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WARRING IDEALS IN ONE
SOUL
AN AFRICAN, A NEGRO, AN AMERICAN

By Amina R. Mateen
First Reader James R. Ardrey
Second Reader Dennis M. Rogers
After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is sort of the 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 see himself through the revelation of the other world.

W.E.B DuBois

After perusing, reflecting, examining, recovering and rewriting pages in America’s annals, the veils are lifting as a new American history is written. For example, are the new historians certain Christopher Columbus did sail on his boat to discover America? Author/socialist/activist W.E.B. DuBois and play-write/socialist August Wilson’s documentations are bearing witness to an opposing history written by many white Americans. Their documentations are divulging that occupants of the same soil from generation to generation experience a history one in the same. When veils are uncovered truths and lies are exposed that are in fact, shameful enough for burial services.

However pervasive and deep the burials have been and are, as author Maya Angelou says, “But still I rise.” Left to rise in these United States of America’s urban cities are the orators, speaking and singing truths from their souls about its people’s experiences from a forced new culture different from its African origin. Nonetheless, a culture passed down through the generations; stigmatize psychologically with undignified labels “three-fifths of human beings, Niggers, Gals, Boys, Colored’s, Negroes,” to the politically correct terms Blacks and
African American's. These orators are most visibly in the urban/inner cities of these United States of America. The pavement attributed to America and the making of the Seventh Son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight, The Negro(es) that August Wilson depicts from 1900-1960 which this study examines. Further, we will examine the overlapping ideals of DuBois and Wilson regarding the historical impact of slavery on The Souls of Black Folks.

William Edward Burghardt DuBois acknowledged as W.E.B. DuBois is recognized as the most multifaceted writer America has produced in his time. On his twenty-fifth birthday, while studying for his Ph.D. at the University of Berlin, DuBois confided to his journal the following goals: "to make a name in science, to make a name in art and thus to raise my race" (Northon Anthology 606).

In 1903 he wrote The Souls of Black Folk, and announced prophetically in the forethought, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line." DuBois, introduced America to a profound psychological reality in Negro/African American's sense of self and relationship to society. This psychological reality is peculiar dualities and conflicts in Negro/African American's self-perception termed by DuBois's "double consciousness."
"... an American, a Negro; two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

DuBois traveled from North, his birthplace south seeking to work educating his people. In his travels, he compiled historical information of the plight of his race.

At the other side of the spectrum August Wilson vowed to produce a play each decade of the twentieth century. Wilson depicts decade after decade the aforementioned passage, which represents the negative entanglements of America's slave history perpetuated decade after decade. Wilson’s studies began on the Hill of Philadelphia's, Pennsylvania inner city.

His first play Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, is actually his first written drama. However, in this study we will examine each in sequence starting with Joe Turner's Come and Gone, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, The Piano Lesson, Seven Guitars, Fences, and Two Trains Running.
Joe Turner's Come and Gone

This study will examine August Wilson's play Joe Turner's Come and Gone, focusing on the characters' search for their "song." The play offers a number of definitions of what this "song" is, but it is roughly equivalent to one's individual spirit or purpose in life. The study will consider in greater depth what this song is, its significance, which characters have found theirs, which are still searching, and which will probably never find it. The thesis of the study will be that those who have found their songs have come to a state of acceptance about life and its difficulties, and have as a result discovered within themselves what the others are seeking in vain outside themselves. Those who have not found their songs are still doing battle with life, with people, and with themselves. The significance of the song, then, is found in the fact that the individual must discover his or hers in order to be an authentic human being and in order to have any chance for love and happiness in the world.

Wilson in his introduction to the play tells us that the finding of one's song is an individual process which has to do with one's reclamation of his or her identity:

From the deep and near South the sons and daughters of newly freed slaves wander into the city. Isolated, cut
off from memory, having forgotten the names of the
gods and only guessing at their faces, they arrive
dazed and stunned, their heart kicking in their chest
with a song worth singing. . . . They search for ways
to reconnect, . . . to give clear and luminous meaning
to the song which is both a wail and a whelp of joy
(Wilson i).

The play focuses on a number of characters rather than one
protagonist. In a sense, these characters in aggregate can be
seen as a spiritual protagonist—the soul of black Americans
struggling to regain their dignity, their identity, their
individuality.

The character most disenfranchised from his soul seems to
be Herald Loomis, kidnapped and put on a chain gang for seven
years by Joe Turner simply because he was black. Bynum tries to
explain what Turner wanted with Loomis:

What he wanted was your song. He wanted to have that
song be his. He thought by catching you he could learn
that song. Every nigger he catch he's looking for the
one he can learn that song from. Now he's got you
bound up to where you can't sing your own song.
Couldn't sing it them seven years 'cause you was
afraid he would snatch it from under you. But you
still got it. You just forgot how to sing it (Wilson
We see, then, that the song of Loomis, insofar as it symbolizes the song of all blacks of that era, is something held back from the white man, something held deep within the soul---if not the soul itself---where the white society could not steal it or harm it. Of course, it was nevertheless harmed simply by the fact that it had to be hidden for so long. The soul should sing through every word, act, thought and feeling of an individual, and to force the soul into hiding is to take away the individual's unique characteristics as a human being.

Therefore, considering the hard shell which Loomis was forced to use to cover his soul to survive on the chain gang, it is a most optimistic sign from Wilson that even Loomis finds his song. He has to cut himself, bleed, and smear the blood over his own face to realize his song, but he does so and is able to stand as a man:

Having found his song, the song of self-sufficiency, fully resurrected, cleansed and given breath, free from any encumbrance other than the workings of his own heart and the bonds of the flesh, having accepted the responsibility for his own presence in the world, he is free to soar above the environs that weighed and pushed his spirit into terrifying contractions (Wilson 93-94).
Not only does Loomis suddenly find his song of self-sufficiency, but he suddenly has a female character running after him as he exits (perhaps finding the man who would help her find her song?), and even "shining like new money" in symbolic representation of the special being Bynum is searching for.

Mattie is the woman who runs after the exiting Loomis. Her song does seem to be contained in her love for and love from the man she so desperately needs to find. As we read, Mattie "had suffered many defeats in her search [for love and companionship], and though not always uncompromising, still believes in the possibility of love" (Wilson 21). Loomis would seem to be the last man for Mattie, but she finds him as that one---if he is---just at the very moment that she stops so desperately searching. Of course, Bynum has played a part in her discovery of Loomis, for it was Bynum---singing his binding song---who helped Mattie with a benevolent ritual (Wilson 74).

