

“Black or White” : Cultural Separation in August Wilson’s Two Trains Running

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 28 October 2022

Accepted: 24 January 2023

Volume: 1

Issue: 1

KEYWORDS

August Wilson, African American, Memphis, racism, the Whites.

ABSTRACT

Being the winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, August Wilson is an African American dramatist who mingles African American culture and heritage in his play “Two Trains Running” that was published in 1990. The play concentrates on the feelings of African American individuals in a time when those people start to stand against the inequality and justice in society. This paper focused on how Wilson separates between the two cultures; Black and White, and the struggle between the two cultures in society. The paper also studied how the character of Hambone suffers until death in order to understand the struggle of his ancestors in the past. The paper proves that Wilson’s play is a bridge between the Civil Rights movement and Black Power through the depiction of tensions between the characters who suffer the trauma of white exploitation and racism. The paper concludes that because of racism black individual should have a double consciousness in order to live peacefully in America.

1. Introduction

August Wilson play “Two Trains Running” focuses on the African American experience in the Twentieth century and to be clear in a "Pittsburg dinner" in 1969. This play is the seventh play among August Wilson cycle, it is the play that foregrounds the struggle of black individuals in the presence of the white supremacy in the American society. Leading actors Samuel Jackson and Laurence Fishburne are performing the play in Broadway in 1992. The play concentrates on the feelings of African American individuals in a time when those people start to stand against the inequality and justice in society. Through the analysis of several passages from the text of the play, in addition to that, the paper exhibits how Wilson connects the death of Hambone who reveals African American community and their struggle, with white exploitation and its destructive progress of the modern life in America. In addition, Wilson's play “Two Trains Running”, investigates the social and mental signs of changing states of mind toward race from the point of view of urban blacks. It is about a gathering of African Americans who connect with each other and battle to remain alive. A portion of the characters battle from individual issues like dependence on wagering cash and others battle from overall issues like obligation. This play is an excursion through the African-American culture: investigating matters, for example, cash, demise, mental self-view equity and raising racism issues. “This play has captured a racially divided country as it came apart” (Rich, 1992:2). For August, the basic means of keeping African American culture is *the blues*. August Wilsons believed that the huge migration of southern blacks to the North was not appropriate, that it has been a mistake. The play finds out a strong economic theme particularly, a series of false or broken or unfulfilled contracts, with African Americans: “The liveliest talkers in "Two Trains Running” are members of an older generation skeptical of all externally applied panaceas, secular and religious” (Rich, 1992:4). This play is considered one of Wilson's most pointedly political product that has happened during the black power movement, at the time of upheavals in the U.S. race relations. Looking to escape from destitution, prejudice, and "Jim Crow" laws, many dark Americans had moved to northern mechanical urban communities amid the early and mid-twentieth century, the greater part of the dark Americans had

worked in cultivating in the previous Confederate slave states. The blacks who moved north could expect higher wages, better instructive open doors, and more probability for social progression than they had gotten in the South. While, prejudice in the North was less rough and unmistakable than in the South, yet it was available.

The objective of this paper is to prove that Wilson's play "Two Trains Running" displays the tension in the American society because of racism and the discrimination that faced the members of the black community. Then, the paper clarifies that this play is a bridge between the two separated and different cultures of the Blacks and Whites.

2. Aptness of the title

August Wilson's play "Two Trains Running", mirrors the experiences of African Americans of the late 1960s when many of them begin to react against the injustice and inequality in the American society. The title of the play is very important as it represents the flowing stream of two main cultures: Black and White. Wilson takes this title from a song by Muddy Nater's "Still a Fool", which is a blue song and depicts the contest of the two cultures black and white to be prevailed in the American society (Bogumil, 1999:94). In the play, Wilson chronicles and documents the period of the post-civil war in America, at the time when many movements appear to call for the equality and civil rights for the blacks. Through the registering of those events, Wilson gives a "healing vision" to the black man and women to face their woes and singing their blues (Nadel, 1999: 22). Then the title of the play gives a hint to the reader that there are two kind of external black and white conflicts throughout the text of the play, which indicates that all the members of black community seem to be displaced persons because of the exploitation and racism of *the whites*.

