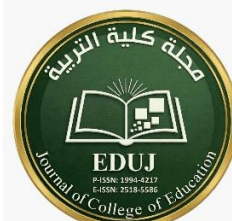


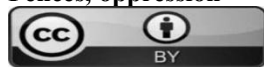


ISSN: 1994-4217 (Print) 2518-5586(online)

Journal of College of Education

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Keywords:

Bell Hooks , Feminism
, August Wilson ,
Fences, oppression

Article info

Article history:

Received 20. Jan 2026

Accepted 16. Apr.2026

Published 25. Aug.2026



A Hooksean Feminist Reading of August Wilson's Fences

A B S T R A C T

The paper presents a feminist analysis of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by August Wilson, *Fences* (1986), in the theoretical perspective of Black feminist thought presented by bell hooks. The paper deals with the marginalisation of feminist readings based on the feminine by exploring the character of Rose Maxson not as a peripheral character but as a site of emotional work, internalised patriarchy, and later feminist rebellion. The study employs a solid theoretical framework based on the seminal works of hooks, such as *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (1984) and *All About Love* (2000). The main thesis claims that the path of Rose, as a submissive wife to a self-determining woman who reestablishes her maternal power, is a manner of feminist praxis that is in line with the views of Hooks on patriarchal domination as well as her reformulation of care as a place of resistance. Results show that a Hooksean approach can help one understand the subtle gender politics of the play, how devastating the masculinity of patriarchy represented by Troy Maxson becomes, and how the main female character in the play revolts silently yet silently.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31185/eduj.Vol64.Iss2.5039>

قراءة نسوية هوكسينية لمسرحية "أسوار" لأوغست ويلسون

م.م. حنان هادي طاهر

مديرية تربية محافظة واسط

الملخص

تقدم هذه الورقة البحثية تحليلاً نسوياً لمسرحية "أسوار" (١٩٨٦) للكاتب أوغست ويلسون، الحائزة على جائزة بوليتزر، وذلك من منظور الفكر النسوي الأسود الذي طرحته بيل هوكس. تتناول الورقة تهميش القراءات النسوية القائمة على الأنوثة، من خلال استكشاف شخصية روز ماكسون ليس كشخصية هامشية، بل كموقع للعمل العاطفي، والنظام الأبوي المستبطن، والتمرد النسوي اللاحق. تستخدم الدراسة إطاراً نظرياً متيناً يستند إلى أعمال هوكس الرائدة، مثل "النظرية النسوية: من الهامش إلى المركز" (١٩٨٤) و"كل شيء عن الحب" (٢٠٠٠). تزعم الأطروحة الرئيسية أن مسار روز، كزوجة خاضعة لامرأة مستقلة تستعيد قوتها الأمومية، هو أسلوب ممارسة نسوية يتماشى مع آراء هوكس حول الهيمنة

الأبوية، فضلاً عن إعادة صياغتها للرعاية كمكان للمقاومة. تُظهر النتائج أن اتباع منهج هوكس يُساعد على فهم السياسات الجندرية الدقيقة في المسرحية، ومدى فتك ذكورية النظام الأبوي التي يُمثلها تروي ماكسون، وكيف تتور الشخصية النسائية الرئيسية في المسرحية بصمتٍ ودون ضجيج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بيل هوكس، النسوية، أوغست ويلسون، الأسوار، القمع

I. Introduction

Fences by August Wilson is a canonical text in the history of the XX century American drama recommended because of its heart-wrenching look into the African American experience during the post-Civil Rights period. The play was set in 1957, and it is the intricate relations between race, past and Black manhood portrayed through the enormous and tragic figure of Troy Maxson. Although an extensive amount of critical analysis has been applied to the play in terms of how it addresses historical trauma and generational strife, a major gap has always existed in the area of women-focused feminist criticism that evades the standard approach of using the female characters as foils to their male counterparts.

This paper aims to fill this gap with a lasting feminist discussion of the play *Fences* using the transformational theoretical lens of Bell Hooks. Using the intersectional analysis of race, class and gender by Hooks, this paper sheds light on the gender politics that are usually ignored by the Maxson household and puts the paper back on the experiences of the matriarch Rose.

