

I. Male Homosociality, Masculinity and *The Godfather*

Men, who have always enjoyed the superior stature in their relationship with the female counterparts, have often (both consciously and unconsciously) found themselves entangled in the complex patterns of relationship, power struggles not only with the fairer sex but also with and among themselves. There is unspoken but all-evident hostility, there is a fair degree of compassion if not fraternity among themselves, and there is also, with them a complex pattern of relationship that shapes their behavior, indoctrination, education and shaping of their own being. Masculinity has always been something desired of, talked about but not surprisingly evaded critical inquiries regarding its evolution through time and the nature of things that 'happen' to the 'causing' masculinity. Male homosociality has always been something not so unfamiliar yet so alien because of the position of masculinity in the society itself. Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*, the case of the current research is a tale of male fraternity and modern masculinity that manifests itself into the crime world that Puzo chose as his subject matter in his narrative of a patriarch who goes by the name Don Vito Corleone. This paper delves into the nature and patterns of male relationships in the novel and will try to shed some light on the complex but 'always-existent' prototype of relationships that have shaped male bonding and also hostility—a love-hate relationship—behind the apparent respect and admiration for each other.

While the all-cherished concept of masculinity was running its due course, history, contingent that it is, had other plans for it. With time, the rise in feminist movement, gay and lesbian culture, in a way started giving blow to the macho man culture. In response, masculinity craved for expressions of reassertion of its under-threat

charisma through arts and literature in crime fictions, buddy movies and war movies, to name the few. These artistic expressions often vested itself into these forms of art and literature not just leaning on the assumed virtue of being the 'superior' in the gender equation but by not giving a significant space to women protagonists and subjects in the literary texts and visual representations in paintings and movies.

Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* is a crime fiction dealing with Don Corleone- the godfather, known, revered and feared by the underground for his wit, wisdom, cold gravity and masculinity. The novel with its all dominating male characters with an air of masculinity is often tinged with the color of male bonding or homosociality. Puzo, an American male writer, seems to be taking pleasure in writing about crime world- the Sicilian mafias, and *The Godfather*, which is populated with brave men with a tinge of admiration and fascination. The novel is a tale of male homosociality, associating it with all the male virtues and vices with least trace of feminine virtues and company. In Hagen's world, "The Corleones' world, the physical beauty, the sexual power of women, carried not the slightest weight in worldly matters. It was a private affair, except, of course, in matters of marriage and family disgrace (60)."

In one of the heated exchanges between Michael and Kay, Michael tells, "I won't be telling you what happened at the office every day. I won't be telling you anything about my business. You'll be my wife but you won't be my partner in life, as I think they say. Not an equal partner. That can't be." (63)

Underneath this apparent rant to a wife from a "superior" male in a patriarchal social interaction, we can capture a glimpse of the queer sense of male dissociation with their female counterparts in their all-important 'business' where little is deemed

necessary to communicate with their better halves. Looking at the tone in which Michael communicates with Kay the above mentioned dialogue we can sense two important implications, he is not just implying to the close-to-nothing importance ascribed to a female protagonist but also alluding to the all-encompassing men's world where men come and play.

This paper uses the theory of Gender and Masculinity as its critical tool to look into the issue of male homosociality, male bonding in the wake of the assumed crisis in masculinity so arisen due to various factors ranging from economic to social, academic to political, in Puzo's crime fiction *The Godfather*. Besides, the paper also takes inputs from the discourse of masculinity in its relation to the political change and fast-growing media culture in the western society in general and American masculinity. All in all, the theory and discourse of masculinity will be the chief tool of examination in this research.

The Godfather by Mario Puzo is a crime fiction set against the post World War II American time. It's a tale of family, pride, honor, love, male chauvinism if not gallantry and also the 'Family', narrating a tale of rise to power of the Corleone family. Through the tale of not-so-heroic but also not anti-hero Don Corleone—the head of the Corleone family—the story evolves as a tale of valor, love, deceit, vengeance, vendetta and courage in the face of danger. The storyline follows the life of young Vito Corleone, the lone survivor of a family vendetta against his family in his native home town of Sicily who is later transported to New York just to evolve into a most-feared, revered, underworld don. But his path to the 'success', if we could call it one, is not an easy one. The ascent itself carries with it a grim face of Yankee society where a man is forced to pave his way crushing the evil forces if one has to reign supreme. As his engagement in

the gangland business makes steady progress establishing him in the underground operations in New York he also mulls the cold satisfaction of vengeance which he successfully carries out on his return to his hometown in Sicily. Upon his return to New York from Sicily, he slowly but steadily ascends to the newer heights of the profession he chose and eventually establishes himself as one of the heads of city's ruling families—a place of great power position. He is soon famous, prosperous, feared, revered Godfather, Don Vito Corleone.

Vito has three sons—the hot-headed Sonny, inept and weak-willed Fredo and Michael, a well educated war veteran, who is torn between family responsibility and the inheritance of violence and power. Vito's daughter Connie, who is married to Carlo in the opening of the book, is a pampered daughter of a powerful father and big brothers. Her husband Carlo, a smalltime hoodlum, is a womanizer and mistreats Connie that eventually leads to family tragedy of Sonny's murder. As Vito rises to newer heights in his underground operations, the other five ruling Mafia families asks for his support and offers to join their narcotics business that he refuses outright, instigating a brutal gang war that eventually results in a failed life attempt on him.

Wounded and bed-ridden Vito passes command of family to Sonny. In the mean time, Michael in an act to avenge his father's death kills a police officer and must hide in Sicily. While in Sicily, Michael falls in love and marries again but his wife is murdered in a failed plot to assassinate him. In New York, Sonny brutally thrashes Carlo for abusing and mistreating Connie. Later, Carlo arranges Sonny's murder. Having lost one of his sons, Vito capitulates and agrees to join the other five families in the narcotics business which he once shunned. He also arranges his youngest son Michael's safe return

to New York. Upon his arrival in New York, Michael—a changed man—carries with him the cold blood that has followed and the harm that has been caused to his family takes the business in his hand. He also looks out for Kay, his longtime partner, and persuades her to marry him. When Don Vito dies of a stroke, Michael takes the helm of the family and orders death of other New York families. He becomes the Godfather. His operations bloom and he ascends to the newer heights of power in the New York. But things do not get easier for Michael. He moves the family enterprise to Nevada in a bid to convince his wife that he is legitimizing his business as promise but rather than keeping the promise to his wife he have expanded the operations into hotels and gambling as he plans a complicated move into the less-restrictive Cuba. During this move, Michael has to make an alliance with Miami leader Hyman Roth, who plots Michael's murder by allying with Fredo as a man who serves as a go-between. While Michael tries to make peace with Roth things go out of hand as Roth fearfully goes to the F.B.I. Meanwhile, the Cuban operation also does not fare well due to rebel take over in the country. Times do not treat Michael well as he learns about his wife's miscarriage through his consigliere Tom Hagen. Michael, through his influence escapes the charge by getting the hearing dismissed. But the family trouble with Kay is still not over as she is adamant that their marriage is over. Mama Corleone dies at the family compound helping bring the remaining family close together. Connie also begs to be allowed to come in with the family and even Fredo has returned. But Michael must reestablish his eroded power by doing away with his enemies including Fredo. He succeeds once again and prevails.

Mario Puzo, an American novelist, screenwriter, essayist, short story writer and nonfiction writer was born on 1920 and has 26 works to his credit. Born and raised in an

impoverished community densely populated with Italian immigrants in New York known as Hell's Kitchen, he had tremendous knowledge on the issues that he deals with throughout his works. Growing up in such surroundings under an illiterate father who abandoned the family when Puzo was 12 might have tremendous impact on the subject matters that he chose for his works. Following his service at the army during the Second World War, Puzo attended New York's New School for Social Research and Columbia University.

