

Contributions of August Wilson's to Anti-Racism as an African American Playwright: A Literature Review

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Abstract

August Wilson became a prominent playwright in the 1980s. In the early 1980s, he achieved prominence in African American theater with his unique dramaturgical style. Nonetheless, he encountered discriminatory practices and the enduring impact of white supremacy ideology in the United States. Additionally, it is significant to mention that in 1959, he was the only African American student enrolled in Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, his presence at this mostly white educational institution exposed him to several sorts of intimidation and abuse from his Caucasian colleagues. Furthermore, he encountered accusations from his instructor about the conduct of plagiarizing a significant quantity of material specifically 20 pages, in his works about Napoleon. As a result of these allegations, he chose to depart from Gladstone High School in 1960. Subsequent to his expulsion from a racially biased educational institution, he autonomously pursued knowledge by using the resources at the Carnegie Library, where he developed a deep interest in books about the lives and history of African Americans. The maltreatment he suffered from those of Caucasian descent was profoundly cruel and characterized by acts of barbarity. Notwithstanding his humble beginnings, Wilson has attained significant success in dramaturgy.

Keywords: Anti-Racism, African American Theatre, August Wilson

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1980s, Wilson was generally acknowledged to be a significant within the African American community theater because due of his unique methodology in dramatization: Nonetheless, is he encountered biased practices beside the dominant alabaster mindset on the American continent. He attended Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh in 1959 was the only black student, which exposed him to intimidation and abuse

from his white classmates. Moreover, he encountered accusations of plagiarism from an educator over a 20-page study work on Napoleon (Alabbasi, 2021). As a result, he decided to leave Graduated from Gladstone High School in 1960. After existence ejected from a racial perspective biased academic establishment, he independently sought self-education by using the facilities of a library housed in Carnegie (Almaarroof, 2022). As a result, he formulated an insatiable need due to reading about the Experiences and historical accounts of African Americans. The therapy he endured of Caucasian origin persons was severely devoid of compassion and marked by tremendous cruelty. As an African American resident inside the United States, he contends African Americans have a very engaging story, probably exceeding that of any other demographic (Abdullah, 2022). The user's text lacks any information or context. Consequently, it cannot be rephrased. Wilson addresses the topic of African American harassment via an artistic lens, rather than using protest as a method of confrontation. The author has created a compilation of 10 theatrical pieces, known as a ten-play cycle or century cycle, which together chronicle the development of Black American theater throughout the twentieth century, each decade (Escayg, 2020).

Problem Statement

In the first phases of his career, Wilson believed that theater might act as a medium to enhance public knowledge of the struggles of African Americans in twentieth-century America. He committed himself to crafting a collection of 10 plays designed to reexamine the historical narrative of each decade of this century. The objective was to ensure that the achievements and significance of black life would be duly recognized and included into the history of American theater (Fisher, 2021).

Significance of Study

The significance of Wilson's theatrical endeavors in African American Theatre lies in their confrontational nature. Wilsonian dramaturgy is a theatrical approach designed to tackle the many socio-economic and cultural challenges encountered by individuals of African American descent. Wilson plays a crucial part in the development of multifaceted and multifaceted perspectives within the African American theatrical legacy. The African American Theatre has embarked on unique endeavors by using history, memory, rituals, time, and place in a scholarly and artistic manner (Fu, 2022). Consequently, he has the ability to navigate the socio-economic and cultural turmoil inside the minds of persons of African origin. As a result, in the early 1980s, many current African American playwrights began studying and imitating his theatrical techniques. Marion Mac Clinton perceptively observes that August Wilson's substantial contributions have been instrumental in facilitating possibilities for many black authors.

Literature Review

The significance of "anti-racism" studies has gained considerable attention over the years, reflecting a growing commitment to addressing systemic racism in various societal domains. In the 1980s, Wilson emerged as a notable figure in African American theater, known for dramatizing the Black experience through an artistic lens, rather than direct protest, as reflected in his unique "ten-play cycle," which chronicled African American life across each decade of the 20th century (Alabbasi, 2021). The plays are celebrated not only for their artistic quality but also for their socio-political commentary on racial injustice and cultural identity,

highlighting the enduring struggle of Black Americans within the broader American narrative (Escayg, 2020).

A key theme in anti-racism scholarship is how Black artists and intellectuals have used creative expression to resist and redefine the racial structures imposed on them. Wilson's experience of racial bias during his education—where he was falsely accused of plagiarism and subsequently left formal schooling—fueled his passion for self-education and African American history, which deeply influenced his works (Almaarroof, 2022). This self-driven learning helped him develop a profound understanding of the historical mistreatment and cultural resilience of African Americans, leading him to present their stories in a way that foregrounds both the pain of oppression and the richness of Black cultural heritage (Abdullah, 2022).