The problem that this paper is faced with regarding research is the inclination within the interpretation of the Wilson scholarship to place gender analysis in the background of its themes of racial struggle and patriarchal descent. Although these themes are admittedly central, they often smear over the exact oppression that Black women undergo in the patriarchal systems of their communities. The research questions that will be used in this inquiry are as follows:

1. How does a Bell Hooks-inspired feminist approach demonstrate the processes of patriarchal power and emotional exploitation in the Maxson family?
2. How does the character of Rose Maxson combine her female experience of internalisation of patriarchal norms and her possible feminist resistance and self-definition? And lastly,
3. How does the relationship of marriage, motherhood, caring, the play portrays holds in light of the loveless power being criticised by hooks, as well as the need to understand that loving each other is an ethic of love?

This paper has argued that the journey of Rose Maxson in the *Fences* is a well-woven, though covert, dramatisation of the feminist consciousness-raising effort. The final renunciation of patriarchal authority and her redefining of motherhood by adopting Raynell is a sort of feminist praxis, which defies the principles of the loveless, duty-bound world that Troy has created. This study will be guided by a qualitative, theory-based close reading of Wilson's *Fences* based on Bell Hooks' theory and Black feminism principles. With the

dramatic world of Wilson placed in the direct line with the feminist theory of Hooks, this paper is intended to create a more multifaceted, more profound insight into the perennial appeal of the play and its intricate portrayal of Black womanhood.

Literature Review

The initial focus of critical scholarship on August Wilson's *Fences* has had a long history of development since its debut, with much of it initially focusing on the show as a compelling representation of Black masculinity and the weight of racism in history and gradually adopting more intricate intersectional understandings. The first wave of criticism, which took place in the late 80s and early 90s, was aimed at establishing a firm place of Wilson in the American theatrical canon. The early collections of readings by Alan Nadel (1994) and Marilyn Elkins (1994) were useful in this effort. The collection of essays by Nadel, entitled *May All Your Fences Have Gates*, explored the dense web of the dramatic world of Wilson, and most of the scholars dwelled upon the historical and mythological aspects of Troy Maxson personality (Nadel and Elkins, 1994, p. 55). Similarly, the critics found a way to study the multifaceted portrayal of family, community, and the African diaspora legacy in the play through the works by Elkins, such as *August Wilson: A Casebook*, in 1994, where Troy often became the focal tragic hero in all his encounters with the demons of his society and self (Elkins, 1994, p. 78).

It is on these grounds that the groundbreaking work of Sandra G. Shannon, (1995) titled, *The Dramatic Vision of August Wilson*, provided a detailed commentary of the ten plays in the cycle of productions of Wilson. Shannon suggested that the works of Wilson, such as *Fences*, are profoundly engaged in a historical recovery project, using the stage to recover and retell the stories of Black America. Her interpretation of the play, *Fences*, has shown how the conflict between Troy and Cory in relation to generations is a main axis of the play and has been seen as an allegory of struggle between two generations, each having different visions of how black can be progressive in a changing America (Shannon, 1995, p. 112). Although these initial studies recognized the female characters, they were largely positioned in reference to the male characters, and Rose, to give one example would be a stabilizing influence or a moral contrast to the defective masculinity of Troy.

The change started to take place in the 2000 and 2010 when scholars started to use more specialized theoretical optics of the text, such as feminist and womanist ones. Nila I. Tan Kurnia (2010) in *August Wilson's Fences: The African-American Women's Pursuit Of Dreams Seen From The Perspectives Of Rose Maxson*, examined the personality of Rose Maxson in perspective of pursuit of dreams, and the study proposed that the journey of Rose is a unique, gendered, pursuit of self-fulfillment in a patriarchal society. This was unlike the previous criticism, where the work by Kurnia placed the desires and sacrifices of Rose, at the center of the meaning of the play and not the peripheral of the Troy narrative (Kurnia, 2010, p. 45).