Puzo published his first novel, *The Dark Arena*, in 1955. Nine years later, he published *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, which dealt with the immigration of an Italian family to America in the 1920's and the struggles they faced up through World War II. The novel is based on the experiences of Puzo's own family, and he considered *The Fortunate Pilgrim* to be his best work. Although his first two books received good literary reviews, neither earned Puzo any financial freedom.

Determined to write a book that would be a commercial success, Puzo published *The Godfather* in 1969. Based on the corruption, violence, and honor of the Mafia and themes involving love, family bondage, and Old World values, this novel was on The New York Times bestseller list for sixty-seven weeks and sold over twenty-one million copies worldwide. Puzo and film director Francis Ford Coppola converted Puzo's work into a sequel of three movies. The films were more romanticized and contained less sex and violence than Puzo's books. The first two movies, *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather: Part II* (1974), were movie blockbusters and earned several Academy Awards, including best picture and best screenplay. The central figure, Don Corleone, became a movie icon. The third film, *The Godfather: Part III* (1990), was not as

successful. During his writing career, Puzo co-wrote fifteen screenplays, including The Godfather movies, *Earthquake*, *Superman*, *Superman II*, and *Christopher Columbus*.

After writing about a Robin Hood-type character in *The Sicilian* (1984) and a global political thriller in *The Fourth K* (1990), Puzo returned to the world he had created in his Godfather series in *The Last Don* (1996), which was made into a two-part television series in 1997. Prior to his death from heart failure in 1999, Puzo spent the last three years of his life writing *The Family*, a novel dealing with an influential family in Renaissance Italy. The novel was completed by the woman with whom he spent the last twenty years of his life, Carol Gino (his wife had died in 1978). Puzo said that ultimate goal in writing was to depict immigrants' struggle in America and to make the story of ethnic isolation available to millions of readers. He did this, he said, to honor his mother.

Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* though not academically acclaimed has been the bestseller of all times with over 10 million copies sold within little over three years of its publication. Criticisms have sprung on the subject matter that Puzo traversed and commendations have been made on how he did it so vividly. John G. Cawelti, in his paper "The New Mythology of Crime", analyses *The Godfather's* exploration of the themes of crime and males' involvement in it and the male sinister fraternity of the crime world as:

Is it an expression of man's original sin, some basic instinct toward destruction or the result of an innate aggressiveness inherited from some primordial animal ancestor? These general answers share a certain unfortunate circularity: man loves crime stories because he has some basic trait which, among other things, manifests itself in a fascination with tales

of crime. It may be a matter of great theoretical or metaphysical interest whether this trait is a function of free will, evolution, heredity, or environment. (326)

James Thomas Chiampi in his essay "Resurrecting The Godfather", sheds light on the proscription of explicit sexuality in the "business" of the mafia fraternity, "As we have noted, in the world of *The Godfather*, as in the Counter-Reformation world of the Gerusalemme Liberata, trust, spontaneity, open-ness, and sexuality are resolutely proscribed. This puritan tinge fatally limits the role of women in the novel. It is clear that Sonny must be removed as head of the family when he talks "business" at the dinner table surrounded by women and children (27)."

Another critic Fred Gardaphé, in his essay "Re-Inventing Sicily in Italian American Writing and Film", writes about the Italian heritage and pride of the Corleone family, the pride of being a Sicilian man.

In *The Godfather*, Sicily becomes for Don Corleone what Krypton was to Superman: a legendary place of origins the experiences of which elevate him to the status of a hero, if not a god. This is exemplified best through the character of Michael Corleone, the one son who is closest to total assimilation into American life. Michael is sent to Sicily to hide out after avenging the attempted assassination of his father. He is also sent to Sicily to unlearn the American behavior that led him to do things like break the old country's code of silence. (60)

Michael S. Kimmel's essay "Men's Responses to Feminism at the Turn of the Century" talks about males' resort to homosociality owing to the rising threats from growing female consciousness and maintains;

The rise of feminism in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States provoked a variety of responses among American men and prompted what we might call a crisis of masculinity, because the meanings that had constituted traditional gender definitions were challenged. Men's responses included a frightened retreat to traditional configurations, the demarcation of new institutional spheres for the vigorous assertion of a renewed masculinity, and men's support for feminist claims. (262)

Barbara Simerka, in her paper "Homosociality and Dramatic Conflict: A Reconsideration of Early Modern Spanish Comedy", defining homosociality maintains, "The term "homosociality," as coined by Sedgwick, refers to a well-established custom in patriarchal societies: "the desire to consolidate partnerships with authoritative males in and through the bodies of females" in order to maintain the hierarchical status quo." (522)

A number of researches and papers has been conducted and reviewed on Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* but interestingly the issue of male homosociality has been either ignored or merely unnoticed. My task, thus, will be to explore on the issues of male homosociality and answer the questions which have to date remained unasked.

If we look at the trend in arts and literature during the period of 70s and 80s—the very time when Puzo's *The Godfather* came out—we can see the theme of male homosociality explored in the different forms of arts and literature of the time. There was

also an increasing trend of crime fictions and buddy movies telling tales of macho men depicting machismo and male masochism as a significant male virtue.

There have been various accounts of the allegorical significances of nostalgic narratives in revisionist westerns for North American society during the 1970s which are not relevant to the paper's present argument. What is most relevant to an analysis of representations of sex-gender in this cycle of films is the idea that the increasing popularity of buddy films in the 1970s and 1980s may have reflected more general male anxieties. The buddy movie represented an intensification of the (phallic) nostalgic mythologisation of the figure of the untrammelled western outlaw as anti-hero of the times (Wright, 1975; Films 1983). The visual and narrative ordering of the buddy film marginalised women, or excluded them entirely. This exclusion of 'the feminine' was motivated by the need to deny the destabilizing effects of feminism and to shore up the institution of homosociality itself.

If we pry into the origin of the term Homosociality—same-sex relationship sans sexual attraction such as friendship and mentorship—we can see the contribution of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick at its forefront. Sedgwick in her paper "Between Men", describes homosocial desire as:

a kind of oxymoron. "Homosocial" is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with "homosexual," and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexual'. In fact, it is applied to such activities as "male bonding," which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear

and hatred of homosexuality. To draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of "desire," of potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for man, in our society, is radically disrupted. (697)

Sedgwick is particularly conscious while she opts for the word 'desire' in place of 'love or longing' or any other words that may not efface the sexual connotation to an arguable degree. "For the most part, I will be using 'desire' in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of 'libido'—not for particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotionally charged, that shapes an important relationship." (Sedgwick 697) The term homosocial desire works as a paradox in a considerably larger degree. While it is meant to allude to the non-sexual aspects of a same-sex relationship that may manifest in relationships like friendship, mentorship, entitlement and the like, it comes in strict contrast with the homosexual aspect of relationship. In fact, homosocial interaction often springs from homophobia and disregard for anything that negates the masculinity.

Michael Corleone was the youngest son of the Don and the only child who had refused the great man's direction. He did not have the heavy, cupid-shaped face of the other children, and his jet black hair was straight rather than curly. His skin was a clear olive-brown hair that would have been called beautiful in a girl. He was handsome in a delicate way. Indeed there had been a time when the don had worried about his youngest son's

masculinity. A worry that was put to rest when Michael Corleone became seventeen years old. (16)

This research is interested in looking into the issues of male homosociality in the novel *The Godfather*. The research focuses on the relationship between the male characters in the novel and moves on to connect with the general theme of masculinity as experienced by the 20th century American society. Towards the second half of the 20th century, a lot of things happened in the world. By that time, the world had already experienced two World Wars the scars of which were pretty ugly, capitalism was changing the way of life of the people especially men, there were voices of feminism just around the corner and the traditional notion of masculinity was, in a way, challenged. Humanity had little to do with the 'rough and tough' cowboys as feminism and capitalism was emerging as the new machine, the talk of the town. To this change, masculinity was, in a way, responding through the works of art and literature, visual representations like buddy movies. And Puzo's *The Godfather* served nothing less than a masterpiece of male assertion of masculinity, be it in crime scene that is not all 'heroic' as sanctioned by the humanity's moral code or be it in their self-assumption of the role of the protector and provider. The novel served as a blueprint of modern masculinity—a macho man who faces danger, haves his way, plays the protector of those under him—and also gives us an insight into what makes man a Man. The idea of 'security' or a secured life even in the world of crime where life seems to be hanging on a fine balance is not possible without the nod of the don or the Godfather in the novel. And this very security and sense of protection that people sought and found around the Godfather in the novel is, in a way regarded as the real kingdom of freedom. So, in a way, freedom itself was defined within a Men's space.

