

# The Absence of Fatherhood from William Bloom as Reflected in Daniel Wallace's *Big Fish*: A Study of Masculinism

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## ABSTRACT

The conflict of disagreement between parents and children is a common issue. In the real life, this disturbance in family relationship can be found in daily life. One of them is the absence of fatherhood in family. William Bloom tries to figure out who his father really is as a person. His father, Edward Bloom was always telling tall tales of his life and events that happened to him, clearly describing his life as completely extraordinary. In this undergraduate thesis the writer used masculinism theories from Kimmel's, conceptual father involvement from Lamb's et al and the absence of fatherhood from McLanahan's. The writer wants to find out the factors causing the absence of fatherhood, in what way Edward Bloom involve fatherhood figure and masculinity sees the fatherhood as reflected in the novel entitled *Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions*. The writer used qualitative method to interpret phenomenon the absence of fatherhood in the novel, and as a problem of masculinity through the narrations and dialogues of Edward Bloom and William Bloom. The results are the factors causing the absence of fatherhood are labor and searching for identity. Edward Bloom was a good father in the beginning, but slowly became a shadowy figure to his son because there is no accessibility or available element of fathering involvement. The last, Edward bloom is an ideal man, because he involves the three dominants of manhood ideal: the genteel patriarch, the heroic artisan and the self-made man. However, the presence of fatherhood is really important in family and masculinity which is also represented as fatherhood figure and man identity. After that William finally learns how he is able to get to bottom of the truth and finds a way of truly understanding his father.

**Keywords:** Fatherhoods, Masculinism, *Big Fish*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The conflict of disagreement between parents and children is a common issue. In the real life, this disturbance in family relationship can be found in daily life. The conflicts happen due to the difference of their mindset. In the parent's perspective, having more experience in living, makes them feel that they think they have already had more experience in their life and know how to make a move in the world. That mindset involves a journey that they have had when they were young. Having the knowledge, and having the next

generation of the family, the parents use that mindset to protect the children in choosing their path of life.

The problem that is found in most cases were the parents will have three failures in doing it, those are miscommunications in their intention are not well explained to the children until the children understand what their intentions are. The second one is lack of understanding where the parents believe they know everything the best about their children while they fail to understand what their children want. The third is the absence of parenthood in the family. Those three main problems are faced by children whose parents

already have intentions or ambitions that they want their children to be. This leads to the conflict of disagreement that caused the relationship between parents and children worsen.

Morrell (2005: 84) define that the process of becoming men involves constructing masculine identities. Young men need to develop masculinities that include self-respect and respect for others. Adult men face similar challenges as they give meaning to manhood. Manhood is often associated with becoming a father, and being responsible for, and loving towards children is one way of contributing to a new, equitable gender order.

Being a father means that you have got children who really depend on you for their upbringing, particularly when they are young. The father is a role model that children can look to for some of their initial lessons in life - how to approach or tackle things. You have to provide for them, make sure they get a good education and that they grow up as responsible citizens. You need to be there to provide advice and backup whenever it's needed. But the men's absence from the home because of their involvement in paid work meant that a consistent or meaningful presence as disciplinarian or moral guide proved difficult to sustain. As a result, the construction of 'father as mentor' sat uneasily beside another interpretation of being a father - that of 'father as friend'.

*Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions* is about a young man, William Bloom at the deathbed of his father, Edward Bloom, trying to figure out who his father really is as a person. William's father was always telling tall tales of his life and events that happened to him, clearly describing his life as completely extraordinary. In William's time with his father he records four separate 'takes' of his father's death. Each 'take' recognizing Edward's journey through life and everything he encountered, answering life's biggest questions and spending time together. Despite all the stories, smiles and time shared together, nothing could prepare

Edward for what was going to happen during his final death 'take'.

The reason why the writer chooses this novel is because there is an interesting problem, which is father and son conflict. The presence of fatherhood is very important to a children's development of identity also gave additional contribution to the English student and English lecturers to increase the knowledge in understanding about masculinity in literature.

*.Kept in a small bowl, the goldfish will remain small. With more space, the fish can grow double, triple, or quadruple its size,* that was favorite quote from *Big Fish*, it means that the reason for its growth was intended for larger things.

## 1.2 Previous Research

### 1.2.1 Naomi Rosh White (1994)

She wrote "*About Fathers: Masculinity and the Social Construction of Fatherhood*", Journal of Sociology, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Monash University. Her study is about a preliminary exploration of the ways in which definitions of fatherhood are constructed and determined by personal experience within a social context. She examines eleven men's understandings of what it means to be a father, their recollections of the fathering they received, and the intersection of these recollections with their definitions of themselves as fathers.

### 1.2.2 Courtney Pitts (2012)

She wrote "*What Factors Influence Positive Father Involvement in African American Families?*" A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the Requirement for the degree of Master of Science in the School of Human Ecology. Her thesis is about to interviews from happily married Black couples in inner city neighborhoods, overlapping themes emerge exploring the reasons behind positive involvement among father and findings include a heavy reliance on faith, marital support and commitment to matrimony and value of responsibility to

one's family. Future research and implications should address standards set by highly involved fathers and establish programs to help other fathers become more involved.

### 1.3 Scope of the Study

To make the paper become more effective and efficient, the writer makes a limitation in the study, the scope of the study is the novel entitled *Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions* (1998) by Daniel Wallace. The writer focuses on the narration and dialogues from Edward Bloom and William Bloom as Father and Son in the novel. The writer combines the psychology and sociology approach with a literary works generally using the absence of fatherhood, conceptualizing father involvement and masculinity theory.