Shane McCormick (2017) has further developed Wilson's criticism by including the disability studies into the discussion much more recently in his work paper titled *August Wilson and the Anti-spectacle of Blackness and Disability in Fences and Two Trains Running*

. McCormick explores the play with the ideas of the body, brokenness, and spectacle in his analysis and provides a new pattern of explanation of physical and psychological traumas that characters carry (McCormick, 2017, p. 231). This trend of a general historical to the specific intersectional analysis illustrates the increasing perceptions of the multiplexity of meaning inherent in the work of Wilson and creates a critical space to confront the Hooksean feminist reading that this paper will take place.

Hooks have significantly contributed to the development of feminist theory, as well as the social and cultural criticism, by her intellectual and political work since the publication of her first great work, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981). Her contribution to the study of literature is based on her demand on intersectional approach which rejects the segregation of race, classes, and gender. Hooks challenged the mainstream feminism and the traditional academic discipline white and middle-class bias in one of her earliest and most influential essays, *Feminism and Black Women Studies* (1989). She demanded a feminist practice based on lived experiences of Black women and advocated educational areas where their voices could be at the forefront, thus establishing the foundational stage of an inclusive and politically involved type of literary analysis (Hooks, 1989, p. 55).

The interaction of education as a liberation site is one of the themes, which became central in the 1990s, according to Hooks. She wrote in a discussion with Gary A. Olson, *Bell hooks and the Politics of Literacy*, (1994), that she believed that literacy and critical thinking are the keys to fighting domination. She asserts that reading, writing, and theorising are not isolated academic activities in the familiarity of personal and social change (Olson, 1994, p. 433). This is what emerges in her historic book, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994). In this case, Hooks describes her concept of an engaged pedagogy where the classroom is a place of resistance to oppressive structures and one where students will become critical and self-actualised agents. It has influenced feminist and critical pedagogy on a permanent basis, and the principles of this piece of work can be easily used to analyse literary texts as a place of possible consciousness-raising (Hooks, 1994).

The work of Hooks in the 2000s was still developing, but it became more general and directly addressed the politics of everyday life. Her writing book *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (2000) aimed to de mystify feminism theory and make it appear as a movement to abolish every type or form of oppression that would benefit all. She has given a very straight forward definition of feminism which states a movement to abolish sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression that has become a cornerstone to modern feminist texts and actions (Hooks, 2000, p. 1). The most recent attempts to elaborate and apply the theories of hooks to new settings have been made by the scholars like Hazel T. Biana (2020) in *Extending bell hooks' Feminist Theory*, who opts to rethink the main ideas of hooks in Feminist Theory, such as her criticism of patriarchy and her ethic of love, in the article *Extending bell hooks Feminist Theory*, but says that they are still relevant to the analysis of the products of contemporary culture. The article by Biana further shows how the framework developed and proposed by hooks has proven to be timeless in shedding light on the nuances of power in relationships, families, and broader societies (Biana, 2020, p. 14). The bulk of this scholarship, including the cornerstone critiques offered by hooks and the more recent

uses of such critical interrogatives, offers the theoretically versatile means through which to engage in a critically rigorous and politically charged feminist reading of the play, *Fences*.

Although there is large amount of literature on the play, and the theorist as well, there is no systematic investigation into the play *Fence* from a Hooksean perspective. The past studies have almost exclusively questioned such themes as power, identity, and language with either existential, political, or psychoanalytic approaches, which has created a significant gap in literature as far as discovering Hooksean interpretations is concerned. Placing *Fence* into a Hooksean concept of human nature, power, and violence, the given study provides a new analytical prism that has yet to be employed in literature. This methodological innovation does not only distinguishes the present work from those that preceded it, but it also adds to the critical interpretation of the play as the dynamics of power and social order and adds to its theoretical and scholarly value.

II. Theoretical Framework: Bell Hooks's Black Feminism

The theoretical basis of this paper is the Black feminist theory formulated by Bell hooks, whose work offers a critical perspective of examining the intersectional systems of oppression within the context of August Wilson's play, *Fences*. The arguments behind the choice of hooks are her piercing and reachable critique of patriarchy, her insistence on the intersectionality of race, class and gender, and her deep treatment of love as a political and ethical power. Her system is the only one that can help deconstruct the intricate gender relations in the Black family beyond a simplistic discussion of the phenomenon of racism as a particular phenomenon and how the domination of men can be challenged. This part outlines the major principles of feminist thinking of hooks to be utilised in the play analysis.