Bynum found his own song as a binder of people who are meant to be together (Wilson 9-10), and he comes by the song through such a shining man, and it appears that in seeing Loomis as another shining man, Bynum has had his own song validated:

I asked [my father] about the shiny man and he told me he was the One Who Goes Before and Shows the Way. Said there was lots of shiny men and if I ever saw one
again before I died then I would know that my song had been accepted and worked its full power in the world and I could lay down and die a happy man (Wilson 10).

Seth is a character who has not found his song and probably will not if he insists on maintaining his nasty, controlling attitude toward everyone around him, but, again, if Loomis can find his song, it is possible for everyone to find theirs, certainly including Seth.

Seth opens the play complaining about Bynum's activities out in the yard (1), and his last words in the play form a reminder to Loomis that he only has a few more days in the rooming house before he throws him out (75). If Seth has indeed somehow found his song, it is certainly one of constant complaint. If we consider that slaves were hardly allowed to make any complaints whatsoever, perhaps Seth has indeed found his song.

Bertha is much more at home in the world than her husband Seth, and she seems to have found her song. She is a generous, good-natured woman whose song seems to be laughter, as she puts it herself:

The only thing that man needs is somebody to make him laugh. That's all you need in the world is love and laughter. That's all anybody needs. To have love in one hand and laughter in the other. . . . The kind of
laugh that comes from way deep inside. To just stand and laugh and let life flow right through you. (She begins to laugh. It is a near-hysterical laughter that is a celebration of life, both its pain and its blessing.) (Wilson 87).

Jeremy is a character who is on the way to finding his song, not simply because he is literally a musician, but because he is a lively young man who is full of music but who has not as yet found the form of his song. As Wilson puts it in describing Jeremy,

About twenty-five, he gives the impression that he has the world in his hand, that he can meet life's challenges head on. He smiles a lot. He is a proficient guitar player, though his spirit has yet to be molded into song (Wilson 12).

Jeremy is a free spirit who, rather than needing to search for his song in the way that Loomis had to, instead must prune away some of his waywardness in order to find the song which is certainly at its center.

Molly is a character who has not yet found her song because she is obsessed with her suffering at the hands of men, but she will likely find her song if and when she learns to trust again. As it is, she is simply "using [men] to keep from being by herself" (Wilson 74-75), as Bertha puts it.
Martha's song seems to be bound up in her love for her daughter and her Christian faith: "It's alright, baby. Mama's here. . . 'I shall fear no evil. For Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me'" (Wilson 91-92).

Zonia and Reuben seem to be entirely open to finding their songs, as evidenced in their love play (78-84), but they are children and society and other people (who have not found their own songs) will certainly set up obstacles in front of the youngsters to keep them from their songs.

At the same time, it is important to note that Bynum—who is the most knowledgeable of the characters with respect to the significance of songs—seems to be saying indirectly that it is important that one not come by their song too easily, that it is important that one struggle to find and sing that song, claiming it as one's own:

That song had a weight to it that was hard to handle. That song was hard to carry. I fought against it. Didn't want to accept that song. I tried to find my daddy to give him back the song. But I found out it wasn't his song. It was my song. It had come from way deep inside me. . . . It got so I used up all of myself in the making of that song. . . . When a man forgets his song he goes off in search of it . . . till he finds out he's got it with him all the time
(Wilson 71).
MA RAINEY’S BLACK BOTTOM

Ma Rainey is real. It’s true. There really was a Ma Rainey. She died in 1939. However, the other characters in this play, set in 1927 are just as real and just as meaningful today. Oh, we now have all sorts of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity laws, and there is supposed to be more respect, thanks to Civil Rights legislation, and black musicians don’t have to sleep in a broken down bus, or in some flop house in the Negro section of town. But, race is still there. And it is not just between blacks and whites, blacks are taking out their frustrations on one another. So, think of Sturdyvant’s studio not just as a place to record the Blues, but an arena where Blacks are arguing for their personal rights, and taking out grief not in blowing their horns, but accusing one another.

August Wilson’s band symbolizes the human race, and the fact that, no matter what Rodney King said, we just can’t get along all the time.

The time may be the twenties, but it is a time for change. The plot fits Wilson’s ideas that “as black people left the south for what they perceived as economic opportunities or hopes of a less prejudiced society, they destroyed the potential of a strong, united, independent black presence in America.”

(Pettengill 1999 212)
Sturdyvant says it right away, when he talks about that horn player: It may be the music business in particular, but it's the world in general: "Times are changing. This is a tricky business now. We've got to jazz it up..." he says. (Wilson 1985 p. 19)

The band are old Negroes, who are familiar enough to call each other "Nigger" and consider it just a friendly way of noticing one another. Levee is the youngest by far. Maybe one of the better musicians, too, but he is obviously the product of poor (or no) education. "I can spell it, nigger. M-U-S-I-K. There!" that's how he spells "Music" having bet a dollar he can spell it..."C, Nigger. M-U-S-I-C, C, not K!" (pp. 27-8) And the Toledo gives Levee the dollar back, anyway.

The scene starts with the familiarity of the band members, but it is a wary one, born of being together, some of them for twenty-two years, and getting used to one another all this time, and still under the thumb of Ma Rainey.

The tension starts slowly when the band members rehearse, and Levee insists that they do "his" version of the tune. Levee represents what eventually will become an "African American", he wants and even demands changes from the good ole' shufflin' rhythm days. The others resent Levee, obviously.

Sure, this is a band, but one can see that each one wants to have his say, his way, moving things in his direction. Something is in the wind...trick it up...jazz it up...the old ways...
are no good any more, brogans not clodhoppers on a Nigger's feet
now...a new style, new arrangements, even if the tunes and their
sentiments are the same. The blues still provide the means of
baring black folks' soul, but they don't "cohese" the way they
used to. It's 1927. And changes are coming, and they start right
in the recording studio. No, they started before, and afterwards
they will only get worse as the "old" and the "new" Niggers
clash about what's right and what's wrong, what's new and what's
old-fashioned. In the recording studio, the "N" word is "New".