### 1.4 Problem of the Study

From the background of the study, the writer would like to write down the problem statement as follows:

1. What are the factors causing the absence of fatherhood in *Big Fish*?
2. In what way does Edward Bloom involve fatherhood figure as reflected in *Big Fish*?
3. How does masculinity sees the fatherhood as reflected in *Big Fish*?

### 1.5 Objective of the Study

Specifically, the purposes of the undergraduate thesis are:

1. To know the factors causing the absence of fatherhood in *Big Fish*
2. To know in what way Edward Bloom involves fatherhood figure in *Big Fish*
3. To know how masculinity sees the fatherhood in *Big Fish*?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer provides various theories in order to support the analysis in this undergraduate thesis. The writer combines the sociology and psychology approach with a literary works.

## 2.1 Masculinism as Gender Problem

### 2.1.1 Gender

Human beings are categorized based on two different sexes; male and female. The terms of sex and gender are different so that it is important to differentiate them to understand and separate the concept of gender from sex. So, there will be no misunderstanding about them.

Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) note that the concepts of gender come from common parlance during early 1970's. It was used as an analytical category to draw a line of demarcation between biological sex differences. March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay (1999) add that gender refers to the roles which are constructed socially, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers as appropriate for men and women and that 'masculine' and 'feminine' are gender categories. Hence, gender is defined more closely to social than biologically.

Gender constitutes one of the organizing principles of social life a mechanism by which power and resources are distributed (Hooks, 1990; Kimmel & Messner, 1992; Lorber, 1994; Walker, 1999).

According to (Gerson, 1993), typical masculine values accorded to the male gender include:

- a. Increased importance on independence, rationality, and aggression
- b. The exercise of emotional control at the expense of emotional attachment
- c. The overt externalization of inner feelings and desires
- d. The celebration of physical strength as well as the glorification of violence.

Such cultural values help create the generic guidelines for male behavior, which are being written and re-written according to the specific time, place, and socioeconomic circumstances.

Men are socialized to think of themselves as all mighty and powerful, and, consequently, to feel entitled to such illusionary feelings. Illusionary because in reality, most men tend to enjoy only limited amounts of power, and, instead, use dominance, authority,



and emotional distancing to socially construct and maintain images of them as powerful.

Such sociocultural constructions of male power tend to negatively affect men by:

- a. Limiting their access to vital social support networks
- b. Weakening their nurturing capabilities, mainly, their providing support to others
- c. Discouraging, inhibiting, or altogether preventing viable alternative forms of sexual expression, such as kissing, holding, and caressing.

This almost incessant preoccupation with the mechanistic aspects of the male sexual response cycle tends to have deleterious consequences in men's lives; especially for younger men who are just beginning their journey to find their sexual selves. Such consequences include the inducement of sexual anxiety as well as the perpetration of sexual abuse and violence against women, children, and other men (Gilbert, 1993). Gender is considered as an inseparable issue in our social life. Gender is defined as a set of characteristics or traits that are associated with a certain biological sex (male or female). These characteristics are generally referred to as "masculine" or "feminine". According to March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay (1999) note that Gender describes all the socially given attributes, roles, activities, and responsibilities connected to being a male or a female in a given society. Our gender identity determines how we are perceived, and how we are expected to think and act as women and men, because of the way society is organized. Meanwhile, sex is the biological difference between men and women. Sex differences are concerned with men's and women's bodies. Men produce sperm; women bear and breastfeed children (March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay (1999)).

It can be concluded that gender is not sex. Gender refers to the part of physical, mental, and behavioral characteristics distinguish masculinity from femininity. Meanwhile, sex is the biological difference between men and women.

### 2.1.2 Masculinity

Masculinity (also called manliness or manhood) is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with boys and men. Masculinity is made up of both socially defined and biologically created factors. This makes it distinct from the definition of the male anatomical sex, as both men and women can exhibit masculine traits and behaviors. People who exhibit combination of both masculine and feminine characteristics are considered androgynous.

Traits traditionally cited as masculine include courage, independence, and assertiveness. Though traits associated with masculinity vary depending on location and context, and are influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors. In some non-English speaking cultures, certain concepts or inanimate objects are considered masculine or feminine (the counterpart to masculine). An over-emphasized pride in masculinity and power (often associated with a disregard for consequences and responsibility) is known as machismo.

Masculinity tends to be defined in professional and career terms that are expressed in the public domain, while feminine concerns with relationships and intimacy are relegated to the private, domestic sphere. This polarized view creates built-in tension between gender related modes of parenting as well as to what is deemed appropriate for male and female psychological development.

(Hamber, 2007: 5) Masculinity studies, largely in sociology and psychology, have in turn said little about political transitions or transitional justice. That said the study of masculinity itself is still developing. The sociology of masculinity, which has until recently largely focused on Western masculinities, only came into its own in the second half of the 20th century.

The psychology of masculinity, or more precisely psychologists attempting to understand the male psyche, has been part of the discipline for over a century, but critical analyses of the interrelationship between psychology and a gendered social context are limited. Where the study of the psychology of men

exists, it is clinical and largely experimental, although the last decade has seen a growing number of studies on masculinity in discursive and critical psychology. Masculinity is defined as the widespread social norms and expectations of what it means to be a man or the multiple ways of doing male.

