

## The Burden of Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*

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### Abstract

One of the leading works of literature in portraying the social changes of African-American community during the turbulent 1960s is undoubtedly August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*. Wilson was a keen observer and recorder of his fellowmen's development in America. It is only after decades of struggle that, in 1960s, these people seem to gradually establish their identity as true African selves in America. The main purpose of the present article is to survey the struggle of these people in discovering their true selves and establishing their social identity in this land. This systematic study also discovers and points up different factors which are requisite for the burgeoning of all dominated cultures. In this regard, Pierre Bourdieu's social theory is applied which includes different factors in determining the social identity such as different forms of capital, taste, distinction, and habitus.

**Keywords:** August Wilson, Sociology, Pierre Bourdieu, Capital, Taste, Distinction, Habitus.

### Introduction

"Freedom is heavy. You got to put your shoulder to it and hope your back hold up."

(Wilson 1990, 44)

African-American drama is famous for tracking the history of African people in America and showing their efforts to find their identity and hence building an autonomous culture of their own in the new land. Wilson, a famous and devoted African-American dramatist, was not only a member of this community, but also a great observer, a sophisticated philosopher, and finally a great recorder of his fellowmen's development in America. His *Pittsburg cycle* is an invaluable artifact of African Americans' social memory, through the reading of which one can follow the journey of these people throughout each decade of the twentieth century. The beginning of this century is marked by the ending of slavery and the beginning of the path towards self-discovery. And it is only after a long journey throughout the twentieth century that in 1960s they come to understand the importance of returning to their cultural roots to discover their individual identity and hence establish their social identity.

*Two Trains Running*, written in 1990 and set in 1960s, is Wilson's seventh play in his *Pittsburg Cycle*. This play is set in 1969 Pittsburg and revolves around the social changes happening through the

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African-American community at that time. Undoubtedly, Wilson as a famous African-American dramatist could not ignore the gradual substitution of non-violent Civil Rights Movement by the radical Black Power Movement. The time between 1955 to 1968 is recognized as the Civil Rights Movement, the leader of which was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who believed that “enduring insults, physical violence, and imprisonment would eventually gain national attention” (Critical Analysis 4). After the assassination of King in 1968, the non-violent activities of this movement continued but with less vigor. Malcolm X, on the other hand, was the leader of Black Power Movement who believed in “self-defense and in a radical, anti-white position” and preached “a message of Black Pride, self-help and separatism” (ibid.). All these movements, after all, helped Black people to have pride in their blackness and restore positive images of themselves from negative stereotyping in society. Soon, African-American students began to gain pride in their true African culture. Black women “who once straightened their hair to conform to white beauty standards were now sporting afros to demonstrate their pride in African heritage. Phrases like ‘Black is beautiful’ and ‘Say it loud, I’m Black and I’m proud’ also emerged” (Critical Analysis 3).

The main purpose of the present article is to survey the struggle of African Americans in discovering and establishing their individual identity and thereby social identity in 1960s America. The significance of this article is due to the fact that “issues of race, inferiority and legacies of slavery continue to shape the Afro-American society, which deepens the psychological wound of black people. Like the colonized people who are left traumatized after an oppressive colonial experience, African Americans are still living the trauma of racism” (Bouacida 2021, 399). African Americans should find harmony between their past, present and future in order to establish and maintain their autonomous culture in the new land. Subsequently, they should understand different underlying components of culture. And the cultural status of African Americans in *Two Trains Running* is surveyed according to the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu.

### **Review of Literature**

Different studies have been done on the plays of Wilson. *August Wilson’s Ten-play Cycle: A Socio-Economic and Cultural Study* (2011) by Eknath B. Bhalerao is a panoramic PhD dissertation which explores the plays of Wilson sociologically, economically and culturally. Of course, his methodology is descriptive in contrast to the methodology of the present article which is analytical, but it is a useful source for the better grasp of the plays. According to Bhalerao, August Wilson implemented the discourse of one hundred years of African-American history in order to show the “complex social, economic and cultural exploitation of the African-American ethnic minority through his innovative dramatic art. Therefore, he is an outstanding, unique and universal dramatist in theatres across the world in general and the African-American theatre in particular” (235).