"Good times got more niggers killed than God got ways to
count",...this from a book-reading musician, to which one of the
other band members simply replies: Niggers been havin' a good
time before you was born, and they gonna have a good time after
you gone..." (p. 40) Good times. No, they were times to get drunk
or do reefer and forget about the troubles, about the separate
water fountains, and having to sit upstairs in the movie houses
down South, and in the back of buses.

It takes Toledo to tell it like it is (and was): "Ain't
nobody thinkin' about what kind of world they gonna leave their
youngens." (p. 41)

"Well, the colored man gonna be all right. He got through
slavery, and he'll get through whatever the white man put on
him." (p. 41) Well, maybe he won't get through what his fellow
black men put on him. And you can't put off racism on luck. "Bad
Luck? I eat it every day for breakfast". (p. 46)

The prejudice against blacks comes to the fore when a
policeman escorts Ma Rainey and her entourage in. Something
about her car hitting another one, and a cabbie refusing to take
colored folks happens all the time in 1927. Hell, it happens all
the time still today. Just be black and try to flag a New York
City licensed cab, driven by some African or Russian, and see
how quickly he speeds up so as not to pick you up. 1927? Might
as well be 1999. In addition, speaking of 1999, a few bucks in a
policeman's greased palm did wonders then, just as now.

Toledo tells us what it is like to be black: "We're the
left-overs. The colored man is the left-overs. Now, what the
colored man gonna do with himself. That's what we waiting to
find out." (p. 57)

The wait is short. The session becomes the battle between the
old, the tried and true "Ma Rainey's way" and the new, "Levee's
arrangement...that's what people now want...something to dance
to." (p. 62) It becomes a battle of the wills, and of the old,
Ma Rainey still basking in her Southern tour's success, and
Levee, more attuned to "what the folks up North" will buy. He
threatens to quit, and the others do not seem to care.

There is good reason for Levee to get "spooked up" about
white men, when he relates the story of what happened to his
mother, and how he got a big ugly scar across his chest, and how his daddy got four of the men before they caught him, hanged him, and set him on fire.

Ma Rainey had a good reputation and her fans. However, she is obstinate about things. She wants things done her way, and she knows that, once she gets her way, and the recording is done she is just a piece of merchandise to the white people who manage and record her songs. She complains that her white manager, who has been handling her for six years, only had her to his house once, and that was to sing for his guests. But, Ma is a "name", a presence, and she wants the old way of doing things, not Levee's way. She is stuck in her time warp.

The crux of the play is that Levee represents the coming generation, not satisfied, like the older musicians, with the bone the white man throws at them. It isn't really racism that breaks the band apart, it's fear of getting out of the old ways and trying to find something with dignity that just doesn't exist for the Negro in 1927 (and not always today, either).

As Cutler tells the story about the colored minister stranded in a strange town, having to dance for a circle of white men, we now come to the crux of this morality tale: If this was a man of God, where was God? "It's a white man's god!" (p. 98) Levee says. And, at that time and place, he may very well have been right.
That white man's God plays the lead role in the final scenes of the play. Irvin has a choice: keep on plugging away for a sure-fire money maker like Ma Rainey, or take a chance with an untried, but obviously new-style musician like Levee. Irvin's choice is clear. He votes with his wallet. He offers Levee five dollars for each song, which infuriates Levee to the point of no return to normalcy. He is just another working nigger now, in a recording studio, maybe, instead of the cotton fields...but Irvin and Sturdyvant are just like the men who came into the house when he was eight years old and raped his mother.

Levee had a knife as an eight-year old, and he has a knife now, which he uses to vent his anger at the world. Toledo was not the intended target. It was the white man and his God. Toledo just made the mistake of stepping on Levee's new shoes.

This is a play about the old tried and true versus the new, the old shuffling "nigger" versus the working man, trying to build himself into something better. And it is about the white man's power in denying him that opportunity. All the musicians, even Ma Rainey, are searching for some sort of identity that goes beyond prejudice and segregation. Wilson shows us "a floundering generation of African-Americans."

(Shannon 12) This was 1927, and he is showing us that not enough has changed.
The horror of that final scene is not so much Levee's anger and frustration, but the fact that he takes it out on one of his own. And that's the way it often is, and was, in real life. The drunken arguments, the fights with knives and guns: niggers killing niggers, they would say. And the white man would laugh and shrug his shoulders and say "Well, that's the way they are. They need to be watched and taken care of."

The one person who was trying to raise himself up, to try and do something important and different was the worst victim of them all. Ma Rainey already was an anachronism. Her time was over. She could still tour the chit'lin circuit down South and sell her old-fashioned songs and records, but her time was past. There was Bessie Smith now, and soon there would be Billie Holiday and Ella. The faithful band members would be anachronisms, too, supplanted by Count Basie from Kansas City, and Kid Ory and Louis Armstrong from New Orleans, and Duke Ellington from Striver's Row in Harlem. The Regal in Chicago and the Apollo in Harlem would begin to resound with the kind of riffs that Levee dreamed about. But, for a while they were still black men's riffs, until the popularity of some of the entertainers crossed over. Now there would be more white faces at concerts and gigs, and, in the end, the struggle of black entertainers was still a segregated struggle.
Negro musicians, in August Wilson's play are just the microcosm of what was happening between the races in 1927. They blew their heats out with music from their guts. They were underpaid, often scammed, and under-appreciated. Yet, there could and should have been some hope for talents like Levee's. But, he threw it away, as so many of his peers did. That is the real tragedy of "Ma Rainey".
FENCES

One often wonders whether fences were built to keep people out or to keep them in. August Wilson's play shows us both sides of that old adage. Troy has just finished serving fifteen years in prison and now has an honest job. Upon returning to his life, however, he wants to rule the lives of his wife, Rose, who is more than willing, his injured brother, Gabriel, who doesn't understand the world's realities any more, and his son, Cory, who dreams of going to college and play football, but whose dreams are shattered by his father's different dreams for him.

It would be easy to say that Troy destroyed his family, and, eventually himself. Wilson searches far deeper for the reasons Troy does and says what he does. It is the 1950s, and slowly things are changing for American's blacks. Yet, the change comes too late for Troy. Yet, he makes every attempt to stand up for racial justice in his own way. It would be simplistic to say that the reason Troy won't sign those papers for his son to be recruited, and perhaps, go on to college, is -- as he explains it -- "The white man ain't gonna let you get nowhere with that football no way. You go on and get your book learning so you can work yourself up in the A & P, or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That
way you have something nobody can take away from you" (Wilson, 1986, p.35).