(Connell and Whitehead, 2005) Psychological theories of human development beginning with Freud (1938), Erikson, (1968); Marcia et al., (1993), Levinson, (1978, 1996), are typically constructed in a way that treats the masculine paradigm as the norm. This approach tends to valorize autonomy as the preferred goal for raising male and female children. The ability to achieve autonomy is seen as a major task in the process of attaining self-differentiation that culminates in adulthood. Dependency is viewed in a negative light, and the failure to achieve independence is thus considered a flaw in the necessary process of forging an adult sense of identity.

## **2.2 Masculinity in Literary Works**

According to Andersen (2009), in his thesis about *Casting a Long Shadow: A Study of Masculinity and Hard Men in Twentieth-Century Scottish Fiction*. He's found eight Scottish fiction novels that portray image of masculinity: George Douglas Brown's *The House of The Green Shutters* (1901), John MacDougall Hay's *Gillespie* (1914), Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *Grey Granite* (1934), James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing!* (1992), Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), Ron Butlin's *The Sound of My Voice* (1987), and William McIlvanney's *Docherty* (1975). There is a distinct pattern and evolvement of Scottish masculinity throughout the century which can be identified and expounded with these eight novels. During the first half of the century a hard but failed masculinity emerges and becomes almost like a burden that subsequent male characters cannot escape. Society, culture and gender roles undergo dramatic changes in the post-war era, but Scottish masculinity is left behind the Scottish hard man becomes an anachronism and Scottish male characters experience dramatic identity crises. It is in fact the very nature of Scottish

masculinity the rigidity, pride and lack of emotion that is to blame for its own downhill trajectory, but its prominence and value make its adoption for any twentieth-century character inevitable. Twentieth-century Scottish fiction portrays an image of flawed and destructive masculinity that is dominated by patriarchal images of manhood and mythical representations of the hard man and which ultimately results in a masculine identity crisis. Another common in children's literature for example *The Wolf in Little Red Riding Hood* and *Toad in The Wind in the Willows*.

Ernest Hemingway's *Garden of Eden* is full of hints about masculinity and male domination and is a reflection on his own life and behavior and phobias, especially his antipathy toward homosexuals. It is not known if Hemingway engaged in different sexual experimentation; nevertheless, there does not appear to be any justification for his treatment of women and gays. Crossing the demarcation line in literature between the sexes has proven to be unpopular and costly to the male definition of masculinity. Using the definitions of masculinity, the writings of male authors have given women's groups food and fire to go after the male gender as a whole and those writers in particular. In the eyes of the feminists some male writers are execrable for their uncivilized definitions both of the feminine gender and of masculinity.

## **2.3 Fatherhood as Problem of Masculinity**

### **2.3.1 Defining of Fatherhood**

According to Rodin, Johnny and Åberg, Pelle in their peer reviewed essay about fatherhood across space and time. They said that how fatherhood should be understood has been debated by researchers in various fields, including feminist and critical studies, and in the context of broader research on men and masculinities, where the discussions concern such issues as how the role of fatherhood is part of a man's identity and how it relates to other time and context bound norms of masculinity. In recent decades, fatherhood has commonly

been studied from the perspective of historical institutionalism or social constructivism. From these perspectives, fatherhood is not seen as given or fixed, but rather as a politicized social construction that is exposed to normative pressures from political, religious, and social authorities and institutions, and from more personal and private relations. Fatherhood cannot be understood as something that exists outside society. Rather, fatherhood is constructed through society and a socio-cultural and historical context. There is no single established truth about what fatherhood is. What is considered to be "good" or "appropriate" fatherhood, and how individuals live up to those ideals, is bound to history and socio-political context. From this perspective, "fatherhood" designates a social construction which incorporates the ideologies (norms, values, and discourses) and practices associated with being a father. However, in order not to conflate ideologies and behavior, which might obscure the analysis, it is useful to father. make a distinction between fatherhood and fathering. Fatherhood is a social institution which implies the norms, values, public meanings, and discourses connected to being a father; that is, it concerns the rights, duties, and responsibilities attached to the status of being a father. This involves legislation and informal institutions regulating rights to custody, child support, alimony, etc. Fathering, on the other hand, refers to the "performance" of fatherhood, to fathers' actual behavior and practices. This involves interacting with children and partners, such as participating in maternity care events (e.g. ultrasound), childcare (changing diapers), childrearing (teaching manners), and applying for paternity leave. Certainly, fatherhood and fathering are intertwined. The culture of fatherhood indeed influences the ways a father reflects on his role as a father and the way he acts towards his children, i.e. his fathering. However, norms, values, and attitudes do not always coincide with behavior. Surveys show that fathering, i.e. men's actual participation in raising and caring for children, has changed much less than

attitudes and norms, with some exceptions among the educated middle class and in some particular countries, such as the Nordic ones. Actual fathering does not necessarily conform to prevalent ideologies or public discourse on fatherhood.

### 2.3.2 The Absence of Fatherhood

Father absence is a term used by researchers to indicate that a child has lived for part or all of their childhood in a house without their biological father. This will be because the child's parents have split up or because they never lived together in the first place. It does not usually apply to children whose fathers have died, as this is a very different kind of psychological event. It also does not mean that the children had no contact with their father or that they did not have a good relationship with their father. You can see your father very regularly and get on really well, but still be termed 'father absent', simply because of your living circumstances.