The Great Depression increased the power of Vito Corleone. And indeed it was about that time he came to be called Don Corleone. Everywhere in the city, honest men begged for the honest work in vain. Proud men demeaned themselves and their families to accept official charity from a contemptuous officialdom. But the men of Don Corleone walked the streets with their head held high, their pockets stuffed with silver and paper money. With no fear of losing their jobs. And even Don Corleone, the most modest of men, could not help feeling the sense of pride. He was taking care of his world and his people. (213)

The novel has, in most of its instances, worked as a mouthpiece of male psyche of asserting masculinity by taking up different traditional roles that has helped establishing a male dominated world.

II. Male Homosociality in Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*

The idea of male homosociality and homosocial desire have always 'been there' with history dating back (probably) to the primal days of humanity when two distinct breeds of male and female were born, if not consciousness of difference was born. Men have always been men or tried to be so and female have remained true to their 'nature'. Though the idea of identity and self has always been contingent owing to the different cultural, historical, economic and social settings and constraints of which no matter on earth is immune to, the human race have, by and far, succeeded in forming one general case of identity differing one from the other. While the male homosociality has been shaped, to a larger degree, by masculinity the female bonding has taken up or embraced the 'feminine mystique'. That said, we can argue that male homosociality has always adhered to the ideals of masculinity and masculinity has always played decisive role in shaping the males' nature of relationship among and between themselves and with the other sex. If we look back at the history of humanity, the larger chunk of it has always been patriarchal with few exceptions like Amazonian civilization. Humanity, until, fairly, recently, has been patriarchal—men reigning supreme—and masculinity without surprise has been men's guiding principle. Male homosociality, on the other hand has always come to terms with the demands of masculinity.

Masculinity or rather the maintenance of it, however, has not experienced a smooth sail during the course of history. Men have persistently felt their masculinity challenged and the reasons may be myriad. The rise in feminist movements and escalating development of roles of women in the society, at least in the later half of last century, have posed significant challenge to the age-old masculinity. A general

consciousness that masculinity has been experiencing crisis has started haunting the modern men which Eisler and Skidmore would call 'masculine stress'. According to Eisler and Skidmore, who conducted study on masculinity on 1987, there are four mechanisms of masculinity that accompany masculine gender role that often result in emotional stress. They include: the emphasis on prevailing in situations requiring body and fitness, being perceived as emotional, the need to feel adequate in regard to sexual matters and work and because of social norms and pressures associated with masculinity (Eisler and Skidmore, 23).

This paper works on the assumption that masculinity has undergone crisis in the recent dates dating back to past few decades instigating men to work on regaining or reaffirming their questioned masculinity and heal up their bruised pride of the past. We are living at interesting times, so have everyone else, as we are moving with the time—the ever-changing and ever-flowing one. And everything under the sun is contingent and every ideal are but constructions and patriarchy and masculinity is no exception. In this regard Adam and Savran in the introduction to their collection of essays, *The Masculinity Studies Reader* maintains:

The introduction of European philosophy into the humanities opened up the possibilities of even more dramatic reconsiderations of gender. Among the most influential of those philosophical perspectives was deconstruction, which proposed that the western intellectual tradition was founded on a structure of binary oppositions that, when subjected to close analysis, would inevitable break down as a result of their own internal contradictions. Words (or signs) have no inherent meaning; rather their

connotations are derived in relation to other words, and those relationships are inevitably value-laden and hierarchical. The term *man* assumed significance through its pairings with its more degraded counterpart, *woman*. The "woman" of women's studies was suddenly open to radical interrogation, as a once relatively unified subject split into multiple and often conflicting interests. Deconstruction and related variants of poststructuralist theory questioned the stability and universality of all identity categories, positing the self as a mutable and fragmented effect of subjectivity. Influenced by poststructuralist theory, feminists came to see gender as a historically contingent construction, invariably constituted in and by its performance. (Adam and Savran 4)

The traditional notion of patriarchy was rapidly fading away with the new found consciousness or the postmodern consciousness. Antics were exposed and there was no longer any thing as ascription and universal value.

Masculinity has arguably experienced threat or has experienced challenges in the later half of last century. As the women rights movement got more vocal and men no longer were the bosses of the world, things were fast changing for traditional masculinity. The ideal depiction of modern men in media, arts and literature called for men with pumped up body frame, clean shaven face, 'metro sexual' has become the new face of male as they say, 'pink is the new black'. Things have undergone sea change for modern men, as it is no longer 'cool' to be fat and carry much prided moustache and beard. While women have started taking over male disciplines or areas that were primarily ascribed for male only like military service, masculinity or rather the

traditional notion of it has come under threat. Such is the case that in recent years many 'Man Laws' have been created, as a way for man to re-affirm their masculinity. Even in the field of art and literature, paintings and visual representations artists have started have either depicted or responded to this new-found male anxiety. For instance, there was a surge in buddy movies, crime fictions, war movies and arts that bespoke of traditional masculinity. And we have significant degree of evidences to believe that Puzo's *The Godfather*, as a novel, has served the interests of traditional masculinity within its well-knit storyline of a dark but charismatic patriarch.

In its simplest sense, the term 'homosociality' refers to a set of relationship between the individuals of same sex sans homoeroticism or a 'nonsexual interpersonal attractions'. According to Sedgwick, "Homosocial" is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with "homosexual," and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexual' (Sedgwick, 696). Male homosociality unlike the female homosociality, however, may be characterized by an acute "homophobia, and fear and hatred of homosexuality," connoting itself to male bonding. While Sedgwick opts for the word 'desire' in place of 'love', as claimed by her, she says,

For the most part, I will be using 'desire' in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of 'libido'—not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotionally charged, that shape an important relationship. How far this force is properly sexual

(what, historically, it means for something to be "sexual") will be an active question. (Sedgwick 697)

It is therefore safe to say that Male homosociality has more to do with guarding the masculinity and being true to the male fraternity rather than being attracted to each other. The relationship is that of respect, honor, valor and proving one's worth with the other and also living in accordance to the set standards of being a Man in the Men's world. Being a man and supporting a man has, until-recently, been the men's unwritten code. Strict adherence to the 'moral' codes like shunning homosexuality and supporting heterosexuality has been part of male fraternity or solidarity. Likewise, according to another critic Bird, homosociality refers to social bonds between persons of the same sex and, more broadly, to same-sex-focused social relations (Bird, 121).

Britton in his paper "Homophobia and Homosociality: An Analysis of Boundary Maintenance" has drawn an interesting link between homosociality—male assertion of masculinity—and homophobia—the fear and disgust for homoeroticism. He maintains that his paper empirically explores the utility of the concept of homosociality as a sociological explanation of homophobia:

This is a relatively new explanatory variable previously only theoretically linked with homophobia. It refers to social preference for members of one's own gender, but does not necessarily imply erotic attraction. Lipman Blumen (1975, 1976) notes that, in general, powerful social institutions are sex-segregated (male dominated) and posits that sexual activity within them maybe seen as troublesome by patriarchal society as a whole. Thus,

homophobia helps maintain the boundary between social and sexual interaction in sex-segregated society. (Britton, 43)

In a male-dominated social order that we call by name patriarchy, homosociality is something considered sacred as a norm and homophobia comes as no surprise.