To the casual reader or viewer of the play, this is the point at which it might appear that Troy doesn't want his son to get ahead. Cory himself says as much later on, "You ain't never done nothin' but hold me back. Afraid I was gonna be better than you" (p 86). What is the purpose of Troy's relationship with his family? There are not many facets to this, one seems merely to want to go over some of the ones that made the greatest impression.

For one thing, Troy is trying hard to be the stable family man, trying to keep his eyes and hands (and other body parts) off women not his wife. He is trying to be a masculine and dominant force in a black family. As he saw from his own father, this is something that causes women to either run off, or for men never to stay around (Bono tells us about the father he never saw or knew). Man of the house -- that is one of the images Troy wants to give friends, neighbors and his own family. A house bought and paid for. A roof that needs new tarpaper for $264 that he will drive a garbage truck to pay for food on the table, and not leaving, either. He wants to be that good neighbor who nevertheless wants to build that fence.

Then there is Troy the dreamer -- the man with the imagination that he could have been a baseball star if only the
major leagues had not been segregated. Did he ever play baseball? Probably not, but Bono, for one humors him. It was a way of getting out of the poverty of the South for many black men, who endured all kinds of racial problems. Even in this dream, even as he realizes that Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron and Wes Covington were symbols, and that there were better players. "Hell, I know some teams Jackie Robinson couldn't even make" (p. 10). Within that pipe dream is reality. It strikes hard at Cory's dreams. "The colored guy got to be twice as good before he get on the team. That's why I don't want you to get all tied up in them sports" (p. 34). Trying to hold his son back from his dream? More like trying to keep him from suffering the hurt and indignity of being "colored" in a white man's world.

There is Troy the loving husband, who tells Rose over and over again, especially in front of friends, how much he physically wants her. There is a bond between the two. Then there is Troy the trustee for his shattered brother, whose government money paid for the house. Finally, there is Troy, who awakens to the unfairness of his job -- his asking why no blacks are driving trucks, and taking that question to the Commissioner's office.

From a strictly historical perspective, we have Troy caught in the middle of momentous change. His native South is beginning
to reverberate with Civil Rights demonstrations, which one day will affect Pittsburgh. As Lloyd Richards writes in the play’s introduction “Fences encompasses the 1950s and a black family trying to put down roots in the slag slippery hills of a middle American urban industrial city that one might correctly mistake for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania” (p. vii).

The Fifties were not an easy time for Blacks, North and South. One wonders, what would have happened to Troy, had he lived and worked in Alabama, rather than Pennsylvania? Would he have dared complain about racial prejudice to his boss at the garbage dump? Would he have been able to afford a nice home, and spend carefree payday evenings drinking -- just enough? Would Troy have done, as Rosa Parks did, and refuse to move to the back of the Montgomery bus? Would he have sent Cory to pass the gauntlet of National Guardsmen in order to go to an integrated school? Probably not, but he would have been thinking about it.

Yet, there is not a trace of politics in this play, as if Troy and Rose were vacuums when it came to even discussing who was running the country -- or Pittsburgh -- for that matter. As Max Lerner (1957) points out that the migration of the Negro to the North had given them a sort of balance of political power. “It is this power which revived the movement for federal civil rights legislation, and in turn caused the urban Negro to be wooed by both major parties” (Lerner, 1957, p. 517). It would
seem, surely, that in the neighborhood bars (including the
raided one) there would have been some discussion about
politics. Surely, when Troy "knew" he would not be fired after
his meeting at the Commissioner's office, there would have been
a sentence or two about how the Commissioner and Troy's boss got
their jobs. No real mention of politics or civil service or
unions, except in a couple of "throwaway lines".

Perhaps what Wilson was trying to show was that Troy's
commitment lay within his fences. All his strength was in
permission or denial of events within his own household. He was
fighting for control of the next generation. No matter how hard
he tried to involve his son in this fence-building chore on a
Saturday morning, the more the fence was an illusion for Cory.
Perhaps Wilson's focus was narrowing in on the way a black man
saw himself, rather than a white man's point of view. Knowing
that he and other blacks at the garbage dump got no respect,
Troy demanded a "SIR" from his teen-age son. There is surely a
heart-breaking point in the play when Troy, trying to defend his
dominance, tells his son "Who the hell says I got to like you?
What law is there say I got to like you? . . . It's my job. It's
my responsibility. You understand that? A Man got to take care
of his family" (pp. 37-8).

At the same time, Troy's aim with his son is for him to be
different. Perhaps better. Perhaps not as frustrated. When his
wife admonishes him about Cory's, "just tryin' to be like you"
(p. 39) Troy follows with an angry outburst, "I don't want him to
be like me. I want him to move as far away from my life as he
can get" (p. 39). In this speech, where he also tells Rose that
she is the only good thing that ever happened to him, and that
he wants that for Cory, we can see the hidden anger in the 1950s
black man. It is anger and it is frustration. At whom is the
frustration aimed? Given his lack of education, and his 15-year
prison record, what sort of job with dignity could he have
expected?

The dignity that Troy aspires to comes out from time to
time as in his boasting that the house is bought and paid for.
He lies about paying ten dollars a month to "the devil" for
furniture he bought earlier. He boasts about his "fight" with
death when he was sick. Yet, at one point, he admits he can't
read. When he gets the promotion to truck driver, it turns out
he has no driver's license. Is it any wonder, then, that Troy
wants his son to be better and different?

One needs to look at the supporting cast. For instance,
Gabriel, the badly wounded younger brother is a symbol of the
fact that, despite being treated as second class citizens, the
Blacks fought for their country in the War. Then, when they
were badly wounded, were again treated as second-class citizens
when it came to payment.
Lyons, the eldest son, is supposedly a jazz musician. This, too, was an escape for reality for many younger black men who had some musical aptitude. "The jazzman may be on an adolescent seesaw where, when he feels too dependent or too independent, the result may be self-destructive" (Stearns, 1956, p. 300). Lyons is dependent on the ten dollar loans (which he repays from his live-in girl friend's pay check). His self-destructiveness ends him in the work-house for a three-year term.