Fatherhood can have an impact on each stage of development, especially during childhood and adolescence. As fathers provide support for their children's basic needs and continuity of care, they help children develop a sense of trust and confidence (Erikson, 1997). When the men talked about what being a father entails, they mentioned a range of characteristics and responsibilities; being loved and having a sense of purpose and fulfillment were some of the rewards of being a father. All of the men who had been abandoned by their own fathers placed great importance on always 'being there' for their children.

Being a father means that you have got children who really depend on you for their upbringing, particularly when they are young. The father is a role model that children can look to for some of their initial lessons in life - how to approach or tackle things. You have to provide for them, make sure they get a good education and that they grow up as responsible citizens. You need to be there to provide advice and backup whenever it's needed.

But the men's absence from the home because of their involvement in paid work meant that a consistent or



meaningful presence as disciplinarian or moral guide proved difficult to sustain. As a result, the construction of 'father as mentor' sat uneasily beside another interpretation of being a father - that of 'father as friend'. Not being involved in the routine day-to-day care of children has meant that the men seized on an interpretation of fathering which built on their power to accommodate their children's desires. Fathers can be seen to be exercising power over their children and granting them privileges while retaining control over the extent and nature of their own participation in parenting. But this control is not without its paradoxes and contradictions (McKee and O'Brien, 1982). For instance, while a father may be seen to have greater power in the family than his partner or children, his long periods of absence from the family and its activities means that he is most often unable to be a central figure within it.

Donaldson (1987) mentions the desire of fathers to live through their male children, either as a way of overcoming the frustrations of a meaningless or demeaning work situation, or to vindicate ongoing exposure to its indignities. A different interpretation of the significance of fathers' differentiation of male and female children has been suggested by Lynn Segal in her pithy observation that 'it is insufficient for the men to be distinguished from the boys; the men must be distinguished from the women (Segal, 1991). Segal goes on to say that without the return of 'full-blooded patriarchy', many men are condemned to live with ever increasing levels of insecurity over the distinctiveness of their 'manliness'. In other words, if masculinity is best understood as a heterogeneous set of ideas and practices constructed around assumptions of power which subordinate women, then practices and perceptions which support this differentiation and subordination within the family are a fundamental cornerstone of this status quo.

According to McLanahan, Tach, and Schneider (2013), in their study about *The Causal Effects of Father Absence*. They conclude that there is four factors

that causing the absence of fatherhood in a family:

1. Education
  - a) Test Scores
  - b) Educational Attainment
  - c) Attitudes , Performances and Engagement
2. Mental Health
  - a) Adult Mental Health
  - b) Social Emotional Problems
  - c) Substance use
3. Labor Force
4. Searching for Identity
5. Family Formation and Stability
  - a) Marriage and Divorce
  - b) Early Childbearing

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Method

The research method that used by the writer is qualitative research. The study is conducted by using qualitative method through the study of literature. Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight (2001:64) defined that qualitative research as empirical research where the data in the form the number, whereas quantitative research are in the form of numbers. Hughes and Tight conclude that qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analyzing the data in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible. Meanwhile, According to Strauss and Colbin (1990), qualitative research is kind of research with resulting inventions that cannot reach out by using statistical procedures or with other quantification way. Qualitative research is used to examine people's life, history, attitude and organization functional, social movement or kind ship relation. It is clear that instrument of the qualitative research is not a number or statistical procedure.

The research begins with choosing one novel as the media, after that the research continues with finding the related materials such as gender, masculinity and the absence of fatherhood theory. Then, the writer collects the sources from textbooks, journals, and articles from Gunadarma University library. The writer also visits other libraries in other universities like University of Indonesia in order to complete the information needed.

### 3.2 Source of the Data

In this undergraduate thesis, the writer chose the novel entitled *Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions* (1998) by Daniel Wallace. The writer uses this novel as primary data to analyze one of the main characters in this novel, Edward Bloom and William Bloom. The writer also conducted library research through internet in order to get the information about the absence of fatherhood theory and masculinity theory.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The technique of collecting the data as follows: First, the writer read the novel entitled *Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions*, in this novel tells about a young man, William Bloom at the deathbed of his father, Edward Bloom, trying to figure out who his father really is as a person. William's father was always telling tall tales of his life and events that happened to him, clearly describing his life as completely extraordinary. In William's time with his father he records four separate 'takes' of his father's death. Each 'take' recognizing Edward's journey through life and everything he encountered, answering life's biggest questions and spending time together. Despite all the stories, smiles and time shared together, nothing could prepare Edward for what was going to happen during his final death 'take'.

Second, after the writer reading the novel repeatedly, the writer found some interesting problem which can be used as undergraduate thesis topic by finding the theories related to the absence of fatherhood and masculinity. Third, the writer started to collect the data from the novel by underlining the dialogues which is indicated the absence of fatherhood and masculinity from main character in this novel.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

After collecting the data from the novel, the writer tried to re-scan the data and chose some narration or dialogue from Edward Bloom and William Bloom that appropriate and delete the inappropriate data which unrelated with the absence of fatherhood and fatherhood as masculinity problem as theme in this

undergraduate thesis, for make the writer easier to analyze and then, the writer tried to analyze by synchronizing between the data and the theories.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Summary of Novel

*Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions* The novel begins with the birth of Edward Bloom in Ashland, Alabama. He was a special kind of person, he had a way with animals, on his ninth birthday it snowed in Alabama-which never happened, he never forgot a name or a face and by his twelfth year he knew everybody in his hometown by the sound their shoes made when they walked and he always wanted to be a big fish in the world.