A vital aspect of anti-racism discourse revolves around the articulation of Black identity amidst persistent racial discrimination. The “Black Aesthetics Movement” of the 1960s and 1970s played a crucial role in defining this identity by promoting a cultural renaissance that celebrated African traditions, folklore, and arts, which were carried over to America during the transatlantic slave trade. These cultural elements were key in resisting assimilation into white culture and in forming a sense of self-empowerment (Talamaivao, 2021). Wilson’s dramaturgy draws heavily from this aesthetics, incorporating oral traditions, music, rituals, and historical narratives to examine the African American experience, especially through the lens of systemic racism and marginalization (Triplett, 2023).

This tradition of integrating cultural history into artistic expression aligns with broader discussions within “critical race theory”, which emphasize the importance of storytelling and lived experience in understanding the structural nature of racism. By situating African American struggles within a historical context, Wilson and other proponents of Black aesthetics argue for the necessity of remembering the past to navigate the present and future (Valencia, 2020). This viewpoint resonates with scholars like Du Bois and Amiri Baraka, whose works during the Black Power Movement sought to educate and mobilize African Americans through literature, theater, and activism (Watt, 2021). Wilson’s exploration of themes such as migration, identity, and economic struggle in plays like “Joe Turner's Come and Gone” serves as a prime example of how art can be a vehicle for anti-racist advocacy by portraying the complexities of Black life in America (Lentin, 2019).

Methodology

Different kinds of review articles exist. Theory-based reviews (e.g., Gilal et al. (2019)), theme-based reviews (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2022; Ahmed & Salmi, 2024; Rosado-Serrano et al, 2018), framework-based reviews (e.g., Södergren (2021), theory development reviews (e.g., Paul & Mas (2020)), hybrid reviews (e.g., Dabić et al. (2020)), bibliometric analysis (e.g., Ahmed et al. (2023a); Alsharif et al. (2023); Halsharif & Pileliené (2023); Pileliené et al. (2022)), meta-analysis (e.g., Alsharif & Khraiwish (2024). According to Ahmed et al. (2023b) and Ahmed et al. (2021), bibliometric reviews can be either domain-based or journal-based. A thorough literature review process was used to methodically gather, evaluate, and combine previous findings in this study (Webster & Watson, 2002). The review was guided by well-defined research questions aimed at identifying key trends, gaps, and advancements in the field. A search was conducted in the Google Scholar database to ensure that the review encompassed

the most relevant and credible studies. The search was restricted to peer-reviewed journals, ensuring that the most up-to-date research was captured. A combination of keywords and Boolean operators was used to refine the search strategy, employing terms such as August Wilson and anti-racism to locate studies relevant to the study. To avoid linguistic bias, the review initially aimed to include studies published in various languages, but for practical reasons, it was ultimately limited to articles in the English language. Duplicate articles were removed.

After the search, the review followed a rigorous selection process in which studies were screened based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included to determine if they directly addressed anti-racism and were published in credible, peer-reviewed sources. The review process was conducted in two stages: an initial screening of titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text review of the articles that met the initial criteria. Each study's methodological quality was evaluated using a literature review methodology to ensure robustness and validity. Data extraction was carried out systematically, focusing on study characteristics, methodologies, key findings, and limitations. A thematic synthesis was employed to group studies based on recurring themes, identifying points of convergence and divergence in the literature. This synthesis enabled a comprehensive evaluation of the current state of knowledge on anti-racism, highlighting gaps where further research is needed. Lastly, a risk of bias assessment was conducted to account for any potential selection or publication biases, thus ensuring the reliability and objectivity of the review findings.

Discussion

Consequently, African Americans are increasingly seen as essential and significant contributors to the American theatrical community. The provided text lacks the necessary content for an academic revision. Kindly provide further details. Wilson is acknowledged for his contribution to the formation of a unique identity within African American theater. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that his creative evolution occurred under less-than-optimal circumstances (Guo, 2021). The course of his life demonstrates a series of variations as he contended with the obstacles presented by a cultural dilemma. This unfavorable setting is apparent in the subject foundations of his theatrical works. The artist illustrated the harsh realities and obstacles encountered by people in the African American society. Regarding this subject, John Lahar contends the plays in question do not function as pedagogical instruments; instead, they illustrate the greater spectrum of life via the nuanced depiction of specific events. The text provided by the user lacks sufficient length for an academic revision. The author used the notion of non-white tactics and black aesthetics to illuminate the complex racially discriminated against African Americans (Triplett, 2023). Wilson subscribes to these notions to delineate a unique sense of self for African Americans in America. While enslaved, they were brought to America, their unique rituals, narratives, and musical compositions were preserved and perpetuated. They are deeply committed to their indigenous cultural heritage and fiercely guard their original identity as a result. The pervasiveness of racist actions in the US, however, has put this identity in a crisis. To rediscover who they were, a number of Black aestheticians came together to establish the Black Aesthetics Movement. To further the idea of Black Aesthetics, experts compile a variety of stories, rituals, folklore, musical forms, and religious beliefs, which they then integrate into creative expressions, literary works, theatrical performances, and sculptures (Talamaivao, 2021). Many African American myths, traditions,