What are we to read into the "adoption" of Troy's illegitimate daughter by Rose? The little girl is certainly symbolic of all the out-of-wedlock children, only a few of whom end up in a loving home. Yet, she obviously had to be a reminder of Troy's "black infidelity".

Is there something symbolic about the way Troy died, holding that bat with which his son had threatened him years earlier? Perhaps what the reader needs to become aware of is that there is no reason to mourn for an untimely passing. He died quickly. He died peacefully, if not at peace. Yet, like so many black men of his era, he left a life unfinished: a wife who could not forgive his infidelity. A son who joined the Marines because his father would not let him work on his college dreams. A disabled brother who was signed into an institution by Troy. An older son, released from jail for the funeral. If anything, we can learn that Troy tried his best to prevent his family from
being what today we consider "dysfunctional". His efforts, though failures for the most part, were still efforts.
THE PIANO LESSON

Inside this book, there is a review from the Washington Post which says, in part "The piano is no less vital a sign of a family's spiritual heritage than Chekhov's Cherry Orchard was." In a sense, the piano itself is the protagonist of this play. It was stolen from a white man. It represents not only black history -- the pain of slavery and the greater pain of some sort of limited freedom. It also represents a sort of transition from the past to the present (Berneice and Boy Willie, for example) and the future (eleven-year old Maretha). The piano also symbolizes some little wealth -- it is obviously worth money. Boy Willie wants to sell it for his share to buy into his piece of the American dream -- a hundred acres of land down South. Avery wants the money to buy a place to create his church.

We are in depression-era Pittsburgh. Berneice has a job, which is rare for the times. So does would-be preacher Avery, who works as an elevator operator ("with a pension"). Boy Willie and Lymon, both of whom had served jail time in the South, come with a beat-up truck to sell watermelons. The real theme of this play and its characters is to achieve some sort of dignity for black people, not the same as for the whites, but a self-supporting dignity all its own.
The piano's carvings have a history that is important to this family, because it is a daily reminder of where they all originated -- Southern slavery. As Doaker relates the story, when his grandfather carved all the faces and symbols on that piano, "When Miss Olivia seen it she got all excited. Now she had her piano and her niggers, too" (Wilson, 1990, p. 44). Still, the fact that a white man had the piano was deeply offensive to Papa Boy Willie. He would always talk about taking the piano, because "it was the story of our whole family and as long as Sutter had it...he had us. Say we was still in slavery" (p. 45).

To the casual reader, the first lengthy scene of the play does not seem like there is any dignity in it. Slow-witted Lymon, the fanatically religious Avery, the anxious Boy Willie -- all seem somehow to be stereotypical of a white man's version of black folks at home. But, there is a continuity in this family, even with slavery and a burning box-car, a stolen piano, and small amounts of money made and lost. The point Wilson makes is that blacks are not like whites only with darker skin. They should not want to emulate whites, but progress along their own individual needs and feelings.

The piano is the link in this family, and Boy Willie cannot understand its symbolic value. Boy Willie more or less pleads, "That piano ain't doing nobody no good" (p. 42). But, it is.
Berneice tells Boy Willie, "Money can’t buy what that piano cost. You can’t sell your soul for money" (p. 50). The rationale here is that there is so much history in that piano -- not merely the carvings but the efforts to take it from old man Sutter -- to have it installed now, up North, relatively safe from the indignities the blacks still were exposed to in the South.

Of course, since Wilson used music in many of his plays, and music as a sometime profession for some of his characters (Wining Boy in this play, Lyons in "Fences") musical instruments represented one of the few ways a black man could make decent money. One can go down a list of some of the musical "greats" of the early part of the Twentieth Century, for example Jelly Roll Morton and W.C. Handy. There were the legendary beginnings of black "jazz".

Storyville helped to establish a special kind of jazzman- the solo pianist. He made more money than an entire jazz band. Jelly Roll Morton took in fifteen to eighteen dollars a night" (Stearns, 1956, p. 72).

No wonder Wining Boy talked about "carrying the piano on his back". It was his living.

This family -- widow, widower, nephews and brothers and friends -- were part of the move toward recognition as a group of people willing to work and pay for what they wanted. Max
Lerner (1956) writes about the stratification of American society when he wrote about “the working class, tenacious of its gains, job-conscious...the Negroes, whose history marked them for the role of a depressed caste” (Lerner, 1956, p. 525). That tenacity is evident in Berneice’s determination to keep that piano, at all costs. One talks of the piano as a symbol. It is a fact that August Wilson himself mentions that the entire play was inspired by a painting of a teacher bending over a student at the piano. This is to be the future for Maretha: to become a teacher, perhaps to play as well as teach the piano. This particular piano would be the foundation for her future.

Boy Willie thinks he is being more practical. That piano can buy him some land. “You can sit up here and look at that piano for the next hundred years, and it’s just gonna be a piano. Now I want to get Sutter’s land with that piano” (p. 51). Without reading any further, one is tempted to be at a crossroads. Which makes more sense -- Boy Willie settling down on some land, or the piano remaining as a symbol in the household in Pittsburgh, offering a better future for little Maretha? It would be a difficult decision to make. Ancestor’s, tradition and pain of the past as a bridge to the future or a definite opportunity of a black man making something of himself in the South?
What we are really seeing here is a rather complex portrayal of the different interpretations possible within this so-called American Dream. Boy Willie, for all his talk, is the realist and not the dreamer in this play. He is following his father’s advice that people must own the products of their labor. In Boy Willie’s case, that means owning land -- even if the price he is asked to pay is higher than what Sutter might offer the land to a white man. Willie Boy’s dream is rooted in the reality of the 1930s. There is no dust bowl down South. Land is still worth something, and Willie Boy has his explanation, land the only thing God ain’t making no more of...as long as I got the land and the seed then I’m alright. I can always get me a little something else. Cause the land give back to you. I can make me another crop and cash that in (p. 51).

He sees the land as continuity; Berneice sees the piano in the same way. The question that emerges now is “What do you do with your legacy, and how do you put it best to use?” (Shannon, 1996, p. 146)

If Boy Willie represents the carefully ambitious black man who sees land as his only opportunity, Berneice opposes that wish. Her character reveals that Boy Willie’s selfish designs and impetuous actions are instructive they should agitate black Americans who regard without
feeling or simply ignore vestiges of their past in their desperate pursuit of an American Dream that has historically eluded them (Shannon, 1996, p. 148).