Patriarchy is as Britton calls it a sex-segregated society where being heterosexual is being a homosocial being, conforming oneself to the norms of the society and being One in the herd. Therefore, homophobia adds up to fortifying the notion of male homosociality. The relationship to homophobia lies in maintaining the boundary between social and sexual interaction in a homosocially stratified society (Britton). Homophobia, therefore, may serve as a fine line of defense protecting society's gender definition within a homosocial system of stratification. In the same vein Sedgwick maintains:

"obligatory heterosexuality" is built into male-dominated kinship systems, or that homophobia is a necessary consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage . Clearly, however convenient it might be to group together all the bonds that link males to males, and by which males enhance the status of males—usefully symmetrical as it would be, that grouping meets with a prohibitive structural obstacle. From a vantage point of our society, at any rate, it has apparently been impossible to imagine a form of patriarchy without homophobia. (Sedgwick, 698)

In the novel, we can see a trace of homophobia when there is a description of Michael as a timid man lacking the masculine virtues:

Michael Corleone was the youngest son of the Don and the only child who had refused the great man's direction. He did not have the heavy, cupid-shaped face of the other children, and his jet black hair was straight rather than curly. His skin was a clear olive- brown hair that would have been called beautiful in a girl. He was handsome in a delicate way. Indeed there had been a time when the don had worried about his youngest son's masculinity. A worry that was put to rest when Michael Corleone became seventeen years old. (16)

Vito Corleone, Michael's father and protagonist of the novel, is a traditional man with an air of masculinity around him all the time, in the ways he talked, walked and did things. Whenever there is a description of Vito in the novel there is not a single trace of feminine sensibilities.

The Don was a real man at the age of twelve. Short, dark, slender, living in the strange Moorish –looking village of Corleone in Sicily, he had been born Vito Andolini, but when strange men came to kill the son of the man they had murdered, his mother sent the young boy to America to stay with friends. And in the new land he changed his name to Corleone to preserve some tie with his native village. (pg 192)

Likewise, in another instance, the narrator is generous with words while he talks about Don Vito Coleone, the Godfather, "But all great men are not born great, they grow great, and so it was with Vito Corleone (211)". There was only one person who could save him. He would go back to New York. He would go back to the one man with the power, the wisdom. He needed and a love he still trusted. His Godfather Corleone (13).

No characters in the novel matches the poise that the Godfather carries with him, he is always surrounded with an aura of masculinity—a combination of bravado, tact and wisdom.

Sedgwick in her paper "Between Men" discusses significant differences between male and female homosociality. She draws from Ronald Regan and Jesse Helmes while doing so. She writes:

The apparent simplicity—the unity—of the continuum between "women loving women" and women promoting the interests of women," extending over the erotic, social, familial, economic, and political realms, would not be so striking if it were not in strong contrast to the arrangement among males. When Ronald Regan and Jesse Helmes get down to serious logrolling on "family policy," they are men promoting men's interests. (In fact, they embody Heidi Hrtmann's definition of patriarchy: "relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women.") Is their bond in any way congruent with the bond of a loving gay male couple? Regan and Helms would say no-disgustedly. Most gay couples would say no-disgustedly. But why not? Doesn't the continuum between "men loving men" and men-promoting-the-interest-of-men have the same intuitive force it has for women?

(Sedgwick, 64)

Obviously not, there is a marked degree of differences between the homosocialities between the two genders. Men, who have been shaped by masculine ideologies, are

subjugated to a form of social gaze (masculine gaze) and harbour unquestionable adherence to the 'men's unwritten moral code'—that reinforces homophobia, dominance over female. One can, therefore, assume that there is a significant asymmetry between male and female homosociality. While the female homosociality and homosexuality follow a relatively continuous relation pattern the male homosociality and homosexuality, on the other hand, is characterized by rather deep-seated discontinuous relation.

The novel, which revolves around the lives of the Corleone family, is also a tale of friendship, male bonding, male relationship and the complex patterns of affiliations and the business that men do. For instance, in the novel, the definition of friendship comes in stark contrast with the general assumptions and commonly held notion about it, it means business in men's world not just an innocence and intimate association:

Don Vito Corleone was a man to whom everybody came for help, and never were they disappointed. He made no empty promise [. . .] Only one thing was required. That you can proclaim your friendship. And then, no matter how poor or powerless the supplicant, Don Corleone would take that man's troubles to his heart [. . .] His reward? Friendship, the respectful title of "Don" [. . .], some humble gift – a gallon of homemade wine etc. It was understood, it was mere good manners, to proclaim that you were in his debt and that he had the right to call upon you at any time to redeem your debt by some small service. (14)

If we take a look at the above mentioned passage, we can sense a fair degree of awe that the Don commanded on the people who came for his help and his distinct way

of helping others so that he eventually has control over the person whom he chose to help. To shed blood in the name of friendship and brotherhood, and to maintain stoic endurance is an adherence to the norms of homosociality.

The novel is never short of tell-tale instances of male homosociality and men's adherence to the unwritten code of masculinity. Throughout the novel, there is not a single event that portrays Don Vito Corleone as a coward but even when he carries with him that air of superiority and inspires awe on other peoples around him, he acts 'rational' enough by not 'interfering' into his daughter's personal affair—her being beat up by her husband. In one instance Connie complains to Vito about her sufferings due to her husband. "Connie had said angrily to her father, "did you ever hit your wife?" She was his favorite and could speak to him so impudently. He had answered, "She never gave me a reason to beat her." And her mother had nodded and smiled (238). He adds, "Even the king of Italy didn't dare to meddle with the relationship of husband and wife. Go home and learn how to behave so that he will never beat you (238). Vito, not surprisingly, becomes rational rather than being emotional in such intense matter. The charismatic awe-inspiring mob Kingpin's 'rational' reaction to a very intimate and emotional incident (Connie being his favorite daughter) speaks volume about the way a men's world function. Vito, in a way, is conforming to the unwritten but sacredly held code of masculinity by not interfering between the issue of husband and wife.

Sedgwick cites an article by Catherine Mackinnon which she says attempts at careful assessment of the 'grounds of disagreement between streams of feminist thoughts'. She quotes MacKinnon as telling:

Each element of the female gender stereotype is revealed as, in fact, sexual. Vulnerability means the appearance/reality of easy sexual access; passivity means receptivity and disabled resistance...; softness means pregnability by something hard... Woman's infantilization evokes pedophilia; fixation on dismembered body parts...evokes fetishism; idolization of vapidty, necrophilia. Narcissism insures that woman identifies with that image of herself than man holds up.... Masochism means that pleasure in violation becomes her sensuality. (73)

While citing MacKinnon, Sedgwick makes a point that though the question of sexuality in its relation with homosociality is debatable, the relation calls for immediate political attention. She again quotes Mackinnon as saying, "Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness to men, which means sexual attractiveness, which means sexual availability on male terms" (Sedgwick, 701). The essence of patriarchy has, till date, remained not only in its own definition but also in their definition and control over women. The patriarchal luxury has always been in its ability to 'define' and impose its definition on the women and making sure that the 'code' functions within them as well. And the spirit of masculinity has always been staying at the helm of the gender power structure.

Throughout the novel all the major female characters and none of the female characters appear to have a solid stature—stand of their own—firstly they lack agency and they are also denied substantial degree of subjectivity. Some of the major female characters mentioned in the novel and worth mentioning are Vito's daughter Connie and Michael's wife Kay. Not only the presence of female characters in the novel is scant but

also they are relatively insignificant. Their presence acts, to the most part, as an addition to the male characters' activities.