*August Wilson’s Play Cycle: A Healing Black Rage for Contemporary African Americans* (2002), a PhD dissertation by Charles Patrick Tyndall is basically about the issue of racism in Wilson’s plays and, therefore, it is a useful source for the present study. As Tyndall declares, there will perpetually be a compulsion to analyze works such as Wilson’s plays to help American society better and “understand its past, present and future, and how we all fit into the cycle of life” (205).

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*Understanding August Wilson* (2009) by Mary L. Bogumil is another source for exploring different aspects of Wilson's plays. Bogumil argues that Wilson gives voice to "disfranchised and marginalized African Americans who have been promised a stake in the American dream but find their access blocked. Wilson wishes not only to portray the predicaments of African-American life but also shed light on the atavistic connection African Americans have to their African ancestors" (10). Bogumil also explains that the playwright both perpetuates and subverts the tradition of American drama in order to expose the "distinct differences between white American and African American experiences" (ibid.).

*To Forget or not to Forget: The Dilemmas of Denver in Toni Morrison's Beloved* (2012) by Ghada Sasa is a valuable article about the interrelationship of past, present and future in the lives of African Americans. According to the writer, this interrelationship has a great impact on the characters of the novel *Beloved*. In fact, the characters should "overcome the bitterness of the past in search for a brighter future." And harmonizing themselves with their past is exactly the first thing that the characters in *Two Trains Running* should also do in order to build up their social and cultural identity in America. Through the sources mentioned here and many others, the importance of cultural rehabilitation of African-American community in America is understood. And now in the present article, it is intended to pinpoint different visible and invisible factors which are responsible for the growth of African-American culture in relation to August Wilson's *Two Trains Running* through the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study of African culture is mainly possible through sociology. The study of culture by different sociologists has a long history and for the present study, the concept of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), has been adopted because he not only objectively and systematically observes the social agents in the actual context of a society, but also pays attention to the historical context as well. The most pivotal components of Bourdieu's sociology are culture, different forms of capital (cultural, academic, and economic), taste, distinction, and habitus which are discussed briefly in the following. According to Bourdieu, culture is a stake which like other social stakes invites people "to take part in the game and be taken in by it," and the interest of this game lies in its competitive nature. The value of culture, the supreme fetish, is generated:

in the initial investment implied by the mere fact of entering the game, joining in the collective belief in the value of the game which makes the game and endlessly remakes the competition for the stakes. Culture is indispensably built upon the illusion of oppositions between authenticity and imitation, true culture and popularization, distinction and pretension, high culture and middle-brow culture.... Respectively, these binary oppositions produce the value of culture and the need to possess it. (1984, 250)

Accordingly, culture in its nature is a field of struggle in which the social members should gain different capitals in order to preserve their originality in this regard. Cultural capital is what a person accumulates throughout one's life in order to build a specific lifestyle for him/herself. This capital is formed in different places that one spends time, specifically at home or school. In schools, as an instance,

different aesthetic and cognitive practices are learned by spending time and energy in order to form a cultural capital which is then considered valid through “contestation for ‘distinction’ in cultural styles” (Sulkunen 1982, 105). As a result, the inclination for certain cultural activities and objects is not something haphazard and random but rather has its roots in the natural and social world in which every person is brought up; and therefore, making changes in these desires is not a facile task.

Academic or educational capital is also another capital which creates the sense of distinction in social agents. This capital is actually the “guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school (the efficiency of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family).” The school or the educational system, in fact, helps forming a set of dispositions towards an acceptable and apparently valid culture (Bourdieu 1984, 23). The educational system, the creator of this kind of capital, is a formal classifier which produces the social fractions in a transformed way like the divisions between different disciplines, theory and practice, conception, and performance. The most important thing about these educational classifications is that they are presented as completely neutral and not personal or subjective and finally they replace “scholastic dignity with human dignity” (387).