Berniece is also a complex character. She cannot forget the past—she still seems to be mourning her husband, dead now some three years. At the same time she is anxious to make Marethia’s future brighter than her own, or that of any other member of her family. In a telling speech to Boy Willie, she explains more fully her determination to keep that piano.

Mama Ola polished this piano with her tears for seventeen years. For seventeen years she rubbed on it till her hands bled...Seventeen years’ worth of cold nights and an empty bed. For what? For a piano? For a piece of wood? To get even with somebody? (p. 52).

What Berniece seems to be doing here is turning her piano into a memorial for her ancestors. By respecting and owning, the piano means to her honoring the value of her heritage. Berneice’s character becomes a lesson on how the black community must remember the past. Through Berneice, Wilson shows the danger of dwelling too intensively on historical pain. "By clinging to the past she does not have to face the challenges of the present and the future; she can retreat into the false security of her denials" (Pereira, 1993, p. 91).
Wilson does not seem to paint the overall picture quite like he has Berneice stating it. It is OK, he seems to be saying, to remember and honor the past—especially a past so fraught with danger and hardship and slavery. But, his voice seems to be imploring his black peers that it is time to stop worshiping the past at the expense of the future. Remembering that this play is set in the mid-Thirties, it is still a time of danger, an unemployment and prejudice. Nevertheless, Wilson peoples some of his plays with characters that seem to expect that things would get better. Avery is no Martin Luther King, Jr. In fact, one might think that he is playing the “Jesus Card” more for acceptance (and some eventual profit) than a real release from his current status. Making the three Wise Men parable into his “dream” of three hoboes makes these Messengers more like the poor Blacks than the whites of Biblical times.

Berneice is locked in another struggle. As much as she delves into the past, and worries about her child, what about having another man in her life? At the same time, Berneice’s vision keeps her from moving on with her life without Crawley. As much as Avery wants to marry her, she is determined not to give in. "You tryin’ to tell me a woman can’t be nothing without a man?" (p. 67). Yet, she realizes somewhere down deep that she needs a man and romance and love.
Yet, much as people want children, to leave something behind, Willie Boy is against it. "What I want to bring a child into the world for... I ain't got no advantages to offer nobody" (p. 91).

What are we to make of Sutter's ghost? He is a part of the history of the piano, and it is obvious that the more this ghost seems to appear, the more Berneice realizes that this ghost could never let her get rid of the piano. It is like a deus ex machina. The struggle between this ghost and Boy Willie, between the past, the present, and the future, brings the protagonist to the rescue: the piano, that is. As Berneice opens the piano for the first time in years and sits down to play, she exorcizes the demons. For blacks in the Nineteen Thirties, we have now come to an epiphany: Boy Willie heading back to his land, and the piano remaining as a reminder of what was and what will be.
SEVEN GUITARS

Again, August Wilson focuses on the one way that blacks can try to develop their own culture. "Wilson continues his weave of African-American experience through a larger and sometimes hostile American culture" (Grant, 1993, p. 1). Again, Wilson uses a jazz and musical idiom to delineate his characters and their success or failure in a life separate from white society. This was 1948. The veterans were building Levittowns and going back to work. The Negroes who had moved up North from the South to work in war-time industries in Detroit and Pittsburgh were now being displaced by returning veterans. It seems the one sure way of making a name for a Negro in those days was in music. This was the time of Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, Count Basie and Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. Their music became universal, but, they were still not allowed through the front doors of the cabarets and hotels in which they were performing.

There was this "Chit'lin circuit" where black performers had their own audiences—Chicago's Regal and Harlem's Apollo were the Palace of black entertainers. Their music was even segregated onto "Rhythm and Blues" "race" recordings, on off-shoot labels like Okeh. Even so, as Wilson's characters reveal, the musicians kept on playing. After all, what was the alternative? "From the very beginning, perhaps the jazz
musician’s strongest motive was the desire for recognition and respectability” (Stearns, 1956, p. 320). Floyd was an example of what Stearns (1956) was referring to when he said that jazz had to make the transition from private music played by Negroes for Negroes to “a public music which had to survive commercially in the white world at large” (Stearns, 1956, p. 317).

Floyd “Schoolboy” Barton was successful, in his own way. He made records that sold fairly well. But, he was illiterate. In fact, as he tells Vera “Some fellow down in the workhouse be writing everybody letters...it sounded so good I gave him an extra quarter” (p. 8). He is in Pittsburgh only to get his guitar out of hock, and will attempt to swap it for his gun. It is somewhat frightening for a white person today to listen to the reason for Floyd’s arrest, “they charged me with worthlessness” (p. 9).

What was important in the 1940s to blacks was some sort of respect in return for their abilities. “You get a hit record and the white folks call you ‘Mister’” (p. 10). Yet, as we learn more about Floyd one has to wonder -- why is it that so many un- or under-educated black men end up playing music and doing rather well at it. Don’t they feel any sense of lack of accomplishment. Is it, in the mid 1940s still impossible to get a decent education? The answer, of course, is ‘Yes! In 1948, the time of this play, there was no powerful NAACP (it was mostly white-dominated and not very powerful at all), no SNCC, no Civil
Rights marches; only the bitter memory of Marian Anderson being refused to perform in Constitution Hall in Washington. So, the Floyds of the black world played their guitars, pounded on their pianos, blew their horns and did what they could to gain respect and recognition. Dignity was something else again. It would be difficult to retain any sort of dignity when jail, now and then, seemed the end result of misbehavior, drunkenness, fights, or (as Floyd had said "worthlessness").

With jobs going back to white veterans, blacks either were unemployed or deemed unemployable. Without a job, getting arrested was easy. As Floyd himself said "Come home from the cemetery after burying my mama, was walking down the street--and they arrested me" (p. 22).

If there is one thing black performers -- whether good, bad, or indifferent -- had was hope. In Floyd's case, it was his manager, Mr. T. L. Hall, and that letter from the record company he so proudly carried with him. Yet, in "Seven Guitars" as in some of his other plays, like "The Piano Lesson" black women seemed to have jobs -- even if they were menial work in laundries or working for some white woman.