In the play, Memphis the owner of a restaurant seems to be distressed with the white hypocrisy and attempts to flee to the north of Pittsburg to live peacefully away from the white supremacy (Nadel, 1999:128). At the end of the play, Memphis declares the payout of the \$35000 and visited Aunt Ester to courage to stand in front of the man who cheated him earlier (Nadel, 1999:129). These events assure the idea of the two trains in the play that the title refers to. In an interview with August Wilson in 1963, he expresses the significance of the title by saying:

"The title came from a blues song called two Trains Running, and actually that phrase is in several blues songs. It's most commonly followed by the line "two trains running, neither one going my way. One running by night, one run by day" There were two ideas in the play, or at least two ideas that have confronted black American since the Emancipation, the ideas of cultural assimilation and cultural separatism. There were in my mind, the two trains. I wanted to write a play about a character for whom neither of these trains were working. He had to build a new railroad in order to get where he's going, because the trains are going his way. That was the idea when I started out exploring" (Wilson& Elkins, 2006:235-6).

Then the play is about two opposite trains that suggest an alternative change to the life of the characters, or at last makes a revolutionary change. The characters of the play are identified by the desire to change their life by either gamble, self-verification, murder or outrage against the causes of their misery (Bogumil, 1999:64). Then, the whites represent the reason behind the misery of those black Americans from both the past and the present. The white characters of Lutz, Stoveall and Zanelli are the best examples from the play concerning the white hegemony in the play, who attempt to have control over those black people. As a reaction to this incident, many of those black people find a way to preserve their identity and dignity. The attitude of those characters in the play, resembles the ideas in the minds of many Americans who expected a social change after the assassination of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Bogumil, 1999:95). Wilson's play focuses on the private lives of black Americans who migrated from the south to the north to find a prosperous life, but instead, were shocked by declined of wealth on the north of Pittsburg. Many white *landlords* who lived in the cities of the north, transmitted their works to the suburbs because the high population of black in the big cities of the north. This factor could be one of the reasons behind the misery of black people in the north that the play represents (Bogumil, 1999:95). According to James H. Cone (1992):

"The contrast between what blacks expected to find in the "Promised Land of the North and what they actually found there was so great that frustration and despair ensued, destroying much of their self-esteem and dignity. Blacks expected to find freedom which had eluded them for so many years in the south, that is, they expected to have...like other Americans-the right to live wherever they chose. Instead they found themselves crammed into small ghetto sections of the cities, paying to white land-lords and merchants exorbitant prices for rent, food and clothing, and being policed by white cops who showed no more respect for black life than the "white law" they knew so well in the South" (Cone, 1992:90).

Through this declaration, the reader could understand that there is a conflict in the play in the souls of the characters who struggle internally and externally in order to live peacefully. Wilson's play deals with the black individual's endeavor to be a part of the African American community and recover their wounds caused by the outer world. Memphis Lee wants to get benefit from selling his restaurant, but he changes his mind and seeks refuge from the white killer Jim Stovall who represents the white hypocrite system. Then we have Lutz, the white butcher who promised to offer Hambone a ham ten years earlier when Hambone painted the backyard fence of the store, but instead he received a chicken (Grant, 2010:152).

Memphis criticizes the life style of living in the American society and the black folk. Actually, Memphis announces that black people will not have power to change their destiny. He rejects Sterling's idea of Malcolm X's reverence, telling him that: speaking about black power with their hands and pockets empty (Wilson, 1990:41). This pessimistic perspectives toward life in America, opposes the struggle of other black characters who to have power for demanding the social justice that goes alongside with the history of African American people (Grant, 2010:153).

This perspective could be the outcome of the materialistic society in which Memphis lived. Throughout the play, the factor of racism and exploit seem to be affected Memphis's life and family, who seeks refuge from the crucial system of the white society in which he lived. In the play, Wilson focuses on the disturbing events in the lives of the characters to create more aggressive and despair idea about the American dream (Grant, 2010: 154). Wilson has brought the attention upon disturbing years in the sixties, when inequality and racism had a strong base in the American society. At that time, the relationship between Blacks and whites was somehow like the relationship between the master and slave. In his study, *Blood on the Tracks* (1990), Norine Dworkin expresses the time of the 1960s in America when he states:

"In 1968, the relationship of blacks to white Americans was not that much different than the relationship of slaves to their master. It was like a day off on the plantation. Nobody was working. There were no jobs. There were all these people with families but no mean of support, because society didn't have any use for them." (Dworkin, 1990:8-9)

From this comment, the reader can estimate that the play is about a group of black people who suffer many traumas because of the "socio-economic system in America" (Jose, 2012:100). Memphis who is according to Wilson is a "self-made man whose values of hard work, diligence, persistence, and honesty have been consistently challenged by the circumstance of his life" (Wilson, 2008:1). Memphis is the victim of the two trains running that the title indicates in the play. He fails to win the case of his restaurant when he asks a black lawyer to present him in the court. Then he wins a higher amount more than what he demanded when he asks another white lawyer to present him in the court (Jose& Raj, 2011:108). This incident assures the idea that black man has to submit to the crookedness system of the white in order to survive and be able to take part in the white America.