Economic capital is another powerful and “legitimate principle of authority or signs of distinction, at different moments and, of course, by the different fractions” and that’s why there are lots of struggles for gaining it (Bourdieu 1984, 316). The refusal of apparent economic interest not only did not decline its power but helped found its way into the domain of art and culture and therefore money dominated the sacred realms of art, culture, and times which previously were against the “profane, everyday world of production” (Bourdieu 1977, 197). In this way, economic capital becomes one of the means for defining the social status of people in society. After gaining these capitals in different ways, social agents form different tastes within themselves.

Taste is all the choices a person makes which, according to Bourdieu, refers to the “countless pieces of information a person consciously or unconsciously imparts endlessly underline and confirm one another” (1984, 174). These continuous choices build up the viewpoint from which people observe each other like the way they look at a work of art and its symmetries and harmonies. These tastes are formed through the “conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation, so that people have codes which unconsciously lead them to understand, appreciate, or analyze different things from works of art to social matters” (1-2). After all, these tastes lead to the formation of the feeling of distinction in the social agents.

The existence of so many preferences in different fields “provides an inexhaustible interest in the pursuit of distinction in the social agents” (Bourdieu 1984, 226-7). These markers of distinction need not always be intentional, as in most cases, the specific choices each social class makes non-intentionally serve to distinct that class (246-7). Of course, the distinction between classes, contrary to “all naively Darwinian convictions,” is fueled by the power of the dominant class who, by their very existence and way of living, impose the differences which seem totally necessary, absolute, and natural (255). These distinctions inevitably lead to social divisions which are the “principles of division, organizing the image

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of the social world” (471). And all these social practices are to be realized in the habitus of a special social community.

Habitus is an internalized life style of a section of society, composed of different practices with different values and significations. The habitus at the same time that is a “structuring structure,” organizing different practices and social matters, is itself a “structured structure.” In other words “the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes.” This shows that each habitus not only reveals some intrinsic qualities of a special social group or section of society, but also shows what qualities it does not have or is opposed to and as a matter of fact “social identity is defined and asserted through difference” (Bourdieu 1984, 171-172). These structures of difference are characterized by distinct distributions of capitals: social, cultural, symbolic, and economic (Bebbington 2007, 155-6). The important point here is that habitus determines the amount of different capitals including social, cultural, symbolic, and economic ones, allotted to its agents.

Finally, a “competition” is created between different social classes and unfortunately the dominated class confirms the position of the dominant by imitating their life style. When people “adapt themselves to a dominated position, they tacitly have accepted domination and the result, in fact, is the loss of self-esteem which has great impact on economic position” (Bourdieu 1984, 386). In a society, with this kind of invisible classificatory system, a civilian’s duty is defined as conforming to the social orders and this involves “a question of respecting rhythms, keeping pace, not falling out of line” (Bourdieu 1977, 162). As it was said, classificatory system and its cultural preferences are tacitly presented and injected in the minds of the inhabitants of society by social conditions of the family, educational system, and various areas of society. As this system is composed systematically, so it can be said that it can be open to change depending on how much individuals become aware of the artificial, though seemingly natural system of classification. Therefore, it can be said that “habitus are not fixed habits” (Murdock 2010, 64).

### **Discussion**

Different scenes of the play happen in Memphis’ restaurant. The focus of the play is not on one of the characters only but on all of them. Memphis is presented as a businessman who is entangled with selling his property with a deserved price and then returning to his hometown to regain his lost land. Sterling is a young man who has been out of penitentiary because of robbing a bank and is desperately searching for a job and, at the end of the play, takes Hambone’s right from a white businessman. Hambone is a character who has been driven mad after a white man had not given him the ham, which he has promised, after Hambone’s painting his yard. He only articulates and repeats two sentences ‘I want my ham’ and ‘He gonna give me my ham.’ Risa is the female character of the play who works in the restaurant and has made her legs ugly in order to drive out the male attention from herself. Also, there are the characters of Wolf, West, and Holloway who attend the restaurant in parts of the play and through them the audience hears different views towards the social and cultural issues of the time.