During Edward's youth he had several encounters in strange situations. He saved a beautiful, young woman in 'Blue River' from a 'snake'. To show her appreciation for Edward's courageous act, she renamed the river after him, "Edwards Grove". Edward also tamed a Giant named Karl to become a framer and grow his own crops to have his own food instead of destroying parts of Ashland in search of food. He was taken underwater by a massive catfish, only to witness a section of Ashland that was covered by a flood, but there were houses and farms still intact and people as well. During Edward's seventeenth year he came to a realization that in his heart he knew that he had to leave Ashland. The only way to leave Ashland was through the place that had no name, where hardly anyone who entered was allowed to leave, and when people did leave, it seldom happened. In order to leave the place that had no name, the person had to get passed a vicious dog named Dog. The people who were permitted to leave were to the decision of Dog. Edward was one of the few who managed to overcome Dog and escape the place that had no name. On Edward's escape into the new world he had little money and food and slept beneath the stars. He was robbed that night by two men who severely beat him and robbed him of every last dollar. The next morning Edward trudged through the area not looking for anything or anyone and happened to come across an old store. The family that owned the store



took Edward in and helped him get better and to show his appreciation he helped around the store and even created a new name- Ben Jimson's Country Store and a slogan- Buy one, get one free" that would soon make the Jimson's very wealthy. Edward stayed with the Jimson's for a while and soon decided that after he had a little nest egg, he would depart and further explore the world he would soon come to live in.

Edward left the Jimson's in hope to expand his understanding of the nature of the world and attend college. After wandering around he soon came to a city called Auburn where such a college existed. Being unfamiliar with the area and arriving in the evening, he was exhausted and hungry. Edward found an old woman took in boarder, to which he stayed for three days and three nights. When Edward's stay was up, he asked to old woman if there was anything he could do to repay her for her kindness and hospitality. She told Edward that she had a glass eye that was stolen when a group of youths had broken into her home one evening. Edward soon enough found the group of youths who had taken the glass eye and sure enough was successful in retrieving it, but not without encountering Don Price.

While Edward stayed in Auburn it was to his great joy and misfortune that he fell madly in love for the first time with the most beautiful woman in the town of Auburn, Miss Sandra Kay Templeton. Edward adored everything about Sandra. Soon enough Edward managed to gather up the courage to make his move and ask her on a date, but before doing this, he came to the bitter reality that Sandra was involved with the boy who had stolen the old lady's glass eye- Don Price. Sandra agreed to go on a date with Edward that Friday night even though that morning Don asked her to marry him. When Don found out about the date he was incredibly angry. Three weeks after Edward and Sandra went on their first date they were driving around aimlessly one evening when they were faced with Don Price aggressively trying to win back Sandra. Despite his efforts, soon enough Edward and Sandra married.

In Edward's early adulthood, when Sandra and he were settled down, they

had a son, William. Edward loved Sandra and William endlessly. He was the proper father to William and a good husband to Sandra. Soon enough, Edward was in search for something more. He fell in love with a town called Specter and all of the people in it. Edward decided to purchase all of Specter with hopes to achieve the satisfaction of having more, when he unexpectedly fell in love for the second time with Jenny Hill. Jenny's property was the last part of land that Edward purchased. Edward would travel back and forth from Ashland to Specter and vice versa, which in turn meant that when he was gone, it was for a long time and when he was back, he wasn't back for very long. During his absence from Specter, Jenny became very depressed, to the point where she no longer cared about the garden or housework and when Edward did return, the swamp was too deep and he could not get through it, so he had to come back home to Ashland with Sandra and William. After this event, Edward just seemed to be a very sad man of few words.

As Edward's began to age, so did his health. He developed an illness that had spread throughout his entire body that was not curable. In his time of sickness he lived at home all of the time, which was something that he hated. The family doctor, Dr. Bennett, delivers the news of Edward's condition to the family four times throughout the novel and acknowledges that if Sandra and William have any peace to make with Edward that they best do it that moment. Edward's old age did not put him to death, but instead he became a swimmer. His almost debilitating illness meant that he would hardly ever exercise, so he put the pool in their backyard to good use and began swimming every day. He was a great swimmer and William swore when his father dove into the water once, he thought he had seen a fish. Edward was swimming one day while William watching and Edward's lungs filled with water. Edward was admitted to the hospital when he had a request of Edward to sneak him out of the hospital and take him to "Edward's Grove". The two drove North on Highway 1 until they reached their destination, where William carried his father down to the water and watched as he jumped into the river and

became a fish. As William grew older and time passed on he had heard stories of lives being saved, wishes granted, or children carried for miles on his back, but no one believes these stories. No one believes a word.

## 4.2 Result of Study

The character of Edward Bloom can be viewed as a rounded, dynamic and major protagonist. Edward shows himself to be a round character because even though his career was as a traveling salesman, he lived the life of adventurous man wanting to accomplish many goals in life. Edward was a good father in the beginning, but slowly became a shadowy figure to his son, William; this showed him to be a dynamic character. Edward was a major character because William, his son, told the stories of his father's past but wants to know who his father really was. Edward loved telling stories about himself but told them in a lying or mythical way; he made himself out to be a hero in his son's eyes. Edward, being good with animals showed him to be the main protagonist.

### 4.2.1 The Factors Causing the Absence of Fatherhood in Big Fish

Many masculinists agree on what constitutes father absence. The website dictionaryfordads.com has an article entitled, "Absent Fathers." It explains that "absent fathers usually do not reside with their children or are away for long periods of time. This includes fathers who are divorced, separated, incarcerated, in the military, travel regularly for business and are absent in the home more than they are present". The writer would like to explore the factor causing the absence of fatherhood as reflected in the novel entitled Big Fish. In particular, the writer focuses on the activities and interactions through narrations and dialogues.