Through this notion, Wilson suggests that black Americans have to pay a forfeit for their success in life even from their black counterparts; so most of the black characters of the play suffer many traumas because of this bitter reality. In the play, Chauncey Ward's father conducts like the white people. This man, according to Wilson's play, is "the first black judge they had down there was death on niggers. Give one fellow five hundred years" (Wilson, 1991: 56). In his study (2001), Cigdem Usekes explains that:

"Black Americans who work for the establishment have to pay a price for their personal success. They are so alienated from their racial identity that they become faithful servants of the dominant

group and ill-treat their fellow men much more so-than the whites do. On the other hand, this incident may also signal how the power structure only permits such puppet to practice law so that the status quo can be maintained" (Usekes, 2001:56).

For this reason, "*Two Trains Running*" affirms the theme of capitalism and the linkage between the hard work of black Americans and their identity. Those characters also aim at changing their life through the supernatural influence that could assist them with wealth. Sterling seeks the advice of Aunt Ester to change his fate through his participation with few dollars in the game of numbers (Bogumil, 1999:104).

Then the impact of capitalism and racism is being also evident through West's debate with Risa about the possibility of getting a bronze or gold casket that could prove the life of Hambone (Bogumil, 1999:108). West states:

"I don't get them for free, woman. I call the company and order the casket, they send me the bill...people don't understand. I got overhead. I got seven cars I got to keep up. Got supplies I got to order. How much you think that embalming fluid cost. I got all kinds of bills, people owe me money and won't pay me. I t ain't all like everybody think with Mr. West" (Wilson, 1990:92).

From these words, the reader can estimate the harsh circumstances that black people lived in. The last part of Hambone's life and his efforts was to collect his wages from Lutz. This incident represents the opposite trains that the title assures, which are the Black and White cultures. Through the title of the play, Wilson gives a clear message to the reader that black man could attain a state of resilience through their suffering and resist the white supremacy and racism to achieve their freedom and equality to live free from the racial subordination.

3. *Two Trains Running*: As Cultural Separatism VS. Cultural Assimilation

August Wilson employs the theme of cultural separatism and assimilation in his play "*Two Trains Running*" to indicate that this play discusses two notions that "have confronted black America since the Emancipation" (Wilson, 2006:235). Wilson displays his perspectives about cultural separatism in the play through his affirmation that if black individual is being assimilated in white culture, that could cause negative results. Through this play, he attempts to raise the consciousness of black people in America. He advises his black colleagues to pay more attention to promote their culture. Wilson explains in the National Black Theatre Festival in 1997, that:

"I believe to assimilate into the society is harmful to the cultural self as it abandons the age-old investigation and accomplishments of our ancestors on the Africa continent and the continuance of those explorations here on the continent of North America...assimilating into the society was paying undue reverence to white culture and that black Americans needed to find ways to preserve and promote their own culture" (Wilson, 1997:487).

Wilson adjures his black people not to be subjugated to the white culture and being assimilated into this culture. He explains in more than one occasion that his play "*Two Trains Running*" is about the negative impact of being assimilated in the dominant culture. Wilson creates two opposite powers in the play that represent the contrast between culture assimilation and separatism. Wilson expresses that it is impossible to any black individual to be assimilated to another culture and abandoned his own culture. For this reason, most of the characters in the play rejects the cultural assimilation and seek to maintain a culture separate and live as Africans in the American society without adopting the "European values". According to Sandra Shannon (1999), Wilson explains that "*Two Trains Running*" is about two opposite trains that represent the cultural assimilation and separatism. Shannon claims that Wilson wrote:

"The question we've been wrestling since the Emancipation proclamation is "Do we assimilate into American society and there by lose our culture or do we maintain our culture separate from the dominant cultural values and participate in the American society as Africans rather than as blacks who have adopted European values?" On the surface, it seems as though we have adopted the idea

that we should assimilate, because one has received more publicity than the other. But if you look at it, you'll find that the majority of black Americans have rejected the idea of giving up who they are- in the essence becoming someone else- in order to advance, in American society, which may be why we haven't moved anywhere. I see the majority of people saying: "Naw, I don't want to do that I'm me." (Wilson & Shannon, 1999:546)

From this declaration, the reader can understand that there is a conflict in the play between the two powers: cultural assimilation and cultural separatism. This conflict creates a state of stagnation in the souls of black Americans in the play who suffer the insecure life because of their dark skin. Memphis points to this idea when he rejects the attitude of most black men. He says: "these niggers talking about freedom, justice and equality and don't know what it mean. You born free. It is up to you to maintain it" (Wilson, 1990:42).

Then, it is obvious that those people lived in miserable circumstances and they were a subject to be imprisoned. Wolf as black man describes the insecure life he and other black Americans lived in. He says:

"The white men don't feel right unless he got a record on these niggers. Walk on down there...I'll give you a dollar for every nigger you find that ain't been to jail...I been to jail...tried to make bond and couldn't do it. They kept me down there in the country jail for months. Ain't have nothing but walk down the street. I was walking down center Avenue...police was chasing somebody and wasn't looking where he was going, and I wasn't looking where I was going neither....he ran into me so hard it knocked us both down. I started to get up and there was two, three police officers with their guns pointed at my head. Told me not to move. They arrested me for obstructing justice....I learned to watch where I was going at all times. Cause you always under attack" (Wilson, 1990:54).

From this quote, it is clear that the relationship between blacks and whites was broken and not steady. So that, there is no way in front of black men only to deny his own culture and be assimilated to white culture in order to survive. Wilson's play then is about the debate whether to be assimilated to white culture or stickle at the idea of cultural separatism. Wilson states:

"Unless, we acknowledge a common past, we cannot have a common present or a common future, and you have to make an intelligent decision about where, as a people, we are going, how we are going to participate in this society. Are we going to accept the idea of cultural assimilated or insist on the idea of cultural separatism? This is what we have been debating for hundreds of years. My plays are part of that debate" (Wilson& Bigsby, 2002:212).

Therefore, Wilson creates his characters who seem to be like Wilson, because both of them stand against racial crimes and racism of the white society. Those characters are using their Black Nationalism and black rage to overcome the racial segregation in society. Sterling as an African American uses his black nationalism to overcome the hardships of life and improve his financial standing through lottery. When Sterling's number wins, he hopes to change his destiny, but the European American family, the Alberts who were responsible for the numbers game, do not want to give Sterling his winnings because he is black. Then Sterling heroically against this racism and gets his winning, but not all of them (Tyndall, 2012:175). Wilson describes Sterling's warrior spirit to change his destiny that becomes a cause behind his acts, like robbing a bank or stealing gas in order to survive. These incidents affirm the economic and social issues of black people at that time and how many people tried to find a way to live in such critical situations. Sterling endeavors to stand against the economic racism of European Americans who control the lives of African Americans, This issue affects Sterling's choice of actions and illegal ways in order to live in the white American. According to Marry Bogumil (1999):

"*Two Trains Running* revolves around the theme of money, capitalism, and the connection among hard work, rightful compensation, fate, luck and identity....Sterling pursue illegal or suspicious means of income-outside the traditional bounds of accepted occupations: they are part of capitalism's underclass, forced into its under-world" (Bogumil, 1999:103-4).

From this quote, the play is then about the struggle of African Americans during a historical change in the history of the United States. A historical change that many black Americans expect after the assassination

of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, is never achieved because black Americans did not have power to make a social change. Wilson's play "Two Trains Running" is a "living history text" that reflects the daily struggle and conflicts of African Americans' life in 1960s and its effect on the political scene in America (Saddler& Bryant-Jackson, 2016:58). Wilson attempts to depict the black experience in America and how the social, economic and political racism of the white, physically and psychology had affected the minds of black Americans and their suffering of being African in America (Jose& Raj, 2011:110). Wilson portrays this suffering in the play, through the character of Hambone who is cheated by the white butcher, Lutz. Hambone's mental disorder has "deteriorated to such a point that he can only say two phrases" (Wilson, 1991:14). The cause of Hambone's lunacy seems to be because he refused to be subjugated to his culture. In his study (2004), Harry Elam Jr. describes Hambone to have a black consciousness about his status. Elam states: "while such obsessive behavior seems "mad", Wilson suggests that it implies a different level of consciousness, an unparalleled measure of commitment and focused sanity" (Elam Jr., 2004:65).