Connie, the Don's favorite daughter though grows up as a pampered sibling of a rich and powerful father and three big brothers lives a life of misery after her marriage. She too is not immune to domestic patriarchy and violence from her husband Carlo. Even her all-powerful father can do nothing about it. The beef between Connie and her husband eventually ends up taking the life of Sonny, the headstrong eldest son of the Corleone family. Connie complains about her troubles to her father and asks, rather angrily, to her father, "Did you ever hit your wife?" She was his favorite and could speak to him so impudently. He had answered, "She never gave me a reason to beat her." And her mother had nodded and smiled (238)". The whole exchange is charged with patriarchal theme. The Don's reply that his wife did never give him any reasons to impose his will and violence against her speaks volumes about the nature of patriarchy in the family. While violence against women is viewed as something normal, women on the other hand are expected to 'behave' with men. Women in the novel are never away from patriarchal subjugation and gaze.

Kay Adams, Michael's long time girlfriend and wife too does not have her way in her familial life and ends up losing her husband to the 'family business'. Kay is the only of the many Corleone women who never accepts the Mafia way of life but on the other hand she does not raise stern voice of objection either. In a way she gives in to the pressures of patriarchy. The love of family and the love for her husband as a woman keeps her from moving against her own rational belief and moral conviction. She, too like a woman living confined within the set boundaries of patriarchy, confines her live to

family and is not allowed a place in the business. In one of the heated exchanges between Michael and Kay, Michael yells, “. . . won’t be telling you what happened at the office every day. I won’t be telling you anything about my business. You’ll be my wife but you won’t be my partner in life, as I think they say. Not an equal partner. That can’t be.” While Michael walks out of his promise to Kay that he will not embrace the 'family' business of mafia world, Kay has no choice but to stay with him. Sedgwick in her paper quotes MacKinnon as telling, "Narcissism insures that woman identifies...Masochism means that pleasure in violation becomes her sensuality"(Sedgwick, 701). In the same vein, Sedgwick continues by bringing on MacKimmon:

"What defines woman as such is what turns men on." But what defines "defines"? That very node of sexual experience is in some signifying relation to the whole fabric of gender oppression, and vice versa, is true and important, but insufficiently exact to be of analytic use on political issues. (75)

Much ink has been spilled and many themes have been explored on the issue of patriarchy in its relation with female counterparts. We can, therefore, safely argue that masculinity, the essence of patriarchy, rests on the base that it has control over what it wants and what it can define. To be born a female is to be entirely defined in relation the role of "lady", a role that does take its shape and meaning from a sexuality of which she is not the subject but the object adhering to the traditional gender role and definitions (Sedgwick, 702).

Nevertheless, Puzo's *The Godfather* is a novel, a crime fiction to be more specific, that has spent most of its pages on masterfully depicting a god-like protagonist—a

masculine man—and has also proved to be less generous on the elaborations and development of female characters in the entire course of story development. While the depiction of violation has earned place of fairly elaborate graphic representation, the case of women has been under shadow of violence most of the time in the novel and Puzo seems rather economical in his representation of women in his text. There is domestic violence, there is sexual predation if not illicit sexual encounters if not adventures of Sonny, Fredo and Jonny Fontane and little has been mentioned on the female's perspective, crime fiction that it is. Puzo, an American male, writer seems to take pleasure in writing about the male world of crime fraternity that can often be viewed an artist's endeavour to fortify the masculinity that has arguably suffered bruises in the later half the last century. We will not be wrong if we call *The Godfather* a protomasculine novel aiming at re-asserting masculinity.

Just as economical was Puzo on his words on the female characters, he was, without surprise very generous with his words on the major male characters in the novel. Don Vito Corleone, the protagonist of the novel, is a paradigmatic Mafia don. He is the charismatic leader, emphatic and idealistic father, a man of true class, he is the perfection. His words mean heavy, his plans are flawless, his stature inspires fear and awe, his enemies find him enigmatic but everyone trusts him as a man who keeps his words and never backs from his promises. He's the Man in the novel. In fact, it is in the hands of Vito Corleone that the crime world looks glamorous like a business. No other characters in the novel match his stature, Brazini looks petty man without class, Don Ciccio looks rowdy and cruel and Don Fanucci looks smalltime and brutish. Even his sons do not come closer to his stature. Michael, the most successful heir to the Don,

though he is a war hero, takes up family responsibility during the hard times, has little flaw in his character appears meek in front of the Don. He lacks the warmth and joie de vivre of the Don. The Don talks about reason, "making offers that the other parties cannot refuse", he is the silken tongued and fire-breather at the same time. He is the epitome of a masculine man, flawless and par excellence. He outshines everyone in the business and family. He's the perfect patriarch.

It is also interesting to note that Don Vito Corleone, the protagonist of the novel, is a man of few words but his words carries meaning of thousand lines and on many occasions convinces and persuades people more effectively through 'reason' than bullet. But the point to note is his words reverberates more than a bullet does. This sort of act is quite masculine in a patriarchal world. While the women stereotype of gossipmongers continue to persist, the depiction of a man of few but sure words adds up to the males' ascription of taking business and no nonsense, no gossip. His words match the intensity like that of a divine command, his anger is thunderous, and he is what every man desires to be. He is a prototype of a masculine ideal. In one instance he tells Sonny, "never let anyone know what you are thinking and in front of strangers you should never let them know what you are thinking." Sonny, the Don's eldest son, is a masculine man as well, he is headstrong and motivated but short-temper fueled by myopia or vice-versa is his hamartia that eventually takes his own life when he pursues his brother-in-law unguarded hasting into an well-plotted ambush.

The Don, his son Michael and Sonny, his consigliere Tom Hagen, his aides/friends Luca Barsi, Genzo and Clemenza are all masculine men in the novel but none of them are as complete as the Don himself. Michael is the most successful male

character apart from the Don. The image of a true man is not just of man having a vigorous physical strength but also a mind to think rationally. If his business creates enemies he should also learn to make loyal friends who can fight with him and for him when situation calls and should have the caliber to bring peace among enemies. Men with physical strength, mental order and good heart are the real man. This is the patriarchal notion of the construction of malehood. "A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man, (2)" writes the noted feminist critic and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in the introduction to her seminal text *The Second Sex*. Being a man has been, throughout the course of history, conforming to the celebrated and cherished notion of manliness the definition of which looks more like an ascription rather than a contingent achievement. While the fulfillment part is achievement the meanings itself have been more like an ascription—men are born into the definition—and it is up to them to fit in the boundaries of that ascription. "Their opinion of Michael was that he was not equal to Sonny in force though more intelligent certainly, but not as intelligent as his father. A mediocre successor and a man not to be feared too greatly (396)". This is a very interesting comparison between the father and son. The father, the Don is the hero, the ultimate one in the eyes of people, but his two sons Michael and Sonny didn't have that all in all caliber of their father. And Freddie, the middle son is a weak one, collaborates with the enemy, and fears much—something not true to the men's expectation. All in all, the above, lines are given judgment from people around. So to a Don, to inherit their father position, both sons need to learn a great deal to be a Man like his father. This is in a demand to fulfill the

vacant position of super hero, a macho man, an ultimate masculine figure, a real man with both wit and strength.

The Godfather with its storyline based on crime—a sure-fire topic—stormed the book markets and took the modern readers by their foot with its masculine themes dominating the whole plot structure. But, it is unclear whether the novel was widely welcomed and appreciated by the female readers as well as by the men. If we look at the history of arts and literature, be it in religious text or anonymous myths that have been passed from generations to generations, the story of father and sons—both males that they are—have always been popular and widely accepted by the readers. From the classical mythology to religious texts, traditional folklores and literatures, the father-son combination has always marked their presence and entertained people. We have the great Greek tragedy of fateful Oedipus destined to kill his father King Laius, we also have the traditional folk tale of fated over-reacher Icarus and cautious and wise Daedalus, or the Shakespearian story of the prince of chronic procrastination, Hamlet, and his father King Claudius and we also have father-son story in Aesop's fable. It is not just the father-son adventures that have entertained the readers throughout the history but the point that the paper intends to make is the combination has worked for notable part and size of the history of story-telling. And one common thing, if not theme, that most of the father-son adventures or stories have explored are the stories of heroism, greater passion of art and ambition, revenge, remorse and redemption, manhood, machismo and masculinity, valor, vengeance and vendetta. In *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo, we can find not a single thing to make a comparison, but one thing we all can see is after all the novel is also a story that revolves around father and son business. The story after all is about men.