Wilson, as always, is concerned with the inconstancy of the black man. He gives no excuses, either. In "Fences" it was Bono's father that left and never returned. In "The Piano Lesson" it was the playful attitudes of Boy Willie and Lymon,
promising all sorts of things to women, and then, when they got what they wanted, out they went, never turning around. Here, too, Louise complains about her man leaving after twelve years. "After he done used me up. He say 'It's something I got to do'" (p. 32). One has to wonder why this seems to be a recurring event in August Wilson's plays. It certainly does not speak well for black men. True as it might be, why does he have to keep hitting us with the brutal facts? Of course, the women persevere. Maybe that is the point: Blacks are a matriarchal society, except for those who make a name for themselves -- like Floyd and his hit record.

There are some blacks that were heroes at the time. Joe Louis certainly was one of them. In the play, Lewis is fighting that night. There are only a few such real black heroes. There is a good laugh about Red's wife naming her baby "Mister."

"White folks gonna have a fit with a nigger named Mister. Mr. Mister Carter" (p. 40). There were very few blacks at that time who could be called "Mister" by white society.

Wilson also makes the discrimination point about medical care. Hedley, who is suspected of having TB, would have to go into a nearby sanitarium, which used to be all white. "They moved all the white people out and now it's sitting half-empty" (p. 76). "Health care was not open to many blacks. There were few, if any black doctors. There is a Dr. Goldblum mentioned
earlier, who charges only $2 for a visit. Without making a point of it, Wilson seems to be saying that there are some Jewish doctors not afraid, even willing, to treat blacks, one minority serving another.

Then there are the greedy ones, those who take advantage, like T.L. Hall, supposedly Floyd's manager, but now arrested for selling over $50,000 worth of fake insurance to unsuspecting blacks in the Pittsburgh area. Not that Floyd feels anything for Hall, but he sees his chances of doing something positive going down the drain. "What's the matter? Everything going wrong at the same time" (p. 81). The underlying problem, is that Floyd has no real choices. He either plays his guitar or he starves. He has no education, no other skills. This is the fate of many a black man in the 1940s. The Depression was ended by the War. Some people got rich, white people, that is. Some people died, including blacks. Now, in this so-called post-war economy, the Negro is no better off than he was a generation ago. Those few signals of hope have not reached Pittsburgh yet.

Other than music and menial jobs, what was the black man to do? The sports' field was just beginning to open up a bit. Jacky Robinson would break the color barrier, but dominance of black athletes that is happening today was still years away. Without good education, and with no marketable skills, the black man was
doomed to live off the work and kindness of the women in his life.

It is no wonder, then, that even today, many sociologists consider African-Americans a matriarchal society.

The story of the Negro in America is the story of America—or, more precisely, it is the story of Americans...The Negro in America, gloomily referred to as that shadow which lies athwart our national life, is far more than that. He is a series of shadows, self-created, intertwining, which we now helplessly battle (Baldwin, 1963, p. 23).

Hedley is a victim of that battle. But, he won't go quietly into the sanitarium or anywhere else. And, he lets Ruby have a piece of his mind: "You think the black man is a dog that I will crawl to you? I am a man, woman" (p. 89).

The main problem with the ending of this play is the event that caused Floyd's death. Desperate people do desperate things in desperate times. T.L. Hall was in prison. Floyd had to get to Chicago for recording another "hit song". His concert at the Blue goose was a rousing success. But, he had to resort to teaming up with a neighbor's son to pull a robbery. The son was shot by the police, and Floyd escaped with $1,200. Of course, there could not be a happy ending to this play. Floyd had to be
punished. Yet, to be punished by someone clearly not in his right mind was the ultimate cruelty of Floyd’s life.

What is the relevance of this final act? One supposes it is a means of getting rid of frustration, by stealing from white people. But, that would be unfair to Wilson, or to the millions of blacks who lived through the turbulence of the Forties.

It might be a little foolish to ask why some of these in need did not apply for welfare or workfare, or some relief from the government? In part pride, in part ignorance, in part a self determination to handle things individually -- even if it means committing a crime.

Do we learn very much from this play (it was not terribly successful on Broadway)? Actually, the protagonist in this and other Wilson plays is not so much an individual as an African-American culture. As Wilson himself points out (1993) your social awareness as an African-American is a sort of music within itself.

You, in fact, need that, and you must never let anybody take that away from you...you’re really describing what W.E.B. DuBois said about ‘black twoness- ‘two warring ideals in one dark body’ (Grant, 1993, p. 3).

One may wonder, then, whether Hedley is the reverse coin of Floyd, and whether Ruby is the same to Vera?
Blackness, to some, is a curse. It is for some of the
characters in this play. Yet, like the entire black race in
America, some survive, some thrive and grow, others are plowed
under. Sometimes, they don’t have a simple choice.
TWO TRAINS RUNNING

When there seems to be no hope, people turn to something that just might provide hope. With many blacks in the North that means "playing the numbers". As Wolf, the neighborhood numbers runner explains it:

"It's the same thing as putting money in the bank. This way you might take out more than you put in… but Mellon ain't gonna let you do that. The numbers give you an opportunity. If it wasn't for the numbers all these niggers would be poor (Wilson, 1992, p. 3).

The year is 1969, and the worst event that could happen to the characters at Memphis' Diner is the fact that this old diner is going to have to have to come down, in order for big new sky scrapers and modernization of Pittsburgh can go into effect. This is no longer a city of steel mills. They've long disappeared, along with coal miners and river traffic. The blacks who came up from the South to work for the war effort back in the 1940's are struggling to survive somehow. Playing the numbers may be the only way out for some of them.

This was a time of what was called "urban renewal". What it meant was the displacement of poor blacks and black neighborhoods in order to build huge sky scrapers and modern apartment complexes that the old-time residents could not afford. Memphis' Diner is about to be one of the victims of the
"modernization" of the inner city in Pittsburgh. The old neighborhood is going, going, gone.

Ain't nothing gonna be left around here. Supermarket's gone. Two drugstores. The five and ten. Doctor done moved out. Dentist done moved out. Shoe store gone. Ain't nothing gonna be left here but niggers killing one another (Wilson, 1992, p. 9).

What these characters don't realize is that 1969 is a momentous year for America- and the world. American astronauts land on the moon! That's not of great importance in the diner. They are talking about block-long queues of people lining up to see the remains of the Prophet Samuel. Kennedy assassinated. Martin Luther King assassinated. Robert Kennedy assassinated. And Nixon is the President, to whom black minorities don't matter, since they didn't vote for him the year before.

