narratives where the cultural issues within the nation are constructed in detailed pictures. Three of these novels are preeminent by the way their authors emphasize the social trauma in American culture. With these fictional works, the authors portray the symbolic battles against hyper-masculinity, mortality and racism in America respectively. In all these novels, the authors take American football as their main background for the symbolic battle they are depicting. The characters in these works of fiction fight a symbolic battle that has to be engaged against all odds in the social ethos of the time.

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APPENDIX 1

ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENCY OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Date: 09.06.2015

Thesis Title / Topic: REPRESENTATION OF SYMBOLIC BATTLES IN AMERICAN FOOTBALL FICTION: DON DELLILLO'S *END ZONE*, JOHN GRISHAM'S *BLEACHERS* AND DAN JENKINS' *SEMI-TOUGH*

My thesis work related to the title/topic above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
3. Does not involve any interference of the body's integrity.
4. Is not based on observational and descriptive research (survey, measures/scales, data scanning, system-model development).

I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

ANIL BAYIR
Date and Signature
09.06.2015

Name Surname: ANIL BAYIR
Student No: N11123141
Department: AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE
Program:
Status: X Masters ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Barış Gümüşbaş
(Title, Name Surname, Signature)

APPENDIX 2

ETİK KURUL MUAFİYET FORMU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KURUL İZİN MUAFİYETİ FORMU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI BÖLÜMÜ BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 09.06.2015

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: AMERİKAN FUTBOLU ROMANLARINDA SEMBOLİK SAVAŞLARIN TEMSİLİ: DON DELILLO'NUN *END ZONE*'U, JOHN GRISHAM'IN *BLEACHERS*'I VE DAN JENKINS'İN *SEMI-TOUGH*'I.

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.

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Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Anil Bayır
Tarih ve İmza
09.06.2015

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APPENDIX 3

THESIS ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THESIS ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Date:18/08/2015

Thesis Title / Topic: REPRESENTATION OF SYMBOLIC BATTLES IN AMERICAN FOOTBALL FICTION: DON DELLILLO'S *END ZONE*, JOHN GRISHAM'S *BLEACHERS* AND DAN JENKINS' *SEMI-TOUGH*

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I respectfully submit this for approval.

18.08.2015

Name Surname: ANIL BAYIR
Student No: N11123141
Department: AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE
Program:
Status: X Masters

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Barış Günüşbaş
(Title, Name Surname, Signature)

APPENDIX 4

TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
YÜKSEK LİSANS/DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 18/08/2015

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: AMERİKAN FUTBOLU ROMANLARINDA SEMBOLİK SAVAŞLARIN TEMSİLİ: DON DELILLO'NUN *END ZONE*'U, JOHN GRISHAM'IN *BLEACHERS*'I VE DAN JENKINS'İN *SEMI-TOUGH*'I.

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 137 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 18/08/2015 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 5'tir.

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Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orjinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

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ANIL BAYIR

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