The work by Hooks fits into the larger framework of the Black feminism tradition, which itself came to respond to the inadequacy of the Civil Rights Movement as well as the second-wave feminism to fully cover the specific experience of Black women. Hooks, in her pioneering work, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (1984), has proposed that mainstream feminism is a middle-class, white, women's movement, which has historically universalised its own experience and reduced the way race and class work in a fundamental and ongoing way to shape the experience of gender subjugation. She brings to light the supposedly homogenous conceptualisation of a so-called sisterhood, disproving it with the old truth of hierarchy based on race and class in the feminist movement itself :

While it is evident that many women suffer from sexist tyranny, there is little indication that forges 'a common bond among all women.' There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share — differences that are rarely transcended. (Hooks, 1984, p. 44)

Rather, hooks suggests an emergent feminism located in the margin where we place the voices of women of color and other marginalized people in the building of a more inclusive and transformational political agenda. This is an intersectional approach that is critical in analyzing a character like Rose Maxson, who is not only a victim of sexism, but

racism and economic challenges of the community she belongs to. The core of the framework presented in hooks is her definition of feminism, which she puts across, overwhelmingly clear in the book *Feminism is for Everybody* (2000): “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression”(Hooks, 2000, p. 1), also, she notes that , feminism hunts for a “systemic, institutionalized sexism,” known as patriarchy, rather than just individual sexist thought and behavior”(Hooks, 2000, p. 1). Through such a definition of feminism, hooks leaves the emphasis of a more limited fight based on equality with men, something that she believes ultimately amounts to equality within the current system of patriarchy and capitalism, to an upheaval against all kinds of domination. This definition is deliberately broad dealing not just with gender, but with race, class and other axes of power. It enables us to discuss how Troy Maxson is both a victim of systematic racism and a spreader of patriarchal ideals to his own family context. It also offers a paradigm on how to make sense of resistance by Rose as not a pursuit of personal empowerment, but a movement towards the establishment of a more just and loving world, where domination is eliminated.

The criticisms of patriarchy by hooks go to an in-depth examination of the destructive power of patriarchy on men. She claims that patriarchal masculinity socializes men to be emotionally detached, perceive power as control, and fear intimacy in her work, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (2004). This lovelessness “patriarchal masculinity socializes men to be emotionally disconnected, to equate power with control, and to fear intimacy”(Hooks, 2004, p. 37). Hooks suggests a radical ethic of love in opposition to this loveless patriarchy.

In her book, *All About Love: New Visions* (2000), she does not see love as a feeling, but it is a practice, “ love not as a mere feeling, but as a practice—a combination of “care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust” (Hooks, 2000, p. 47). Love is political as far as hooks are concerned. It is the praxis of freedom, which is the key to community building and opposing oppression. This definition of love as doing, a moral commitment, provides a solid structure of understanding the path of Rose. Her choice of taking care of Raynell, a child of her husband infidelity can be interpreted as a great expression of moral love. It is an option that is beyond individual treachery and it is a declaration of service and duty thus building an area of recovery and opposition to patriarchal collapse. In this respect, the ultimate claim of moral judgment that Rose makes is not only a personal victory, but a political action that is in keeping with the idea of love as a force of change as proposed by hooks.

The intersectional approach to race, class, and gender will be used to analyze the role of these factors in the lives of the characters of the play in the further sections of the analysis based on this theoretical framework. Her discourse on the patriarchal masculinity will be used to analyze Troy Maxson, whereas her ideas on love, care, and resistance will serve as the prism through which one can examine the character development of Rose. Through the feminist thinking of hooks, this research will prove that *Fences* is not merely a play about the plight of the Black man in America, but it is a deep and multifaceted examination of Black womanhood, patriarchal domination, subtle but possibly radical feminist love and resistance.