The reason why there are more absence fathers than ever are various. Divorce, for example, it means that most children live with their mother and see their father significantly less that was one of the factors causing the absence of fatherhood. Meanwhile other explanations of the absence of fatherhood is death, followed by fathers working as labor force, many fathers

work over 50-70 hours per week or spend lengths of time on business trips.

According to McLanahan, Tach and Schneider (2013, 399) these are factor causing the absence of fatherhood: Education, Mental Health, Labor Force, Searching for Identity the last, Family Formation and Stability.

#### a. Labor Force

In this novel, the factor of the absence of fatherhood is because of "men go to work" as labor because father as "breadwinner" and financial support for their family. Being a father is important to men. It fulfills part of their lives. Men must work constantly to keep this masculine control and dominance in place and the place of subordinated men is rendered ambiguous in this account.

In this situation, Edward Bloom is not willing to accept the easy way out by making excuses for himself in terms of the need to build up his career and provide financial support for his growing family. He knows he had missed much in his children's growing up years, and that he cannot turn the clock back in order to regain the considerable quality time he had lost. This painful realization leads to a decision to make a substantive change his life. Placing the ideal of the hero into a contemporary framework meant, among other things, that men were always to be the breadwinner for the family. A man's role is that of breadwinner. This can be proved as follows:

..... He wasn't there very often during the week, because he was on the road, selling, following money-working. (Big Fish, 124)

Modern masculinities are centrally constructed around work. The lack of work and engaging in labor which no longer has an associated status or meaning have produced a variety of responses from men.

William also tells that his father gone weeks at a time, because his duty, father as a breadwinner. His father was gone weeks at a time, and comes home tired and sad, with little to say other than he missed his family. In other words, his family moved to a bigger

house in a nicer street. For William, no matter if his father works hard as ever while his mother could raise him. Meanwhile, a present father is always better than an absent father in a family. This can be proved as follows:

*Hard work, good luck, and a number of canny investments make my father a wealthy man....* (Big Fish, 141)

According to McLanahan, Tach and Schneider (2013), labor force is one of the factors causing the absence of fatherhood. In *Big Fish*, William tells that when his family moved to Birmingham, Alabama, his father started to get a job. He assumed that he must perform many great labors before he assumed his rightful place. Because, father as a breadwinner. This can be proved as follows:

*....His first labor was to work as a veterinarian's assistant. As a veterinarian's assistant, his most important responsibility was to clean out the dog kennels and cat cages. Every morning when he arrived, the cages and kennels would be nearly filled with feces. Some of it would lie on the paper he'd placed down the night before, but still more would be smeared on the walls, and some of it on the very animals themselves. My father cleaned this mess up every morning and every evening. He did it until the cages shone, until you could have eaten a meal off the surface of the floor, so spotless and clean had he left it.* (Big Fish, 93)

Through the narration above, it proved that labor is one of the factors causing the absence of fatherhood in *Big Fish*.

#### **b. Searching for Identity**

Searching for identity is also one of the factors causing the absence of fatherhood as reflected in *Big Fish*. William tell that when he was born, his father was listening to the biggest football game of the year, Auburn against Alabama, until the tops of his shoulders were as red as an apple. It indicates that his father still searching for masculine identity by

listening football game, because everyman do the same thing. This can be proved as follows:

*The day I was born Edward Bloom was listening to a football game on a transistor radio he had tucked into his shirt pocket. He was also mowing the lawn and smoking a cigarette. ....* (Big Fish, 119)

The following narration that has the same case but different expressions: *On the day I was born, my father finished the front and then started the backyard with a renewed sense of optimism....* (Big Fish, 120)

And another narration:

*On the day I was born, my father stopped mowing the lawn and listened to the announcer's voice on the radio....* (Big Fish, 121)

Identity becomes a projection of a person to find the character in the socio-cultural construction. The identity will be a differentiator for one individual to another individual. Because father figure is very important in the family.

The writer concludes through the narrations above indicates that, his father he never be his side when he was born, which is makes the conflict between father and son. Because his father still searches for his masculine identity. One of the impacts of the absence of fatherhood makes the connection of father-son emotional.

#### **4.2.2 The Conflict of Father and Son in Big Fish**

The writer also would like to explore the emotional responses and distrust between father and son as reflected in the novel entitled *Big Fish*. In particular, the writer focuses on the activities and interactions through narration and dialogues.

Children need both a mother and father presuming that mothering and fathering involve gender-exclusive capacities. The "essential father" is a disciplinarian, problem solver, and playmate who provide crucially masculine parenting. (Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996; Wilson, 2002) boys need father; proponents claim to develop appropriate



masculine identity and to inhibit antisocial behaviors like violence, criminality, and substance abuse; in contrast, fathers foster heterosexual femininity in daughters and help deter promiscuity, teen pregnancy, and welfare dependency. This can be proved as follows:

"No more stories, okay? No more stupid jokes."

"They're stupid?" "I mean that in the nicest possible way."

"Just for a little while," I say, "let's talk, okay? Man to man, father to son. No more stories." "Stories? You think I tell stories? You wouldn't believe the stories my dad used to tell me. You think I tell you stories, when I was boy I heard stories. He'd wake me up in the middle of the night to tell me a story. It was awful."