Similarly, the theme of cultural assimilation and cultural separatism seem to be like Du Bois's philosophy of double consciousness because black Americans in Wilson's play Two Trains Running, were puzzled whether to embrace the white culture and being assimilated or choose a cultural separatism which means to live as blacks who were lack social rights. Du Bois tries to heal the trope of this struggle through his philosophy of double consciousness that to be black and American at the same time through his philosophy of double consciousness. He wrote:

"The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him to see himself through the revelation of other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in a mused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 1967:16).

Consequently, this philosophy causes a racial madness for most African Americans who suffer many traumas since they do not know whether to be black or white. Indeed, Wilson succeeds through this work to advise black Americans to forge a new identity that is African and American at the same time. Wilson's task is framing this new identity, is being assured through his overview to the life and activities of African Americans. He tailors the new vision and thoughts about the fate of black Americans in the modern American society. Wilson shows that the prevailed boundaries of the American society delimited the relationship between black and white cultures and experience (Elam, 2004:221). Harry Elam (2004), points out that critics like Brustein and Gates claim that Wilson calls for "sentimental separatism" (Elam, 2004:221). Then Wilson refutes such charges and expresses that:

"We are not separatists, as Mr. Brustein asserts. We are Americans trying to fulfill our talents. We are not the servants at the party. We are not apprentices in the kitchen. We are not the stable boys to the king's hands men...We are Africans, we are Americans,.....we are artists who seek to develop our talents and give expressions to our personalities, we bring advantage to the common ground that is the American theatre" (Wilson, 2009:161).

Then Wilson calls for a "strategic separatism" (Elam, 2004:222), which is the assurance of black culture beside the dominant culture of the whites. Wilson aims at developing his black culture through developing black theatre in America. He refuses to permit the performance of his play "Fences" only in case if the director was black (Elam, 2004:222). In his article *I want a Black Director* (1994) that was published in the New York Times Wilson states that:

"No wonder I had been greeted with incredulous looks when I suggested a black director for Fences, I sat in the office of paramount pictures suggesting that someone who has affected by an undesirable condition, who was sullen, unqualified, and marked by a malignant influence, direct film" (Wilson, 1990:200).

Wilson then wants to the black culture to be performed because "American cultural politics have historically denied black cultural value" (Elam, 2004:222). Wilson's aim is to affirm his black self-

determination against the white racism that he had faced in his life. He refutes what he called "colorblind casting", that American culture viewed in order to assert racial meaning. Wilson states:

"Colorblind casting is an aberrant idea that has never had any validity other than a tool of the cultural Imperialists who view American culture, rooted in the icons of European culture, as beyond reproach in its perfection. It is inconceivable to them that life could be lived and enriched without knowing Shakespeare or Mozart....They refused to recognize black conduct and manners as part of a system that is fueled by its own philosophy, morphology, history, creative motif, social organization, and ethos. The idea that blacks have their own way of responding to that world their own value, style linguistics, religion and aesthetics, is unacceptable to them" (Wilson, 2009:157).

Finally, Wilson holds the goal for his characters in his plays that they will eventually recognize their Americanness and live as Africans in America without being assimilated to the white culture. Thus, those people according to Wilson, will be able to appreciate a unique way of looking at other cultures despite the fact that they will be in a direct opposition to the White culture's way of observing things.

4. Risa: The Voice of African American Women

Risa is the waitress in Memphis Lee's restaurant in August Wilson's play "Two Trains Running". She is a woman who has deformed her legs so that men like Wolf- a number runner in the play- would no longer seek sexual intercourse with her (Rocha, 1994:128). She tries to keep herself from the prevailed social struggle and conflict in the American society, in order to affirm a separate identity (Shannon,1994:152).According to August Wilson, Risa attempts to "force everybody to look at her and see what kind of personality she is" (Wilson,1991:50). Risa then assures her power of personality and her ability to nurture in a world that controlled by men. She is the only black woman in the play, who is the most inscrutable character. Sandra Shannon explains that "in the waitress Risa, Wilson continues to demonstrate that the black woman's capacity to a domestic setting...Risa has singled out from a variety of regular patrons one mentally impaired black man as the recipient of her companion" (Shannon,1994:160).