Now turning back to the theories, according to Adam and Samran, the theory of masculinity that came to the attention of English scholarship during the second half of the twentieth century calls out that "the critical analysis of masculinity must be distinguished not only by its subject matter but a new self-consciousness about the theoretical and methodological assumption underlying traditional disciplinary formations." This claim if not statement carries with it the belief that the patriarchy has long been influential in almost all areas of the studies that may cross path with the masculinity studies itself. In the same vein, they write, "Taking its lead from feminism, masculinity studies is thus dedicated to analyzing what has often seemed to be an implicit fact, that the vast majority of societies are patriarchal and that men have historically enjoyed more than their share of power, resources, and cultural authority(5)." While admitting the theoretical and methodological diversity of the scholarship of masculinity they state that the issue of masculinity is difficult to anthologize. Adam and Savran draws from Bryce Traister and writes, "because, 'masculinity has for so long stood as the transcendental anchor and guarantor of cultural authority and 'truth,' demonstrating its materiality, its 'constructedness,' requires an especially energetic rhetoric and critical insistence (7)."

The idealized man of the past remains a reference for modern masculinity, but a global understanding and acceptance of change and progress plays a big part in a new definition of a being a Man. The modern man is now a gentleman, a scholar, a comedian, a strongman, and an athlete, all with a kind heart. All in all, with both masculine and feminine trait, as it appears in the modern representation of being a man, which if we look through the glass of traditional masculinity is a feminine man. In the novel, we can

find, if not trace some of this transformation of men when we compare the Don and Michael as the two generations of different masculinities. Two generations walking side by side where the later generations men have to prove their manliness to the older one on a continuous basis. And the common thread bonding them together was the embedded patriarchal ideology in their life. Men like Johnny Fontane and Freddie are continuously under the pressure of male gaze. Their masculinity is questioned in many ways when they couldn't arrange the mess of their chaotic life.

Among the three sons, Freddie stands as the impassive and an outcast man, the family does assign important tasks to him and does not trust his ability to handle situations. He is one of the family but not among the family. He was called as ladies' man and he himself was content with his life in Vegas. And neither the Don, his father, nor Michael and Sonny wanted any 'help' from him as he himself was aware he was not good at. And on the other hand, the stand of Micheal, Don's youngest son, was seen as a reincarnation of his father in many ways. But the question here is, was he really interested to be like his father? In the beginning part of the novel, we see his reluctance to engage in any of the family business. This indifference towards his father's affair and disregarding the path of Don shows the new generation of masculinity. Michael was different in a sense as a modern man who did not want to be the part of the life of violence. He knew very well what it is to be a man in a modern way. And this assertion of his masculinity is his divergence from the status quo. But eventually Michael cannot run away from his father's shadow and follows the path that he once shunned. This surrender, if we can call it one, to change in Micheal is a kind of sweet surrender to the patriarchal hegemony. And another strong headed character, the eldest son Sonny, was a

typical male character who continuously desired to make an independent decision in absence of his father, but proves to be a failure and at the end this hasty masculine strength took his life. In this way, we can see the ongoing struggle between two worlds of men, where the new generation are challenged and questioned to prove their manhood. In one instance in the novel, we can see how this conflict has started questioning the future of coming generations:

Let me say that we must always look to our interest. We are all men who refused to be fools, who have refused to be puppets dancing on a string pulled by the men on high. We have been fortunate here in this country. Already most of our children have found a better. Some of you have sons who are professors, scientists, musicians, and you are fortunate. Perhaps your grandchildren will become the new pezzonavanti. None of us her want to see our children follow our footsteps, it's too hard a life. They can be as others, their position and security won by our courage. I have grandchildren and I hope their children may someday, who knows, be a governor, a President, nothing's impossible here in America. But we have to progress with times. The time is past for guns and killings and massacres. We have to be cunning like the business people, there's more money in it and it's better for our children and our grandchildren. (290)

In the above mentioned quote by the Don during a meeting with other family members of New York crime fraternity, we can sense a change of attitude and slowing down of the traditional masculinity. We can argue that he is showing concern for his people's future and in a way trying to convey the end of masculine heroism of his time. Interestingly, he

is addressing to an exclusively male gathering and all he can say in the name of future generation is about his sons getting to better positions. It is interesting to note that he misses out daughters though he himself has a lovely one.

One of the interesting themes explored in the novel is that of respect and legitimacy, the Don sticks with the former and his son Michael vouches for the later. While respect is the thing that matters most for the Don, the father, the man of traditional masculinity, legitimacy is the thing Michael wants to turn to make a safe landing from the treacherous ride of crime world. As a Don, Vito demands as well as commands respect from everyone around him. He considers respect and honor as the backbone of crime fraternity. The Don is a staunch believer in the theory of respect. Every thing he does he does to earn respect that is why even the crimes he commits do not look like one. This whole theme of respect has, in a way, made the crime look glamorous and Robin Hood like. This lust for respect makes his look like the old face of patriarchy while the maneuver for legitimization is the new face of masculinity. In one of the dialogue between Kay and Michael after his return from exile in Italy, defends his father's stature and gives his own thought on living the life of his father:

what you have to understand is that he considers himself the equal of all those great men like Presidents and Prime ministers and Supreme Court Justice and Governors of the States. He refuses to live by rules set up by others, rules which condemn him to a defeated life. But his ultimate aim is to enter that society with a certain power since society doesn't really protect its members who do not have their own individual power. In the

meantime he operates on a code of ethics he consider far superior to the legal structures of society. (369)

Michael, who use to shun the crime and violence that his father's business called for, after his return from Italy talks about his father's thought and ideologies with some degree of respect and defends his father's act. He is now conforming to the codes of ethics of the masculinity.

There is little place for women in the novel and even smaller space for their voices. In one instance when Kay is talking with Tom about Michael, it's Tom's response that weighs heavy.

Kay said, "He's not the man I married." Hagen laughed shortly, "If he were, he'd be dead now. You'd be a widow now. You'd have no problem. Kay blazed out at him, "What the hell does that mean? Come on, Tom, speak out straight once in your life. You are not Sicilian, you can tell a woman the truth, you can treat her like an equal. A fellow human being. (442)

Two messages can be traced in the above mentioned statement; when Tom replies that if he was the same he would not have survived subtly meaning that a man who is not masculine enough or a lover boy will not survive in a man's world and Tom was right in saying this because, Michael is changed man now after he killed Sollozzo and McCluskey to protect his father and his family's dignity. He became a real man of the family as he started filling up the responsibility of his father's business. But before he always hated his father's world and business and always tried to stay away from this. And Kay Adams was in love with that man who he was in the past. She only knew that Michael who used to hate violence. But now he is a changed man, a man in the eyes of

his people. Another that is mentioned in the above statement is about how a Sicilian treats women; they never include them in private matters. Women are always outsiders to them in business and private matters.

An influential feminist philosopher Judith Butler argues that gender was never an essence but it was simply a performance. This Adam and Savran elaborates as:

Describing gender as performance, however, did not mean that it was a supplemental or voluntary aspect of identity; rather, it was set of mandatory practices imposed from birth and repeated again and again in a doomed effort to get it right. Disengaged from the body, masculinity and femininity need not correspond to the sexed categories, man and woman.