III. Analysis: A Hooksean Reading to *Fences*

Despite the rich historical roots of African American experience, the fact that black Americans have come to feature heavily in the domain of the mainstream American literary output, specifically, the theatrical one, is a relatively new phenomenon. Susan CW. Abbotson (2003), observes that it was only during the heightened interest in African-American culture, thought, and experience in the 1960 that serious plays written by and about African Americans entered mainstream theatres :

It was not until the surge of interest in African American culture, thought, and experience during the 1960s that serious plays by and about African Americans reached mainstream theaters. (2003, p.9)

These dramatic inventions , differing not only in their historical settings but also in the gender and intellectual orientations of their authors, are an arguably heterogeneous set of stories the main preoccupation of which is the challenge to dominant formulation of ethnic contingency. In asking questions to the presumptive sense of knowledge that views traditional and canonical American literature as devoid of, unknowledgeable of, and uneducated by the four-hundred-year-old presence of first Africans and later of African Americans in the United States, these works , "attempt to reveal that the real or fabricated Africanist presence is crucial to the sense of Americanness" (Morrison, 2000, p.924). Furthermore, since, as Margery Fee (1995) observes, these resisting writers are “ freeing themselves from the dominant ideology, by changing the current discursive formation” (p.243). Lacking the spatial and temporal milieu, they insist on the establishment of a space that can capture the existence of the invisible and illusory experiences and past of Black Americans in the United States of America.

August Wilkinson Wilson (1945-2005) was one of the most notable African American playwrights at the end of the twentieth century. Theatrical productions are also involved in a variety of issues related to the discourse of global anti-colonialism since the 1950s in his dramaturgical creations, and these works appear to be coincident in terms of an intentional search to achieve the status of recognition in the mainstream canon of white American theater. Besides other critics who have glorified the genius of Wilson, the critic Keith Clark , compares Wilson to the prominent white dramatists such as O'Neill, Miller, and Williams (Bloom, 2009,p.76).

The crowning work of August Wilson, the ten-play cycle called the Pittsburgh Cycle, is a monument to the ability of the theatre to dig, dramatize, as well as scarify the experience of African Americans in the twentieth century. but he has also questioned the very language of difference, separation and exclusion. His main issue of concern is ; “the ghettoization of the black dramatists' works and the colonization of black theatre”(Bellamy 1997, p. 589). The dramaturgical philosophy which Wilson had was based on the belief that Black culture had its own unique and powerful cosmology, and his plays attempted to enhance the daily lives, hardships, and successes of the common people. Although his work has been praised as having a lyrical diction and broad subject matter, the gender politics captured in the Pittsburgh Cycle has generated a long-standing academic debate. There was often an attempt to marginalize female characters in early scholarship, but there has been a necessary

academic re-evaluation of them, as the complex, often subversive roles they occupy. A good example of this dynamic is provided in *Fences*, set in 1957. The action of the play takes place during the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, although the dramaturgy is restricted to the backyard of the Maxson family almost entirely. This confined space is a miniature of the larger society - a patriarchal home in which the grand plots of race and history are done through the cloak of intimacy and sometimes the torment of family relationships.

The personality of Rose Maxson is a compelling object of study, according to the Hookesian viewpoint of emotional labor dynamics and internalisation of patriarchy. She has eighteen years of her life living a life of subsidizing her husband, Troy, and raising her son, Cory. Her work goes beyond housewifery; it is essentially emotional and affective. It is she who softens the rough side of Troy, who bears the emotional heart of the family, and who takes the psychic hitches caused by the frustrations of Troy in a racist environment. However, Rose seems to have internalised the patriarchal bargain to the full in the opening scenes of the play, as she has accepted her part as a wife and mother. However, the fact that Troy admits of his unfaithfulness and the fact that she was going to give birth to another child with another woman is a landmark, a break that shatters the principles of her world and drives her toward the lengthy but necessary procedure of self-identification. This clash with Troy in the second act appears as one of the strongest scenes in American theatre- an untouched and heart-shattering statement of her sacrifices. It is in this instance that she speaks out the emotional labour that has been lingering and undervalued during almost twenty years:

I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. I got a life too. I gave eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me? ... I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams...and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't bloom. I'm standing in the same spot. (Wilson, 1986, p. 71)

This is a monologue which is a direct accuser of the patriarchal family structure which requires the female self-sacrifice. The metaphor of planting the seed that does not bloom is also a tragic recognition of the fact that Rose had delayed her own life. Hooksean-wise this is the point at which consciousness starts: the agonized realization that all of the love and care she has given her marriage has not been returned in an ethical context. "true love requires mutual recognition and the support of each other's spiritual growth" as hooks argues in *All about love* (Hooks, 2000, p. 94). The speech made by Rose reveals the abysmal lack of such reciprocity in her relationship with Troy, and thus preconditions her future resistance.

Troy Maxson is a male patriarchal role model who Bell hooks criticizes in books like *The Will to Change*. He is a man who has been greatly hurt by institutional racism, deprived of his ambition to pursue a career in professional baseball, and reduced to a physically strenuous yet poorly paying job of a garbage collector. To react to this powerlessness in the society, Troy builds up his home as his kingdom where his power is supreme. He rules his household by using a mixture of authority, emotional abuse and strict sense of duty without any nurturing motherly love. It is not only a personal vice but a form of patriarchal privilege

which is a belief that his desires and needs take precedence over the emotional welfare of his wife and family. His roles are seen by him in materialistic terms alone and this is what later he puts across with disturbing clarity during his intervention with Cory :

It's my job. It's my responsibility! You understand that? A man got to take care of his family. You live in my house...sleep you behind on my bedclothes...fill you belly up with my food...cause you my son. You my flesh and blood. Not 'cause I like you! 'Cause it's my duty to take care of you. I owe a responsibility to you!. (Wilson, 1986, p. 38)

The essence of patriarchal thinking of Troy is shown in this speech. He mixes love with duty and material provision which is a direct result of the collapse of ethical love outlined by hooks (Hooks, 2004, p. 65). The discussion of duty by Troy serves as a defense mechanism and justifies his lack of emotion and control of his son. His word is the law and any form of attack on his authority is responded with anger and aggression. His failure to perceive his son as a person with his own dreams, not as the reflection of himself, is also a by-product of the patriarchal ego that hook identifies as one of the main hurdles towards loving affairs.

The marriage institution in *Fences* is presented as a space of unequal power distribution and exploitation of emotions of the female gender, thus fitting the concept of feminist critique of the traditional family structure proposed by bell hooks. Marriage is an institution to Troy and ensures him a house, a nurture and an outlet to his frustrations. In the case of Rose, it is a vow that requires the almost complete deletion of her own personality. The conflict scene after Troy admits that he is an infidel reveals the patriarchal domination that the couple is in the middle of. When Rose questions his betrayal, Troy answers that he is a very patriarchal man, and he constructs his relationship with him in that way.

I'm trying to find a way to tell you...I'm gonna be a daddy. I'm gonna be somebody's daddy. ... You're not the only one who's got wants and needs. But I held on to you, Rose. I held on to you tighter. You're my wife. I'm your husband. That's the way it is. (Wilson, 1986, p. 69)

This text is a good depiction of the way that hooks analyzes intimacy and power. Troy however does not love or even a shared commitment but the strict hierarchical roles of that of a husband and a wife. His pronouncement of, That is the way it is, signifies the patriarchal rule and tries to shut down the conversation and to restore the power. He justifies his infidelity as not betrayal but as an excuse to his own wants and needs, and he at the same time negates eighteen years of life that Rose has spent with him. According to Hooks, in a patriarchal relationship intimacy is characterised as an act of power in which the needs of one partner are systematically privileged over the other (Hooks, 2000, p. 112). This dynamic is theatrically presented in the confrontation scene in *Fences*, which reveals the lovelessness and emotional violence that can be the staple of a marriage that appeared to be fine.