### **Cultural capital**

As it was explained, Bourdieu states that cultural capital is what a person accumulates throughout one's life in order to build a specific lifestyle for him/herself. And one of the most important themes of *Two Trains Running* is the forgotten rich cultural capital of Black people. Here Wilson addresses the "misplaced values of today's youth by imploring them to 'go back and pick up the ball'" (Shannon 1996, 167). Though this is a borrowed metaphor from the sport, yet it is used by Wilson in his interviews to pinpoint serious cultural and economic issues of African Americans. By this metaphor, Wilson ardently asks his fellowmen to regard their African heritage as an "inspiration for their cultural preservation and their continued advancement. It is also an appeal to black Americans to continue to confront white America and to demand that which they deserve as citizens, whether that be equal opportunities for employment, comparable pay, or simple fair and human treatment" (Shannon 1996).

Though, on the surface, economy is the most important theme of the play and nearly all the characters have problems in this regard, yet cultural heritage is the key for solving different problems of African Americans. The characters cannot prosper economically unless they understand their cultural capital which is represented and symbolized by Aunt Ester's character. Holloway's remark about this issue is significant as he states that:

These niggers lining up over there to rub prophet Samuel's head cause they think that's gonna make their hand itch and they gonna get some money. They don't know to go see Aunt Ester. Aunt Ester give you more than money. She make you right with yourself. You ain't got to go far. She live at eighteen thirty-nine Wylie. In the back. Go up there and you'll see a red door. Go up there and knock on that. .... Aunt Ester got a power cause she got an understanding. Anybody live as long as she has is bound to have an understanding. (Wilson 1990, 24)

At the beginning of the play, a great number of Black people have lined up to rub the head of the newly-dead prophet Samuel, because they have heard and believed the rumor that doing this shall bring them money. Holloway believes that Black people are moving the wrong direction, and instead they should go and meet Aunt Ester. Ester is now 322 years old and appears now for the second time in *The Pittsburg cycle*. The first time that she appears is in the first play, *Gem of the Ocean*. Aunt Ester had been born more than 300 hundred years ago and at the time when the first shipload of Black slaves was transported into the land of America. Ester is a character who symbolizes all the history of African Americans and whose meeting is necessary for all the next generations. Holloway suggests that first the characters should go and meet Ester in order to face with their real selves, that is the only way through which they can prosper. The reason for the reappearance of Aunt Ester after about six plays or six decades of the twentieth century is that the need for her presence is felt more than ever. 1960s was a decade through which Black people were falling in either of the two social movements, namely The Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement. African Americans were either repeated the slogans of freedom or committed violence in the way of defending their rights.

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For finding and maintaining the equilibrium between the above-mentioned movements, the Black People should refer back to their cultural heritage. The title of the play seems in one respect to connote two directions that Black people should consider for prosperity in the American land. One train goes towards the future which is of course very important as these people should have aims and scopes for their life and, at the same time, another train goes back to the past because the cultural values of these people lay there. Black people have to travel with both trains as Memphis, one of the main characters, does in the course of the play. Tyndall's remark is revealing in this regard:

At the beginning of the play, Memphis is skeptical of those people who advocate Black Power and follow Aunt Ester, so he is skeptical of the black future (as represented by Black Power) and past (as symbolized through Aunt Ester). By the end of Act One, as Memphis is gearing up for his fight with the city, he has fired his ineffectual African-American lawyer and hired a European-American one, basically telling everyone, with his actions, that the European-American man is needed to take care of business. So, instead of being autonomous and/or turning to the past, Memphis goes in the opposite direction. By the end of the play, however, Memphis does take matters into his own hands and embraces the past, all because he went to Aunt Ester. (2002, 190)

As it is seen, the characters like Memphis do not find equilibrium in their lives unless they create harmony between their past, present and future. And the first step is to refer to their past to find the cultural heritage needed for building up and supporting their social and cultural identity in the white society of America and, subsequently, pave the way for a better future.