"But even that's a story, Dad. I don't believe it for a minute." " (Big Fish, 113)

This indicates the impact of the absence of fatherhood make a conflict between father and son that cause emotional responses and distrust. William needs to trying to figure out his father, but he always telling tall tales of his life and events that happened to him. Whereas William always saw his father as an irresponsible liar, he comes to understand his father's exaggerations and their roots in reality. Nevertheless, Edward has a far greater knowledge of his life than William had regarding his own. He places great emphasis on the importance of raising son to become independent adults, and claims that he should have encouraged this aspect more in their upbringing. This can be proved as follows:

.... "Even when you're serious you can't keep from joking. It's frustrating, Dad. It keeps me at arm's length. It's like- you're scared of me or something."

"Scared of you?" he says, rolling his eyes.

"I'm dying and I'm supposed to be scared of you?"

"Scared of getting close to me" (Big Fish, 114)

As William said that he always saw his father as an irresponsible liar. William got a bunch of doubts from his father story. His father's story always made his stomach 'sick' and he feels it is strong again. It also makes shocked to his system of having learned more about his father in the last few seconds than he has in their lifetime that preceded them. This can be proved as follows:

"Who really knows for certain? Proof is unavailable."

..... "Still," he says, "if I shared my doubts with you, about God and love and life and death, that's all you'd have: a bunch of doubts. But now, see, you've got all these great jokes." "They're not all so great," I say. .... (Big Fish, 76)

Through the dialogues above indicates the impact of the absence of fatherhood make a conflict between father and son that cause emotional responses and distrust.

#### **4.2.3. Masculinity Sees the Fatherhood in Big Fish**

The concepts of father and fatherhood are often used interchangeably, but it is important to distinguish between the idea of (biological) father and somebody who undertakes the fatherhood role. A biological connection with a child is not necessary for successful fathering. More important are love, reliability, availability, dependability and support. Fatherhood is sometimes understood as a central part of unequal and oppressive patriarchal relations, an estate opposed to motherhood. Instead of engaging in a futile discussion about whether fatherhood is more important than motherhood (or fathers more important than mothers), the approach now is to focus on the needs of the child (Morell, 2005:86). He also define that the process of becoming men involves constructing masculine identities. Young men need to develop masculinities that include self-respect and respect for others. Adult men face similar challenges as they give meaning to manhood. Manhood is often associated with becoming a father, and being responsible for, and loving towards

children is one way of contributing to a new, equitable gender order.

How does one acquire masculinity? Dover (2001) identifies a life course similar to that described by Silberschmidt and Heald. "Becoming married and having children are also important markers of having achieved adulthood" (Dover, 2001, p. 136). As a boy matures, physically:

*He will increasingly be expected to help his father and other kinsmen with male tasks. He also takes on less deferential body postures to older males. At the same time a male superiority is assumed even to his mother: he sits on the stool while she sits on the floor. (Dover, 2001, p. 136)*

Kimmel (1996) suggested there were three dominant ideals of manhood: The Genteel Patriarch, The Heroic Artisan and The Self-Made Man.

#### **a. The Genteel Patriarch**

The Genteel Patriarch is one of the three dominant ideal of manhood by Kimmel's theory. It comprised the classical European definition of man. He was the dignified aristocrat, a man with an upper-class code of honor and a character of exquisite tastes and refined sensibilities. To the Genteel Patriarch, manhood meant property ownership and a benevolent patriarchal authority at home, providing for the moral instruction for his wife or family. His was a world encompassing love, compassion, duty; largely exhibited through public philanthropy and usefulness.

William tells that when his father found his first great love. He fell in love with the most beautiful woman in the town of Auburn, and possibly in the entire state of Alabama, Miss Sandra Kay Templeton. Why misfortune? Because he was not the only man in Auburn, possibly not the only man in the rest of the entire state of Alabama to be in love with her. He took a number and headed to the end of the line. This can be proved as follows:

*"I love your daughter, Mr. Templeton," my father said. "And I'm going to love her and take care of her for the rest of*

*my life." My father had thought of what he was going to say for a long time, and he'd come up with these simple, yet profound, words. He thought they said everything that needed saying, and hoped Mr. Templeton would think so, too. (Big Fish: 90)*

According to Kimmel, The Genteel Patriarch, manhood meant property ownership and a benevolent patriarchal authority at home, providing for the moral instruction for his wife or family. His was a world encompassing love, compassion, duty; largely exhibited through public philanthropy and usefulness.

Through dialogue above indicates compassion duty as one of the characteristic from The Genteel Patriarch when Edward Bloom tells to her father that he falls in love with his daughter, Sandra Kay "And I'm going to love her and take care of her for the rest of my life".

#### **b. The Heroic Artisan**

The Heroic Artisan is two of the three dominant ideals of manhood by Kimmel, 1996. The hero as the central archetype of man's search for himself. Meanwhile, The Heroic Artisan as the best ideal of manhood. Man, in search of his own individuation and self-realization, discovers the opposites within himself and sets out to reconcile them. Heroes do not represent definable human figures, but what we actually seek is the mythological ideals to be achieved through heroism. Like the gods of creations whom he resembles and emulates, the hero of myth brings forth order out of chaos, light out of darkness, knowledge out of ignorance.