Risa represents the African American women who stands heroically in the storm of the social dispute between black and whites. She represents the voice of African American culture through her self-definition and her refusal to agree to the seductions of men in the play. Wilson describes Risa by saying:

"Well, I wish I could talk more about her than I can. For me the scarring of her legs was an attempt to define herself in her own terms rather than being by men...basically for me it was her standing up and refuting to accept those definitions and make her self-definition" (Wilson and Shannon, 1991:241).

Risa is a black woman who rebels against the traditional gender aspects that view woman as a "sign" not more. She defies the traditional customs of female gender and sustains her own identity through her refusal to have a man which seems to be a contradict aspect in her identity (Elam, 1994:167). Memphis describes her by saying:

"A man would be happy to have a woman like that except she done ruined herself. She ain't right with herself. How she gonna be right with you. Anybody take a razor and cut up herself ain't right...something ain't right with a woman don't want woman. That ain't natural. If she say she like women that be another thing. It ain't natural but that be something else. But somebody that's all confused about herself and don't want nobody I can't figure out where to put her" (Wilson, 1991:50).

From this quote, it is obvious that Risa wants to advise African American women to define themselves only through their own voice not through the definition of men who only recognize them as objects of amusement not more. She tries to affirm herself in the American culture that places social burdens on her. So she has a black consciousness and respectability that can be found only in "all August Wilson's middle-aged black female characters" (Tyndall, 2004:167). Wilson's female characters are the voice of African-American culture; she wants men to appreciate her identity and not her beauty that could be faded away in years. She doesn't want to make a relationship with men because if she failed, she will be a victim of

problems that could result from failed relationships with men (Elam, Jr., 1994:155). The success and failure in the life of Risa then is an evidence of what Wilson marks as black Americans' (men and women) fights for "self-definition, self-respect and self-defense" (Wilson,2009:2).

Risa knows that she must keep herself safe from the atrocity of men since she is the only woman in the play. She meets every day many men in the restaurant like Sterling, Wolf and Hambone, but she always stays silent only speaks when a question or statement are pointed at her or attracts her curiosity (Green, 2004:154). Risa attempts to help black woman through her voice although she is rarely uses her voice, but she does not stay silent to the mistreatment of women who have been mistreated by their partners. In act one of the play, when Memphis talks about his wife and how she left. Risa asked Memphis that his wife may leave him because of his bad treatment for her. Risa states: "maybe she didn't like the way you was treating her" (Wilson, 1991:4). Then Memphis claims that he treated her as a "queen", he states: "I treat that woman like she was a queen" (Wilson, 1991:5). Risa then suggests that "maybe she don't see it like that. She had to leave for something" (Wilson, 1991:5). At the same time, Memphis tries to defend his position as a man and explains that his wife was doing nothing than more clean the house and take care of it. As a reaction to this, Risa wants to advise Memphis that his wife wanted him to identify her identity as a woman, who has the right to express her feeling, but Holloway interrupts the conversation and Risa does not complete what she wants to say.

This incident assures the dominance of the male character in the play and their powerful voice over the feeble voice of black woman (Green, 2004:155). Memphis as a man tries to reflect his dominance that was enabled him to control his ex-wife over Risa who does all her duties in the restaurant, but Memphis wasn't satisfied as if his job in the restaurant was only to observe if Risa does all the work. For this reason, Risa was a victim in the world of men who try to control her voice and actions. Her silence in most of the debates in the play, asserts the powerlessness of black woman in America who become the prey of the dominant white culture. Sterling tries to fulfill his desires from Risa, attempts to control Risa not as an "independent feminist", but only to accomplish the rol of woman in his life (Elam Jr., 1994:168). Sterling states: "woman, you everything a man need, know how to cook....pay nice attention to yourself...except for those legs" (Wilson, 1991:68).

Then Sterling wants to convince Risa to accept a sexual relationship with him by indicating that Risa is a woman and naturally, she must accept that (Elam Jr., 1994:168). Sterling says:

"Risa.....you in the world, baby. You a woman in the world. You here like everybody else. You got to make the best of it. Quite naturally when men see you with that big ass and them pretty legs they gonna try and talk you into a bed somewhere. That's common sense. They be less than a man if they didn't" (Wilson, 1991:69).