### **Academic Capital**

Another factor, in Bourdieu's theory, which is really pivotal in structuring the social and cultural identity is academic or educational capital. It is also one of the recurrent motifs of Wilson's plays including the current one. In all the plays of Wilson, storytelling is one of the ways for illuminating the way for Black people and it is done by different characters. Wilson in an interview stated that: "So anytime you have five black characters on stage, it is very natural for them to tell stories, because the stories are the only way that cultural information, ideas and attitudes, community sanctions, ways of conduct, et cetera, are revealed" (Li 2018, 43). Evidently, Black people as slaves did not have any educational facilities for informing their younger generations and the only thing they could do was to transmit their historical and cultural heritage by telling stories and this is the method which Wilson uses in his plays. The best teacher, in Wilson's view, is history and the younger generations should know it in order to walk towards future with strength, hope, and dignity.

The three characters who mainly tell the stories throughout the play are Holloway, Sterling, and Memphis. Holloway in different episodes in the play talks about the history of Black people and shows how much it is important to know about it before judging about the present status of Black people in the American society. Below is a very important conversation which brings forth two main viewpoints towards the jobless and wandering black people of the north:

MEMPHIS: Ain't nothing wrong in saving your money and do like they do. These niggers just don't want to work. That boy don't want to work. He lazy.

HOLLOWAY: People killing me talking about niggers is lazy. Niggers is the most hard-working people in the world. Worked three hundred years for free. And didn't take no lunch hour. Now all of a sudden niggers is lazy. Don't know how to work. All of a sudden when they got to pay niggers, ain't no work for him to do. If it wasn't for you the white man would be poor. Every little bit he got he got standing on top of you. That's why he could reach so high. He gives you three dollars a day for six months and he got him a railroad for the next hundred years. All you got is six months' worth of three dollars a day.

MEMPHIS: I still say that boy don't want to work. (Wilson 1990, 34-35)

And later on, we see transformation in the character of Memphis when the audience witnesses how he starts telling his story and moves in order to regain his lost land. Wilson, in an interview with Rocha, explained about the character of Memphis: "And there's a transformation in Memphis. His story is that he's been run out of Jackson [Mississippi] and of course that's not something you'd want to reveal to others. But eventually he does tell his story. That's a big change in this man and it leads him back to Jackson. Memphis learns that lost territory can be regained" (Tyndall 2002, 181). The story which Memphis tells reveals much about 'lost ball' which Wilson believes Black people should regain in order to continue playing their deserved role in society: "I'm going back to Jackson [Mississippi] and get my land one of these days. I still got the deed. They [white men] ran me out of there but I'm going back. [...] Okay. I know the rules now" (Wilson 1990, 72-73).

The most important source of inspiration for Memphis is Aunt Ester, after the visit of whom he is able to tell his story and becomes ready to regain his due rights. Another character who finds his way through Aunt Ester is Sterling. At the beginning of the play, Sterling is just out of prison and in search of work. His search for work has no result, and he becomes so full of anger that other characters like Sterling assume he would get back into prison; nevertheless, after his encounter with Aunt Ester he knows what he should do. Sterling tries to get his right without uncontrollable wrath and with knowledge and serenity. When he wins in the play of numbers and some white people only pay him half of the money, he is daring enough to meet them and speaks out his rights, yet without unleashed wrath. And also, at the end of the play, he goes and gets the ham from the white man and puts in Hambone's coffin. Therefore, the greatest instructor and source of education for the characters and the audience as well is Aunt Ester who teaches them to confront their past in order to make peace with their presence and build up their future as best as possible.

### **Economic Capital**

As was told earlier, the importance of economic capital cannot be ignored in the growth of every culture. And still through the 1960s, the economic situation of Black people was not satisfactory; as in those years, the steel industry of Pittsburg deteriorated which caused widespread unemployment which



eventually increased the crime rate. The economic situation of Pittsburg in that time is best described by Memphis:

Ain't nothing to do. Unless I do like West and go to the undertaking business. I can't go out there in the Squirrel Hill and open up a restaurant. Ain't nothing gonna be left around here. Supermarket gone. Two drugstores. The five and ten. Doctor done moved out. Dentist done moved out. Shoe store gone ..... West gonna get richer and everybody else gonna get poorer. At one time you couldn't get a seat in here. Had the jukebox working and everything. Time somebody get up somebody sit down before they could get out of the door. People coming from everywhere. (Wilson 1990, 12)

As Memphis says, the working opportunities do not match with the growing number of Black immigrants in Pittsburg. And even if they found job, the working conditions were really bad because of their being Black. Memphis has trouble selling his property with an acceptable price because as he says: "They give white folk good price. Most time that be who they give them. Well, they gonna give me just like they give them" (Wilson 1990, 12). Of course, after lots of struggle and meeting Aunt Ester, he finds his true identity and comes to believe in himself and sells his property with a desirable price.