The final feminist resistance Rose succeeds in accomplishing is not through leaving Troy but by radically redefining motherhood and care radically. When Troy introduces his newborn baby girl, Raynell, and his mother dies in childbirth, he leaves Rose with an impossible choice. The most profound and intricate aspect of the play is her choice to keep

the child alive, and this action would be considered by bell hooks as the feminist praxis. Rose reinvents the landscape of motherhood and dissolves it of the patriarchal identification with the wifehood role and turns it into a place of ethical decision and action. She makes it clear that she does not act in the interest of Troy but rather the innocent child. Through this, she claims her own moral authority that makes a clear line between her promise to care and the association with her husband :

Okay, Troy...you're right. I'll take care of your baby for you...cause...like you say...she's innocent. And you can't visit the sins of the father upon the child. A motherless child has got a hard time. From right now...this child got a mother. But you a womanless man.
(Wilson, 1986, p. 79)

This statement is the result of the process of self-definition that Rose goes through. She claims the position of mother and denies the position of the submissive wife. By describing Troy as a womanless man, she also removes the emotional and affectionate work that had kept him going over the past eighteen years thus literally destroying the patriarchal nature of their relationship internally. This action is close to the renegotiation of care as resistance, as portrayed by hooks. Hooks believes that the act of care, especially when given to the fragile, the marginalized and the vulnerable, is a political act that defies the logic of power and authority within a culture of domination (Hooks, 2000, p. 68). Rose does not forgive but makes a most significant decision in her life by bringing up Raynell. It is a decision to establish a place of nurturing and safeguarding in a world characterized by male failure, and in the process, she is a model of feminist motherhood rooted in choices, compassion, and authoritative morals.

It is Rose who is always seen as a counter-balancing force, trying to break this chain of intergenerational patriarchy. She supports Cory, acting between father and son and establishing the room of the personal ambitions of Cory. When Cory comes home to have the funeral after the death of Troy, he first rejects to go to the funeral saying he wants to finally escape the shadow of his father. Rose is the much-needed intervention, as he is much more sensitive and humane in his view of the life and legacy of Troy. Even when she does not forgive Troy, she puts their failures in the perspective of his own struggles, and asks Cory to go on without being invalidated by bitterness. Her presence as a stabilizing force is necessary to the play ending, tentative feeling of resolution. Although the legacy of the patriarchal supremacy in Troy cannot be ignored, the ethic of care applied by Rose and her ability to help establish a bond provide a sliver of hope that one can look toward a new future, the one in which the cycle of the patriarchal inheritance can be broken. Her effect on Cory as well as Raynell is a counter-narrative of the devastating masculinity of Troy, and it is the power of feminist love to heal and change even in the wake of devastating loss.

IV. Conclusions

This Hooksean finding of feminism in August Wilson's *Fences* has attempted to reinvent the critical discourse about the play, whereby the character of Rose Maxson is no longer pushed to the outskirts but is instead brought into the focus of analysis. There are two

implications of this study, theoretical and critical. To start with, it highlights the need to use feminist and womanist lenses on the canonical works of male writers like August Wilson. This would not lessen the strength of their intervention in race and history, but instead give a deeper insight into their work. Second, this paper confirms that the feminist theory developed by bell hooks remains relevant even nowadays as a means of literary and cultural analysis. Her attacks on patriarchal masculinity, her redefinition of love as an ethical action, and her relentless emphasis on how all forms of oppression are interrelated offer a very essential problem-solving plan of the human dramas that are played in both the literary and life arenas.

This study does not lack limitations ; a deeper examination can be made on the personality of Raynell, as her symbolic figure as the future of black womanhood, influenced by the feminist care of Rose, but with the patriarchal legacy of Troy. It may also be useful in future research to apply this Hooksean framework to other female characters in the Pittsburgh Cycle by Wilson and compare how Black women negotiate and overcome patriarchal systems in various historical time frames. Finally, this paper will argue that *Fences* is just a play of Rose as much as it is the play of Troy. It is a tale of a woman who when confronted with the tragic breakdown of her world, does not want to be shattered. Rather, she emerges out of the wreckage of her broken dreams to create a new self based on moral power, moral choice, and transformative force of a love that is not subject to domination. By doing this, she is the incarnation of the feminist praxis which bell hooks had been fighting her whole life.

V. References

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