(Adam and Savran, 4)

We now know that gender is a social construct and every aspect of masculinity and femininity that we are so much used to are too the definitions of society and we also know that definitions are not fixed and complete. So is the case of the discourse of masculinity and femininity. The focus in the novel, however, is not in drawing the distinction between the genders but showing that the 'performance' of gender was mechanical. Soon after Michael takes the helm of the Corleone family business, his father Vito has some advice for him. It is confusing, if we look at with postmodern spectacles, whether the 'words of wisdom' from an old man are meant to motivate Michael or to disregard women. He advises, "Women and children can be careless. Not men." Vito categorically warns or tells his son, men and women live in two completely different worlds. He goes on to say that men should never discuss "business" with women, and it is not for women to question the men's judgment. He adds that women

can afford to be careless and can make mistakes. He elaborated that if a woman makes a mistake, no one dies. In other words, women can be not only careless but also carefree. They can live a comfortable and carefree life than the men, who must constantly watch their backs. While suggesting the perils that men have cope with in their lives and adventures, Vito shows no respect for women and their caliber in respect. He is the perfect patriarch. And to everyone's (men's) expectation Michael buys it.

One of the perennial traits of masculinity is that it is hegemonic and how the meanings that correspond to the 'hegemonic masculinity' are maintained and how meaning that do not correspond to hegemonic masculinity are suppressed is the question that need to be answered. To this question, Sharon R. Bird in his paper "Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity" brings in from Connell saying,

Within the existing gender order, meanings associated with behaviors that challenge hegemonic masculinity are denied legitimation as masculine; such meanings are marginalized, if not suppressed entirely. Contradictions to hegemonic masculinity posed by male homosexuality, for example, are suppressed when homosexual masculinity is consistently rendered "effeminate". (Bird, 33)

What is it to be a man in a patriarchal world? The physical strength alone cannot complete the definition of men. The traits of sharp intellect and humility are important aspects that are inevitable to be mixed with rigorous physical frame. But these mentioned qualities can never be enough to make men a Real Men in patriarchy. Men are continuously questioned and judged in his process of achieving his manhood. There

is need of men's circle for men to become a Man. Hence male bonding and male homosociality is important to give a man his gender identity. But the ironical fact here is that even male homosociality and all these men spaces cannot be complete to give men his identity. The important role if I can say is, of female counterpart, stands side by side.

Masculinity must be exposed in front of female audience as a Hero, a savior and in the form of God sometimes. He must stand as the king or a leader to protect and save his people (women and children). Because for them female counterpart are always vulnerable, and they at least like to believe it. By showing weak and submissive female character in the novel like Connie, Mrs. Corleone, Appolonia, Kay Adams and daughter of Amerigo Bonasera whose name was mentioned. All these fragile female characters are deliberately framed to foreground the role of strong male characters. This proves that men power and politics are not just limited to show the cock fight among male audience but also to assert their masculinity to female counterpart. There are numerous instances in the book that keeps questioning and defining the masculinity of three sons of Godfather. Even Johnny Fontane is encouraged to rebuild his manly stature in society and in his personal life. The role of Connie's husband Carlo is another portrayal of degraded masculinity, where he takes pleasure in beating his wife instead of fighting with Corleone men. And interestingly, Don, the main hero is shown as the only perfect character, who has achieved the stature of the ultimate One. He always stressed the fact of how important it is for a man to act like a man. When Johnny was having troubles in his life, Don, his Godfather told him, "You should start acting like a man." Suddenly angered contorted his face. He shouted. Like a Man!" (36). Hegemonic masculinity, or "the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women" and is

"constructed in relation to women and to subordinate masculinities" shapes the overall framework of gender relations (Connell 185-86).

It is still debatable whether we can call the description of the final moments of Don Corleone in his death bed as a sexist statement but what we can tell with certainty is that the words certainly adds up to the patriarchal notion that women are the creatures of emotion and there is an air of pride in being surrounded by his 'brothers' at his final hours. "He was spared the sight of his women's tears dying before they came back from church, dying before the ambulance arrived, or the doctor. He died surrounded by men, holding the hand of the son he had most loved (407)". It is interesting to note that the Don who spent his life as a head of the family providing 'care and protection' for his family did not want any of the female family members around him during his final breathes like his wife and daughter and daughter in law. This moment can also be seen as a typical men space where there is no space for women and 'emotions'. Even his death was in a men club.

Bird argues that the homosocial interaction, among heterosexual men, contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity norms by supporting meanings associated with identities that fit hegemonic ideals while suppressing meanings associated with nonhegemonic masculinity identities. Homosociality, a non-sexual affinity sought within the bounds of same-sex, is one of the prerequisites for hegemonic masculinity. In this regard Bird brings in from different critics:

The following meanings are crucial to our understanding of how homosociality contributes to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity:

- (1) emotional detachment, a meaning constructed through relationships

within families whereby young men detach themselves from mothers and develop gender identities in relation to that which they are not (Chodorow 1978); (2) competitiveness, a meaning constructed and maintained through relationships with other men whereby simple individuality becomes competitive individuality (Gilligan 1982); and (3) sexual objectification of women, a meaning constructed and maintained through relationships with other men whereby male individuality is conceptualized not only as different from female but as better than female (Johnson 1988). (Bird, 25)

All the above mentioned points that add up to the continuation or maintenance of hegemonic masculinity through the maintenance of male homosociality need no elaboration if we look at the plot of the novel itself. There is a distinct mark of detachment with the female characters within the novel on the part of male characters in the novel. "Business" remained strictly male, while female characters were confined within the domestic business and serving as wives of all-providing males. Likewise, there is an intense and fierce competition between the male members in the novel. Life was a continuous struggle for all the major characters in the novel. Every notable character have, at least once, survived murder attempts or succumbed to it. The tension between the five 'New York families' was ever present. As of objectification of women in the novel, apart from Sonny and Freddie—the notorious womanizers—Micheal too had brief fling with the other Italian lady while he was still with Kay. The following instance in Italy tells it all:

That night and the weeks that followed, Michael Corleone came to understand the premium put on virginity by socially primitive people. It

was a period of sensuality that he had never before experienced, a sensuality mixed with a feeling of masculine power. Apollonia in those first days became almost his slave. Given trust, given affection, a young full blooded girl aroused from virginity to erotic awareness was as delicious as an exactly ripe fruit (343).

Male erotic desire is same as his social stand. He always wants women to be slave in life and in bed. And how priced is virginity in a male dominated society. Virginity is an honor that is given to male. And women without even understanding the politics of men, always become an object to play and eat—a ripe fruit.

Again Michael felt that shortness of breath, that flooding through his body of something that was so much desire as an insane possessiveness. He understood for the first time the classical jealousy of the Italian male. He was at that moment ready to kill anyone who toughed the girl, who tried to claim her, take her away from him. He wanted to owe her as widely as a miser wants to owe gold coins, as hungrily as a share chopper wants to own his own land. Nothing was going to stop him from owing this girl, possessing her, locking her in a house and keeping her prisoner only for himself. He didn't want anyone even to see her. When she turned to smile at one of her brothers Michael gave that young man a murderous look with even realizing it. (338)

Youth and beauty is the prime object of attraction to all men in this world and when it comes to the beauty and youth of women, men always have the lustful appetite, the feeling of possession make the status of women objectified.

Inside the circus of male homosocial interaction lays the feeling of competition, competition is something that has an essentially male face. Bird writes, "Competition with other men provides a stage for establishing self both as an individual and as appropriately masculine. Competition also contributes to the perpetuation of male dominance." He draws from Johnson for elaboration, "To establish self as not female, young men seek out other men with whom to display "non-femaleness" (23). He continues that the homosocial group interactions provide feedback and support for masculinity self-conceptualization. In this sense, masculinity conceptualization is itself a form of competition. While the presence of female cannot be ignored for the assertion of male identity and masculinity as the later compliment the former, the presence of men themselves is of primary interest for the execution of masculinity in a patriarchal society. Men need men for the confirmation of their masculinity and this means the practical side of the homosocial interaction. During the opening scenes of the novel, there is an equally significant piece of conversation between the Don and his friend Luca Brasi—a man fearful reputation—during the wedding reception of Connie. "He stuttered over the flowery congratulations he offered and his formal hope that the first grandchild would be masculine (25). Men love men and show this feeling to join the men's club.