According to Holloway, another reason (besides the high number of immigrants) most Black guys have inferior jobs is that they do not have the same education as white folks: "You ain't got none of them white folks' education ...how you gonna get one of their jobs?" (Wilson 1990, 54). Due to this hard economic situation of black people, the number of wandering black guys were increasing and many of these people, unwantedly, fell into the trap of white businessmen who wanted to grow economically. Holloway explains how recently many white businessmen burned their property to get the insurance money and put into jail one of the wandering black guys there for three years as being responsible for the burning.

Therefore, the high number of black people in the north and the fact that most of them were not educated led to the undesirable economic situation throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. What Wilson suggests in the play is that most black people can go back to the south not only to find their cultural roots but also find more desirable economic opportunities as well. This is significant because economic prosperity has direct relationship with the growth of African Americans' culture.

## **Taste**

Tastes, according to Bourdieu, are cultivated in social members through models. In this play, there are obvious changes in the characters' tastes through their encountering Aunt Ester or in fact their heritage. Sterling, in the beginning of the play, assumes that the only criteria of prosperity are money and a woman:

That's what I figure. I get my money from Wolf .... get in one of them white folks crap games it be impossible to stop me. I'm gonna get me two or three Cadillacs like you. Get Risa to be my woman and I'll be alright. That's all a man need is a pocketful of money, a Cadillac, and a good woman. That's all he need on the

surface. I ain't gonna talk about the other part of satisfaction. But I got sense enough to know it's there. I know if you get the surface it don't mean nothing unless you got the other. (Wilson 1990, 95)

But when he meets aunt Ester, he understands that the first step in finding happiness is knowing himself which entails gaining the knowledge of his past. Therefore, regaining his spoiled rights becomes more important for him than merely following women or money under any condition. At the end of the play, he brings ham for dead Hambone; and though this act brings him no money or physical satisfaction, he seems more self-confident and satisfied than anywhere throughout the play. Clearly, this is a symbolic action for him and the characters and the audience as well of struggle for regaining the 'lost ball.'

Memphis is another character whose tastes undergo significant change during the course of the play. At the beginning of the play, we see him only concerned with material profit and engaged only in economic discussions with other characters. He cannot even stand Hambone who wants to gain his ham or his right in fact. But after the encounter with Aunt Ester he understands that he should return and regain his lost land and stand firmly in the face of cruelty. He finally understands that he should travel with both trains, one which goes towards future and one which goes towards past and the forgotten identity.

Risa, on the other hand, is a character whose tastes do not change throughout the play. Risa has made her legs ugly to keep away the attention of the surrounding male characters from herself. This act of her is obviously condemned by other characters and the audience as well but this shows the depth of insecurity that Black women felt in society. Women in almost all the plays of Wilson want to remain beside a loyal and true man to build up a coherent family as a result. Risa does not hate men but, at the same time, does not want to be treated as a sexual object. Near the end of the play, when she feels she can count on Sterling for building up a healthy relationship she accepts his proposal but of course the entail and result of this relationship is not shown in this play. Therefore, the taste of black women for having a coherent family is not at all satisfied in the plays of Wilson till now. And still Risa is "more voiced than the text demonstrates. She carries stories of the entire community, and thus, is representative of the dramatic journey of the play" (Green 2020, 1).

Wilson, through the play, suggests that African Americans should try to cultivate their own individual tastes in their life style and not only imitate the general trends of society. The young black people are shown to grow tastes for making money by easy means and follow women without intention of making families of their own. If black people want to prosper, they have to be careful not to absorb the usual tastes of society that they are living in and, thus, not be mere imitators.