and beliefs characterize Wilsonian dramaturgy. So, applying the concepts of Black Aesthetics to the study of Wilsonian dramaturgy is a viable option.

This study examines the concepts and tenets of African American art and theater articulated by Alain Locke, W.E.B. DuBois, and Amiri Baraka during the Black Theater and Black Aesthetics Movements of the 1960s and 1970s. DuBois, Amiri Baraka, and Alain Locke are regarded as important players in the Black Aesthetics Movement. The notion of Black Aesthetics significantly influenced August Wilson's theatrical works (Valencia, 2020). Identifying a writer who produces works devoid of ideology is a challenging task. The assertion that writing is free from ideology may be seen as an ideological stance in itself. Thus, African American theater exhibits a diversity of beliefs. Historically, African Americans have maintained many viewpoints on the concepts of liberty and equality, spanning from the early era to modern times. Prominent African American leaders include Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., Elijah Muhammad, and Malcolm X., espoused divergent beliefs about the emancipation of African Americans from the repressive white supremacist society. The historical trajectory of African American leadership has several ideological elements. Some politicians advocate for the creation of a distinct country for African Americans inside the United States. Some leaders, on the other hand, adhere strictly to Christian and Islamic teachings. Among the many goals of the African American Civil Rights Movement was the attainment of full equality and self-determination for all Black Americans living in the USA. As stated by (Watt 2021) Among the various organizations that the Wilsonian theory of dramaturgy is associated with are the Black Power, Black Theatre, Black Art, and Black Aesthetics Movements. Educating and empowering the community, African American philosophy is a combination of numerous ideas and beliefs. As a result, he uses strategies used by people of color to shed light on the pervasive racism and oppression that Black Americans endure. To paraphrase, Harry I. Elam Jr. claims that...Wilson recognizes his affiliation with the Black Power Movement and the revolutionary theater of the 1960s, as well as the principles of black cultural nationalism from that time, even though his dramatic works have a substantial cultural influence. There is great historical significance in documenting the abolition of slavery and the subsequent social, economic, and cultural progress of African Americans (Strategy, 2022). As soon as they set foot in the United States, African Americans brought with them a rich cultural heritage. The African custom in question was mostly conveyed via oral methods. It underwent a metamorphosis throughout time and was ultimately documented in writing form. In the period of slavery, spirituals and ceremonies were of considerable significance in the realm of oral tradition. In a big way, the African American theater helped keep the religious and cultural traditions passed down through the generations alive and well. The enslaved people were granted access to educational opportunities and other conveniences after Abraham Lincoln's proclamation of freedom. In their fight against racism, these brilliant individuals wrote extensive works of literature with the goal of educating African Americans (Leonard, 2020).

This led to the codification of the previously spoken word. African American religious and cultural practices, both oral and written, are incorporated into Wilsonian dramaturgy. The individual holds the view that African American identity is heavily influenced by historical events. Therefore, the author argues that documenting our history is a vital resource, as knowing our past well is critical for shaping our future. Wilson uses African Americans' historical experiences to shed light on and shape their future. A recurring motif in all of his

plays is looking at how the past reflects our present. Both the Tony and the New York Drama Critics Circle Awards were bestowed to August Wilson's "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" for its exceptional drama. During the early stages of the large-scale migration of African Americans from the South to the North, the play takes place in Pittsburgh in 1911 (Lentin, 2019). Mr. and Mrs. Seth Bartha own a boarding house in Pittsburgh where the play takes place. The story centers on displaced people who have fled to the industrialized North in search of better economic opportunities. But the pursuit of material success isn't the only thing driving them; they're also on a quest to find who they are spiritually. The play delves into the complex dynamics between people of African descent and their genealogical and cultural roots. The historical migration of African Americans from the South to the North is explored in Joe Turner's Come and Gone, a play that delves into the complicated realities of race, gender, and economic struggle. Wilson aspires to depict the migration of the Black community's cultural, historical, traditional, and belief systems in addition to their geographical places. It should be noted that a few of Wilson's characters show a lack of familiarity with their own cultural background. According to Massicotte (2022), Seth plays the role of Bartha's spouse in this performance.