What is it to be a man in a patriarchal world? The physical strength alone cannot complete the definition of men. The traits of sharp intellect and humility are important aspects that are inevitable to be mixed with vigorous physical strength. But these mentioned qualities can never be enough to make men a Real Men in patriarchy. Men are continuously questioned and judged in his process of achieving his manhood. There is need of men circle for men to become Man. Hence male bonding and male

homosociality is important to give a man his gender identity. But the ironical fact here is that even male homosociality and all these men spaces cannot be complete to give men his identity. The important role if I can say is, of female counterpart, stands side by side. Men masculinity must be exposed in front of female audience as a Hero, a savior and in the form of God sometimes. He must stand as the king or a leader to protect and save his people (women and children). Because for them female counterpart are always vulnerable, and they at least like to believe it. By showing weak and submissive female character in the novel like Connie, Mrs. Corleone, Appolonia, Kay Adams and daughter of Amerigo Bonasera whose name was mentioned. All these fragile female characters are deliberately framed to foreground the role of strong male characters. This proves that men power and their politics are not just limited to show the winner of cock fight among male audience but also to assert their masculinity to female counterpart.

So much, yet so little, has been said about the issue of masculinity and male homosociality. Amid the host of scholars, sociologists, critics and writers the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick emerges as the seminal text for the masculinity studies. It was her text *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), which Adam and Savran claims came as an intervention into the secular/exclusive feminist scholarship that excluded male. "*Between Men* shows why feminists should care about male and masculinities. It argues that in literature, relations between men have consistently been mediated by women who are treated as conduits for male homosocial desire, vehicles to ensure the heterosexual character of the erotic traffic between men" (Adam and Savran, 6). Male homosociality and masculinity are two interlinked things complimenting each other and Puzo's *The Godfather* is a novel of male homosocial

desire which has placed masculinity as its guiding principle. "Sedgwick contends that the most important connection in the triangulated structure is not between man and woman, but between the two men who have no other way of expressing intimacies with one another."

The Godfather with its all dominating male characters with an air of masculinity is a clear depiction of the celebration of malehood. Puzo, an American male writer, seems to be taking pleasure in writing about crime world- the Sicilian mafias, and *The Godfather*, which is populated with brave men, often with a tinge of the writer's admiration and fascination. The novel is a tale of male homosociality, associating it with all the male virtues and vices with least trace of feminine virtues and company. In Hagen's word, "The Corleones' world, the physical beauty, the sexual power of women, carried not the slightest weight in worldly matters. It was a private affair, except, of course, in matters of marriage and family disgrace (60)." The males indulge themselves in promiscuity, rashness, drinking, gambling, risk taking, asserting their opinion, fighting and the conquest of women in order to constantly prove their masculinity and virility to other men and themselves, to whom they must show all signs of masculinity.

Homosociality, as explained by Kimmel, could be called an attitude—a principle—that all men, including heterosexual ones, are raised up in the culture to be more eager to please other men and seek their approval than women. Men do 'manly' things like whistling and yelling to connect to other men no just to grab female attention. And we don't find in most contemporary Western cultures men criticizing their buddies' attitudes towards women and gender as an adherence to the unwritten code of masculinity and homosociality. It is, therefore, not at all surprising and uncommon for

men to be out of their comfort zone taking feminist position in all male environment given their desire for male approval.

III: The Godfather as a novel of Masculinity and Male Homosocial Desire

Often, when too much focus is set on the voice of the 'margins' we run the risk of missing the whole jungle for trees. Such has been the case of masculinity, male homosociality and the crisis in masculinity. Men, since the classical antiquity, have been at the helm of gender equation and the only thing of absolute certainty under the sun is that nothing is permanent and everything, every little bits and pieces of ideologies, are human constructions. Masculinity, therefore, is also not exempt from that decree of absolute certainty of contingency and construction. The history of humanity has been that of phallogentrism. If so, then the question may arise how such powerful an institution, an agenda is in crisis. The answer is not easy but the fact of the matter is that masculinity, at least the traditional notion of it, has undergone change and come under attack. We are living at an interesting juncture of postmodern times with our age-old base of knowledge shaken, most-cherished values questioned and all the deep-seated notion of power and hierarchy usurped. With the rise in feminist movement and improved roles of women in society, with the advent of capitalist society where machines replace the muscles and with the new found discourse of postmodern psyche of 'deconstruction' things no longer remained the same. And as Foucault says where there is power there is resistance, the cornered masculinity too has started re-affirming their essential significance.

Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*, a crime fiction densely populated with masculine male characters, can be read as a masculine text aiming at healing the bruised masculine psyche in modern times. Puzo, an American male writer, writes about the crime fraternity and tells a bold tale of all-men glamorous game of survival and valor and this

can be read as a text that compliments the male ego and feeds the masculine breed. In his tale of family, honor, respect, courage, danger, retribution, vengeance and vendetta, Puzo seems to take pleasure in narrating a tale of men's world exclusive of women. In fact, all the female characters in the novel are either diminutive or insignificant with very little attention from the writer himself. There is something uncanny about this deliberate exclusion of female characters in the novel but it gives us a plenty of reasons to think about this deliberation. *The Godfather* is a dark dark man's world, a world where men can hone their primal skills of masculinity and breathe a fresh breeze of manhood. Most of the story line centers on the development of male characters and most of the female characters in the novel serve as what Sedgwick calls 'conduits for the male homosocial desires'.

The novel, though a crime fiction, with its depiction of violence and friction between the male characters in the novel, is without surprise a tale of male bonding or male homosociality. A simple reason behind this unusual statement is the fact that the ideal of masculinity is based on behavioral patterns like emotional detachment, competitiveness and sexual objectification of women. All of these behavioral patterns call for men solidarity even if they are standing in the opposite fronts. There is this unique bond of brotherhood if not an unwritten code that everyone adheres to that we can call by name the codes of masculinity—the urge to become one of and one among the pack. This adherence to the codes of masculinity binds the males together as they engage in similar occupation, compete against each other and take pleasures from the similar objects of desire. Its only male to shed all the emotional attachments and be 'rational', it is for men to compete against each other so that they can command each

other's respect and admiration and it is exclusively men's pleasure to use their object of desire as every man does. Commonality or uniformity in their homophobia and heterosexuality, commonality in refraining from being emotional and all the feminine—that too adheres to male codes—ascriptions and commonality to be the man of tact and action, wisdom and patience is an adherence to the masculinity. And it does not take much endeavor to unravel the mystery of why the things that men look for are in stark binary with what women generally represent. One significant thing about masculinity is that it is hegemonic beyond cure and takes its meaning from defining the 'other' gender in the baser terms and placing themselves into strict binary opposition of the superior stature.

All in all, we can conclude that the male bonding helps the males assert their masculinity and men do so since their masculinity is in crisis. In doing so, they create an exclusive circle of their own and keep the women out of it keeping them in bounds of baser occupations that they themselves shun. Whether we like it or not, young and not-so-young men are homosocial creatures. Though the influence of mothers and wives, girlfriends and sisters can be tremendous, most will have their worldviews heavily shaped by their fathers, brothers, and male peers.

The Godfather, as a novel has addressed to that male psyche of being cornered telling tales of valiant males and submissive women. Women in the novel are kept distant from the 'business' and all the major happenings. They are either protected or assaulted or seduced, women in the novel lacks agency and subjectivity whereas even the meek-looking characters can abuse women and become a womanizer. This adherence to heterosexuality can earn them place in the men's club but the standard that the

protagonist sets is hard to meet for every other characters in the novel. Even in his last breath, he was among his men and the absence of female character symbolically justifies the spaces of men as only for them from birth till death. Just like there was not any engagement of women in business, the death of Don became the private affair among men, just like some business deal.

We can, therefore, view Puzo's *The Godfather* as a novel of male homosociality and masculinity as the rest of the texts and visual represents of the time like buddy movies. If Puzo was trying to give breather to the dying masculinity—traditional masculinity—he did succeed in it partly.

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