### **Distinction**

According to the Bourdieu's theory, the suppressed strata of society try to reach the level of distinction by imitating the upper class, and this would, surely, lead to failure because the real distinction is just finding one's special identity and gaining the courage to present it boldly to the surrounding world. As it was discussed earlier, the two political movements were present during 1960s and those were Civil Rights Movement and Black Power movement, both of which demanded freedom and justice. Civil

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Rights Movement mainly talked about the rights of African Americans but Black power movement included violence as well. The significant issue that is proposed in this play is that these people demand something which is their own from their birth. Black people want to become distinct by gaining freedom, whereas they are already free and by repeating this, only create this meaning that they are still slaves:

MEMPHIS: "That's what half the problem is ...these black power niggers. They got people confused. They don't what they doing themselves. These niggers talking about freedom, justice and equality and don't know what it mean. You born free. It's up to you to maintain it. You born with dignity and everything else. These niggers talking about freedom, but what you gonna do with freedom? Freedom is heavy. You got to put your shoulder to it and hope your back hold up. (Wilson 1990, 44)

Memphis adds that black people should put an end to only crying for their rights by going and getting it. He is totally tired of Hambone's repeating his demand for his due ham. He states that: "these niggers around here talking about hey black and beautiful. Sound like they trying to convince themselves. You got to think you ugly to run around shouting you beautiful. You don't hear me say that. Hell, I know I look nice. Got good manners and everything" (Wilson 1990, 44-45).

Wilson's idea in this regard (expressed by Memphis) is that when black people constantly cry that they are beautiful, valuable, dignified, free, and worthy of respect in order to gain distinction, they contradict their distinction. The playwright shows that when African Americans beg to be free and distinct, they inadvertently admit that the superior social members of society should grant them with these values. And this only adds to the social gap between different levels of society. Black people should understand they are already distinct, dignified and free, and the only thing that they should do is to believe in themselves as free members of society. It is true that (as Harry Elam pinpoints) disabled characters like Hambone are representations of a "connection to a powerful, transgressive spirituality, to a lost African consciousness and to a legacy of black social activism" (stated in McCormick 2017, 1), but the demands of these characters for freedom and distinction only emphasize the fact that black people have lost something which already exist in themselves.

### **Habitus**

According to Bourdieu, Habitus is an internalized life style of a section of society, composed of different practices with different values and significations (Bourdieu 1984, 171-172). The change in the habitus of a huge population of black people from the south to the north of America is clearly condemned in this play as in the previous ones. Through the twentieth century, many black guys left the south in search of better opportunities in the north. But their dream was similar to an American dream which was not fulfilled, and many of these people were caught in much worse conditions in the north. Because of the harsh conditions of living including widespread unemployment for black people, many of them turned into crimes and this is the reason why blind and hasty migration is condemned by Wilson many times in his plays. The conversation below clearly shows Wilson's view towards this issue:

WOLF: It looks like Hong Kong out there. I didn't know there were that many niggers in Pittsburg. If you'd drive by you swear didn't nobody have no home. They all out there in the street.

HOLLOWAY: The people out there looking for opportunity. What's out there in the way of opportunities, sooner or later it's got to pass through. You can't find out what's out there sitting at home. (Wilson 1990, 105)

According to Memphis, the reason for the huge migration of black people has been rooted in the Southern mentality of these people: "That's the old backward Southern mentality. When I come up here they had to teach niggers they didn't have to tip their hat to a white man. They walking around here tipping their hat, jumping of the sidewalk talking about 'Yessir, Captain,' 'How do, major'" (Wilson 1990, 32). Because black guys regarded themselves as guests in the new habitus and also because they had come from the land of plantations and with no education, they regarded themselves as inferior to white people and all these worsened their condition. Black people taught that according to justice, they should find and have equal opportunities upon their arrival in this land, whereas according to Memphis if you look for "justice, you got a long wait. Ain't no justice. That's why they got that statue of her and got her blindfolded. Common sense would tell you if anybody need to see she do. There ain't no justice. Jesus Christ didn't get justice. What makes you think you gonna get it? That's just the nature of the world" (Wilson 1990, 44).