The relationship between Risa and Sterling seems to be unsteady because her attitude and actions are affected by this relationship. She is attracted to Sterling and her emotions moved toward him, but she wants him only according to her will (Elam Jr., 1994:168). Risa refuses to be submitted to the affections of Sterling, at the beginning of the play, but she eventually surrenders to his seductions when he convinced her to attend with him the rally of Malcolm X. There he starts to kiss her keenly (Ibid), then she tells him "I want to be your only cousin" (Wilson, 1991:70), and starts to kiss him passionately.

Through the character of Risa, Wilson explains that black women defy the miserable realism of the American culture and their interaction with men and how this interaction affects the consideration of female gender that will continue to be developed forever. Wilson creates the character of Risa with a sense of self-respect and makes her not to rely on her sexual organs. Risa's strongest and self-respect identity, represents Wilson's criticism to the inequality of gender in the African American culture on the one hand, and in the American culture on the other.

Many critics claimed that Risa is different from Wilson's other female characters, in her nurturing nature through which she attempts to advise her fellow black women to be more conscious about their identity and self-respect. Wilson creates three kinds of female characters in his play: "nurturers/sustainers, the artists and the rebels" (Beaulieu, 2006:915). Wilson's female character of Ma Rainey in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" (1985), and Berniece in "The Piano Lesson" (1990), are artists women who tried to fulfill

their identity through music. Ma Rainey is famous in the play with the name "The Mother of the blues" (Beaulieu, 2006:916), because she loves the blues music. The play describes the racism and exploitation of the white publishers against black artists who attempts to publish their artistic works. Ma Rainey describes the relationship between the white publishers and the black artists to be like the relationship between the "pimp and the prostitute" (Beaulieu, 2006:916).

Consequently, Berniece tries to save her African American heritage through her struggle with her brother Boy Willie over selling of the piano. She regards this piano to be a symbol of the long struggle and suffering of her ancestors as well as a tool through which she could respect and honor the severe experience of her ancestors. Risa then is a nurture female who attempts to save herself from "male advances" through unusual act of scarring her legs in order to make herself ugly" (Beaulieu, 2006:918).

Finally, Wilson demonstrates through the character of Risa, that her partners treated African American women like games. Wilson delivers his message through Risa that African American women have to stand against prevailing aesthetics of the suitable female attitude in the society. He draws a complex portrait woman who represents the struggle of African American women in America. Risa has spiritual qualities and knowledge about the world around her that is controlled by men. At the same time, Risa suffers a "psych pain" as she stays away from men, but it causes her a "self-torment" (Snodgrass, 2004:198). The male characters of the play fail to evaluate her predilection to the prophet Samuel and how she attempts to give goodness and love for others without harm herself-respect. Memphis believes that Risa's enigma toward men will cause a big gap between her and her mate, while Wolf advises her to practice a sexual intercourse with him that could finish her agony.

Holloway describes Risa to be a "normal" woman without paying attention to her identity as a woman. It is only Sterling who convinced Risa to have passion with him and smashes the obstacle that Risa carries for many years. This could be the reason behind Risa's self-destruction that because she finally falls in love with Sterling, indicating that there is a subplot in the play that needs a solution (Snodgrass, 2004:198). Risa is the woman that was marginalized in the play. She suffers from the injustice of social and economic system of the American society in a time when there was a conflict between the power racial issues and sexual oppression of black women. She still the strongest and self-identified character, but her hesitation toward Sterling romantic advances seem to be because the prevailed racism and exploitation against women in the American society.

Conclusion

This paper explains in more than one occasion that his play "Two Trains Running" is about the negative impact of being assimilated in the dominant culture. Wilson creates two opposite powers in the play that represent the contrast between culture assimilation and separatism. Wilson expresses that it is impossible to any black individual to be assimilated to another culture and abandoned his own culture. For this reason, most of the characters in the play rejects the cultural assimilation and seek to maintain a culture separate and live as Africans in the American society without adopting the "European values".

Similarly, the chapter also studies the character of Risa and the way she represents the African American women who stand heroically in the storm of the social dispute between black and whites. She represents the voice of African American culture through her self-definition and her refusal to agree to the seductions of men in the play. Wilson delivers his message through Risa that African American women have to stand against prevailing aesthetics of the suitable female attitude in the society. He draws a complex portrait woman who represents the struggle of African American women in America. Risa has spiritual qualities and knowledge about the world around her that is controlled by men.

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