

Comparison of wrights the man who was almost a man and alexeis lone ranger and to...

[Literature](#)



Both Wright's "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" and Alexei's Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven centre upon a transition period in the lives of their respective protagonists. Wright's Dave and Alexei's narrator are both at a crossroads in their lives, standing between boyhood and manhood and while neither attains manhood, their respective characters undergo change and development. It must be emphasised, however, that the character developments which these two characters undergo are ultimately determined by their settings and limited by stereotypes.

Wright and Alexei's respective settings play an extremely powerful role in determining their thoughts and behaviours. Consequent to both his race and socio-economic status, for example, Wright's protagonist is portrayed as both powerless and marginalised from the outset. Powerlessness, or weakness, is repeatedly attested to by the narrator himself. Early on in the story he says, "Ah ain scareda them even ef they are biggern me!," thus admitting his relative physical weakness. Added to that, as the story progresses, his insignificance becomes increasingly pronounced. His mother controls his wages, his father beats him and all, with no exception, refer to him as "boy," very rarely bothering to use his name and, in so doing, acknowledge him. It must be noted in this regard that the setting within which this story unfolds influence all of the stated, from the narrator's socio-economic marginalisation to his lack of independence. It is, thus, that in order to realise his manhood and independence, the narrator finds that he must leave his setting.

Although Alexei's narrator returns to, rather than leaves, his setting, he is as marginalised and as silenced as is Wright's protagonist. While his

marginalisation is largely the marginalisation of his people, the Native Americans, his silence is self-imposed. He rarely responds to his mother's talk or joins in conversation and, to a large degree, has imposed a form of social isolation upon himself. This tendency echoes the characteristics of his social setting. Not only is he a member of a minority race but he is, to all intents and purposes, segregated from the larger society on a reservation populated, not only by members of his race but of his particular tribe. The implication here is that his setting is apart from the larger society and is isolated and marginalised. Hence, his self-imposed, relative isolation has been determined by the nature of his setting.

In addition to the above stated, character development in both stories is constrained by stereotypes. The dominant societal perception of African Americans as violent is echoed in Dave's belief that he would attain manhood only if he purchased and owned a gun. The stereotype of Native Americans as alcoholic plays a pronounced role in Alexei's work but here the narrator actively seeks an antithetical character development. In other words, rather than become an alcohol, he fights against the stereotype, a stereotype and image of Native Americans which he believes was imposed upon his people by the white man: " Crazy mirrors ... the kind that distort your features, make you fatter, thinner, taller, shorter. The kind that make a white man remember hes the master of ceremonies ... the kind that can never change the dark of your eyes and the folding shut of the good part of your past" (58). He is fully cognizant of the stereotypes which have been imposed on his people and his character develops in reaction to this awareness and desire to prove the stereotypes false.

In the final analysis, it is possible to assert that both protagonists are weighed down by their settings and the stereotypes which have been imposed upon their race by the White Man. Dave ultimately gives into these stereotypes through his obsession with guns but Alexei's protagonist uses his awareness of these stereotypes to guide the development of his character along a different path.