Therefore, until this southern mentality does not change, the situation of black people in America will not change considerably. According to Holloway: "It's day off on the plantation. They waiting for the white man to call them back to work" (Wilson 1990, 103-104). This sentence is significant because it sums up the history of black people in America during their living in the past habitus and the present one. For about three centuries, these people worked as slaves for white people in the south, and now even if they have moved up to the north, they still consider themselves as inferior to white people and wait for them to put them to work somewhere. There is true that there has been no justice in America for black people; yet, they should try to get their right as Memphis and Sterling try to do at the end of the play after visiting Aunt Ester. Memphis says he had been born in Jackson but he had to run away, now he wants to return: "but I'm going back one of these days. I ain't even got to know the way. All I got to do is find my way down to the train depot. They got two trains running every day. I used to know the schedule. They might have changed it .... but if they did, they got it posted up on the board" (Wilson 1990, 33).

Though black people have hastened in moving to the north, they can return there to understand their history and their true selves and, in some instances, (like the example of Memphis) regain their lost rights. According to Tyndall (2002) this decision of Memphis is a great change in him which shows that lost territory can be regained (188).

## **Conclusion**

*Two Trains Running* is one of the few plays of Wilson in which political movements of the time are clearly presented and discussed. The 1960s was a decade in which a great population of Pittsburg area consisted of black people and, obviously, they started to demand their begotten rights in different ways.

But totally there were two main movements in this regard and there were the Civil Rights Movement and The Black Power Movement. Wilson, as it is understood from the current play, was not totally against or for of each of the movements and he had an individualistic view towards the social and political movements that were happening in that era. Wilson was aware of the inefficiency of the slogans of Civil Rights movement; nevertheless, he was surely against the extravagance of the members of the Black Power movement as they sometimes committed violence in this regard. What Wilson had in mind was that black people should refer back to their heritage or history (symbolized by the characters visiting Aunt Ester) and then try to take back their rights with sincerity and self-confidence not with violence.

All in all, the sociological analysis of *Two Trains Running* shows the importance of the roles of different forms of capital (cultural, academic, and economic), taste, distinction, and habitus in helping black people to find their true selves and, thereby, establish their social identity in America. By this analysis, it is understood that by 1990s these people have understood they can neither regain their right by mere slogans nor by violence. In fact, they have to go back to their cultural roots and find enough self-confidence for their journey forward. And this is not only limited to the African-American community, but to all social groups who are displaced in history all throughout the world.

### عبء الحرية: تحليل اجتماعي (قطاران يعملان) بقلم أوغست ويلسون

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#### الملخص

أحد الأعمال الأدبية الرائدة في تصوير التغييرات الاجتماعية للمجتمع الأفريقي الأمريكي خلال التسعينيات المضطربة هو بلاشك (قطاران يعملان) بقلم أوغست ويلسون، كان ويلسون مراقباً ومسجلاً حريصاً على تطور رفاقه في أمريكا. بعد عقود من النضال فقط، في التسعينيات، يبدو أن هؤلاء الأشخاص يثبتون هويتهم تدريجياً على أنهم ذوات أفريقية حقيقية في أمريكا، والغرض الرئيسي من هذا المقال هو تقييم نجاح هؤلاء الناس في اكتشاف ذواتهم الحقيقية وتأسيس هويتهم الاجتماعية في هذه الأرض، وتكتشف هذه الدراسة المنهجية أيضاً عوامل مختلفة ضرورية لازدهار جميع الثقافات المهيمنة، وفي هذا الصدد، تُطبق النظرية الاجتماعية لـ (بيير بورديو) التي تتضمن عوامل مختلفة في تحديد الهوية الاجتماعية مثل الأشكال المختلفة لرأس المال والذوق والتميز والهيبتوس.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أوغست ويلسون، علم الاجتماع، بيير بورديو، ثقافة، رأس المال، المذاق، امتياز، الهيبتوس.

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