William tells how his father tamed a giant named Karl was as tall as any two men, as wide as any three, and as strong as any ten. His face and arms bore the scars of a life lived brutally, a life closer to that of animals than of men. And such was his demeanor. One day, the people of Ashland would find whole cornfields ravaged, their apple trees bare, the water tower dry, half a dozen dogs came up missing. It seemed the very life of the town was threatened. So, his father came up with a plan, he headed for the mountains, where he knew of a

cave. This is where he thought Giant's lived. After that, he offered the Giant to eat him as a human sacrifice from Ashland. This can be proved as follows:

..... "What do you mean, that's why you've come?" "For you to eat me," he said. "I am the first sacrifice." "The first . . . sacrifice?" "To you, O great Karl! We submit to your power. In order to save the many, we realize we must sacrifice a few. (Big Fish: 35-36)

According to Kimmel, The Heroic Artisan is the best ideal of manhood. Man, in search of his own individuation and self-realization, discovers the opposites within himself and sets out to reconcile them. Heroes do not represent definable human figures, but what we actually seek is the mythological ideals to be achieved through heroism. The dialogue above, Edward becomes hero to save his town from the giant by saying "I am the first sacrifice".

### **c. Self-Made Man**

Self-made man is the last. A model that derives its identity from activities in the public sphere, measured by accumulated wealth and status, by geographical and social mobility. Self-Made Man represented a form of the new manhood. The ideal of public usefulness through community service gave way to individual achievement. In a land of immigrants and democratic ideals, the Self-Made Man seemed to be born with America. Constantly on the go, competitive, restless, aggressive, chronically insecure, he was a man desperate to achieve some form of stability in masculine identity, but rarely stuck around long enough to put down cultural roots.

William tells that when his father begins to spend his money in unpredictable ways. One day he realizes that there is something missing in his life. Then, he decides to buy Specter that has special somber quality. He says to himself, a quality not unlike living under water, which he can appreciate. It is a sad place, actually, and has been for years, since the railroad was shut down. Or the coal mines dried up. Or the way it seems that Specter has just been forgotten, that the world has passed it

by. And though Specter did not have much use for the world anymore, it would have been nice to be part of it, to have been invited. This can be proved as follows:

"This is the quality my father falls in love with, and this is the reason he makes the town his own..." (Big Fish, 144)

"And in just this way, slowly but quite surely, my father buys Specter. Every square inch of it." (Big Fish, 145)

Through the narrations above represent to The Self Made Man from Edward Bloom, when he buys a town, Specter (a town somewhere in Alabama or Mississippi or Georgia) in order to save it. The first thing he does is to purchase all the land surrounding Specter, and then he purchases the farm, stores, and houses. But, the people from Specter were not asked to leave or pay rent or anything. They were just asked to keep doing as they were doing. He was never a wealthy man, but he had made other men rich. In that way, he could make sure the town would never die.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The writer concludes that the presence of fatherhood is really important and masculinity also represent as fatherhood figure become more important in a family. Throughout the novel the reader is involved in the relationship with Edward and his son, William, have together. William takes this as his chance to finally get to know the mystery of who his father really is as a person and what he endured in his life. The relationship between Edward and William aids in displaying the character archetype of 'Father-Son Conflict' and then William is finally learning how he will be able to get to bottom of the truth and find a way of truly understanding his father.

In order to get the data with qualitative method, the writer found two factors causing the absence of fatherhood. Labor, is one of the factors the absence of fatherhood labor because Edward as a father also as 'breadwinner' and financial support for their family by using McLanahan, Tach and Schneider



(2013) theory. His first labor was as a veterinarian's assistant, second labor was as a sales clerk in the lingerie section of a department store and the last labor was performed with a wild dog. Searching for identity is also the factors causing the absence of fatherhood as reflected in *Big Fish*. William tells that when he was born, his father was not there. He was listening to a football game on a radio, mowing the lawn to finish the front and then started the backyard also smoking a cigarette.

In this undergraduate thesis is not only discussing about the absence of fatherhood as a main problem in the family but also provides the conflict of father and son that causing the emotional responses as complements. William always saw his father as an irresponsible liar. William got a bunch of doubts from his father's story. It makes distrust or even miss connection between father and son.

The writer also measuring each component of paternal involvement: paternal engagement, accessibility (availability); and responsibility using Lamb et al theory (1985). In engagement; and responsibility element, Edward proved that he is a good father when William was a kid. But, there is no accessibility (availability) element which can be proved from Edward itself. Thus, it makes Edward as a father became a shadowy figure to his son.

Edward bloom was ideal man, because he involves the three dominant ideal of manhood: The Genteel Patriarch, The Heroic Artisan and The Self-Made Man, Kimmel (1996). In this novel tells that masculinity from Edward Bloom takes on Genteel Patriarch when he tell her father that he falls in love with Sandra Kay, then The Heroic Artisan when he tamed the Giant named Karl, who was destroying Ashland, stealing the citizen's food and generally causing terror over the entire town and the last The Self-Made Man from Edward Bloom when he buys a town, Specter and when he goes to war as a soldier.

Be a good father, father must be active as a breadwinner prepared to balance work and family life, must participate in child rising and childcare: as forming identity, as a

provider of safety and comfort also as forming character of the children's physical and emotional needs.

## 5.2 Future Research

The study of masculinism is very complex problem and very rare to discuss because the studies are still limited, as we know that there are a lot other writers who discuss about feminisms.

The writer admitted that there are many lack of knowledge about the theory in this undergraduate thesis. The writer suggests other researcher to be able to deepen knowledge about masculinism in literature and found new perspectives and uses other literary works, such as American or British drama even poetry.

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