Nobody knows the person's family tree. He asserts that "All of that outdated and irrational nonsense. "Eight was the user-entered number. There is little doubt that certain people of African American descent have, beginning with slavery and continuing up to the present day, been subjected to a cultural assault by White civilization. A white businessman named Rutherford Selig sometimes charges more money to people of African descent for the kitchenware he sells. On top of that, for a price, he helps people of African descent locate their long-lost ancestors. Wilson wants to stress how rude people of Caucasian descent were in regard to the hardships that Black Americans went through. According to Douglas Anderson, Selig stands for the capitalist powers that devalue and exploit African Americans. The portrayal of white people by Wilson in relation to Black people reveals a psychologically cruel and deeply ingrained attitude towards Black people (Miller, 2023). Bynum, a conjure man with an in-depth knowledge of numerous Black cultural characteristics, is a person that Wilson uses to further the conversation around African American cultural history. He is a spiritual embodiment of the Black people's past and present, with strong ties to their ceremonies and rituals (Hill, 2018).

As a result, Bynum plays a pivotal role in Wilson's body of work, which allows us to trace our African American ancestry. Having lived under a white landlord's oppression, the play's protagonist, Herald Loomis, represents the negative effects of slavery. So, it's safe to say that the individual's current situation is heavily impacted by their history of slavery and prejudice. Wilson intends to investigate how African Americans' mental health was impacted by slavery. The drama has a young girl character named Mattie Campbell. Here we have a twenty-six-year-old woman who is looking for a serious romantic connection with a real man. This yearning stems from the unfortunate circumstance of her husband's move. Wilson delves on the topic of Black women's marital estrangement and suffering in his writings. About twenty-five years old, Jeremy is a talented guitarist and musician of African descent. Despite dealing with several obstacles, he has a high level of self-assurance (Chatterjee, 2019). Because of bad experiences with prize distribution by white people, the individual is reluctant to compete in guitar contests. To showcase his musical abilities, Wilson's character competes against two African American opponents, according to Anderson Douglas. Nevertheless, Wilson comes to

the realization that the white person can't assess the performance quality of any musician since he can't hear their tones. Ten was the user-submitted integer. The female protagonist Molly represents all women who stand out against patriarchy. In order to achieve autonomy, the person believes it is necessary to break away from conventional family and societal norms. In addition, Wilson dissects the racial prejudice that Black women face in today's society. Black aesthetics, nonwhite methodology, and African American oral and written traditions are all explored in Joe Turner Come and Gone, a drama by August Wilson. The first play of a full cycle of ten plays by August Wilson is Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (Alabbasi, 2021).

Conclusion

The action takes place at a Chicago recording studio in the year 1927. The story revolves on a recording session with the band of the renowned blues singer Ma Rainey. White producers and agents have benefited from Ma Rainey's recordings. Unfortunately, Ma Rainey's identification as a Black artist causes others to be reluctant to give her the recognition she deserves. Wilson (year) examines how Black musicians and artists are exploited economically, highlighting how white producers' main objective is to profit only from their creative efforts. Ma Rainey's self-identification goes unnoticed by Sturdivant, the white producer. I will not suffer through it. I would want to take her here so we can record those tunes.

The concept of Black Aesthetics is deftly explored by Wilson in this dramatic work. Blues structure is the play's focal point. When studying African American culture, the blues are essential components. Caucasian producers want to change the Blues in a way that appeals to a wider audience, but in the process, they dilute the genre's inherent authenticity. However, MaRainey remains unwavering in her determination to preserve the Blues genre's originality in order to uphold the cultural heritage of African Americans. People look highly on those who can make a profit from their efforts, according to the author. If you don't, you're no different from any other city street dog.

The protagonist of the play "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," Ma Rainey, is a struggling musician who challenges long-held white conventions about the music industry's treatment of black artists. Come and Gone by Joe Turner and Black Bottom by Ma Rainey are two of August Wilson's plays that delve deeply into the nuances of racial relationships between white and black characters. In the process of writing his plays, Wilson engages with many theoretical frameworks and ideologies, including Black Aesthetics, non-white methods, and the discussion of African American culture.

For future studies, Cloud computing and big data analysis can significantly enhance anti-racism studies by allowing researchers to analyze large datasets, such as social media posts and institutional records, to identify patterns of racial discrimination (Wang, 2021; Wang & Zhang, 2021). Predictive models can be developed to forecast areas prone to racial tensions, helping policy-makers take preemptive action. Personalized educational platforms, driven by machine learning algorithms, can offer tailored anti-racism resources to individuals based on their learning needs and engagement history. Furthermore, real-time data analysis in schools or workplaces can detect racial biases and trigger immediate interventions to promote inclusivity.

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