What do these characters know about Woodstock? Even though there were black performers there, like Jimi Hendrix and Ritchie Havens the 300,000 young people who sat through rain and most were primarily white. 1969 was the year of the Mets winning the world series- not Pittsburgh, and the Stonewall riots in New York's Greenwich Village, a battle about "gay rights". None of these mattered to the people whose neighborhood was fast disappearing, and whose lives seemed to have no future.
In this play, Wilson again composes a cast of characters of black men (and one woman) who represent different sides of the same coin. Wilson himself writes: "reduced to its most fundamental truth, black men are a commodity of flesh and muscle which has lost its value in the marketplace. We are left over from history" (Belton, 1997, xci).

In the diner, Memphis has obviously made something of his opportunity—buying the diner and now holding on for what he hopes is a good price. Wilson, in an essay, praises those black men who have "forged and honed new disciplines and elevated their presence into an art...They, by sheer power of their presence, enlarge the universe" (Belton, xii).

However, the fact remains that for many black men, the idea of a real American Dream is nearly impossible to realize. Still, there are many critics who claim that "Two Trains Running" is his most powerful play. It is, more or less, Wilson's attempt to show the power of black masculinity. Through these characters, he is attempting to portray some men who can "step out of the shadows". "The truth ain't nothing to be afraid of...if you afraid of the truth...get back in the shadows cause you never will see the light" (p. 7).

There are really three important characters, and black characteristics -- not merely a single protagonist. There is Sterling, the many just out of prison, who wants to set his life
straight and go to work, but, when he applies at a steel mill, he is told he has to join the union, and when he goes to join, he is told that he can’t join the union until he is working. It seems Sterling, despite making an effort, is constantly turned away from work. And that means he is losing his opportunity of realizing his version of The American Dream. To most men, this Dream is a good job, a nice family, a home to come back to every night, and money to pay the bills. Sterling sees it his own way: “that’s all a man need is a pocketful of money, a Cadillac and a good woman” (p. 93). But, to get that, he (and any man, black or white) needs a job. “Sterling embodies Wilson’s idea of ‘the truth of American society’. Being turned away from employment because of race is part of the black man’s reality” (Anon, 2001, p. 1). When one reads Wilson’s plays and sees some of the male characters seemingly floundering, either in, or just out of jail, deserting women, or being deserted by them it is hard to comprehend Shannon’s (1996) description of Wilson as perpetuating a way of life he feels provides healthy images for a floundering generation of Americans (Shannon, 1996, p. 12).

One needs to ask whether Sterling represents a “healthy” image? Or, whether the other major protagonist, Hambone, does? There must be some complex way in which Hambone represents a part of Wilson’s concept of the American Dream? He seems to have completely lost his senses, still complaining about an event
that happened ten years earlier, when Lutz, the butcher who had promised him a ham for painting his fences, decided to give him a chicken instead. Every morning still, Hambone goes by the butcher shop demanding his ham. But, Hambone is regarded as a sort of hero by others in the diner. Holloway says: “That’s why I saw he might have more sense than me and you. Cause he ain’t willing to accept whatever the white man throw at him.” (p. 30) What Wilson seems to be trying to assert here is that Hambone has become a victim of the white man’s systematic denial of appropriate compensation. This is no simple “Civil Rights” matter. Surely, Wilson would have his characters comment on the Civil Rights act of 1964, and Affirmative Action, by saying something appropriate like that it is merely another “gift” of the white man, and that the black man should not be given whatever white society feels like, but only that which he has earned for himself. Yet, even when black men—like Sterling in this play—want to work, want to be straight” and earn a decent wage for an honest day’s work, they are denied.

Then there is Memphis, who worked for what he has— and that is about to be torn down. But not before he hopes to get his price. He tells the judge that “I got a clause, too...My clause say they got to giver me what I want for it. (p. 57) And he gets thirty-five thousands for the diner. If nothing else, Memphis’
experience shows the possibility of black men getting what they
deserve if they challenge the white man's rules.

For the naïve reader, a question might well be—well, why
doesn’t Sterling go and complain about “racial prejudice”? Because chances are the legislators and officials are just as prejudiced and would file and forget the complaint. It has happened thousands of times. Complaining, as Wilson uses in the Hambone character, does no good. Wilson is, in effect, telling us that black men must not become chained to a white system in which they never receive what they deserve.

There is certainly a hint of a separatist movement here. In fact, in an interview (1993) with Richard Pettengill, he hypothesizes that if all of black people had remained in the South, they would have developed their own versions of Saks Fifth Avenue, banks, baseball team, supermarkets. In essence, Wilson is suggesting, and he is drawing it out in the Hambone character, that blacks should separate themselves from white conceptions and power, because they will never receive fair compensation for their efforts.

In “Two Trains Running” Wilson seems to be attempting to demonstrate the limitations placed on the black man by white society. On the other hand, the black man knows that his chances of making something of himself, even in 1969, are slim. “Who wanna haul bricks for a dollar and a quarter an hour? That ain’t
gonna help him...I’m talking about he can make two or three hundred dollars gambling...if he get lucky” (p. 33). That, so Wilson seems to feel, is the problem: black men waiting to get lucky, rather than go out and make their own luck.

Wilson also tries to destroy the white man’s stereotype. “People kill me about niggers is lazy. Niggers is the most hard-working people in the world. Worked three hundred years for free” (p. 34). There is, so it seems, no way for today’s black men to escape the wounds of slavery generations earlier. At the same time, Wilson has Memphis provide a stirring soliloquy: “These niggers talk 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...Freedom is heavy. You gotta put your shoulder to freedom” (p. 42).

Of all the characters, Memphis is the strongest -- perhaps the most appealing -- especially to black audiences. He is at the forefront of those black men who are going to stop thinking about slavery and degradation in the past, and start to establish their own truth in America.

At the end, when the rally downtown ended, and the first fires of black anger torched a drug store, when the men were talking about Hambone and his funeral, and Lutz never giving him the ham, then Wilson creates a pleasurable surprise. Sterling proves he is a decent man of sorts. He comes to the diner,
bleeding, with a ham in his hands, and asks the undertaker, West, to bury it with Hambone. Somehow, we are made to feel, through difficulties and even some bloodshed, there are men in our world whose American Dream deserves respect.
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