

“Responsibility in Our Own Hands”

Joan Herrington

At the 1996 Theater Communications Group Annual Conference held at Princeton University, August Wilson issued an urgent warning: “. . . black theatre today . . . [is] a target for cultural imperialists who seek to propagate their ideas about the world as the only valid ideas, and see blacks as woefully deficient not only in arts and letters but in the abundant gifts of humanity.”¹ Reviewing the status of black theater, Wilson challenged black artists to reconsider where, how, and for whom their plays are produced. “It is time,” he said, “we took responsibility for our talents in our own hands.”²

Certainly Wilson is an appropriate proponent for the contemporary black theater, but his increasing outspokenness on racial politics in the arts has illuminated an unusual juxtaposition between his ideology and his own artistic practice. Indeed, Wilson’s very success has provided him with a platform from which to repudiate the theatrical route he himself has followed.

Wilson’s speech was no doubt inspired by a recent vogue in North American theaters for work by black playwrights. Theaters that were once almost exclusively the domain of white playwrights now make a point of including the occasional work by black artists. The ostensible motive, beyond the inherent merit of the individual play, is the diversification of both art and audience, a goal much lauded in the 1980s and early 1990s. In his keynote speech at the TCG Conference, Wilson, whose own plays have been extremely popular at predominantly white theaters, attacked this vogue. He denounced the trend as devastating to the life of black theater because it means that white theaters are now siphoning off money—and audiences—that would otherwise be available to black theaters. Wilson sees the effort of white theaters to become more multicultural in their selection of plays as misguided and dangerous to the black theater community.

Doing a black play . . . does not change the nature of the institution or its mission. Blacks come and go and the institution remains dedicated to its ideas of “preserving culture

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and promoting thought.” Our visitor pass expires and we never have a permanent place to hang our hat, to develop our own ideas, and to provide our community with a sense of cultural worth and self-sufficiency. The damage this does to our present institutions and our already debilitated communities is evident and significant.³

Offering an alternate plan for the survival and flourishing of black culture, Wilson called for the establishment of more theaters devoted to the production of black plays, and challenged black artists to support these theaters with their work; Wilson’s call for separate theaters is a reiteration of W.E.B. DuBois’s call for theater which is “by us, for us, near us, and about us.”

The speech—delivered to a predominantly white audience—sparked immediate discussion throughout the national theater community. Roundtables were scheduled on stages around the country, flurries of responses were printed in leading theater journals. Wilson’s long-standing critic Robert Brustein, Artistic Director of the American Repertory Theater and reviewer for *The New Republic*, wrote a heated reply. In January 1997, Wilson and Brustein held a public debate in New York City’s Town Hall, a sold-out event that was covered by newspapers in most major cities. Their war of words focused not only on Wilson’s revolutionary ideas for the future of black theater but also on the inconsistencies between Wilson’s politics and his own creative process.

Wilson’s attack on white theaters’ attempts at multiculturalism, and his implicit criticism of those minority artists who participate in such efforts, are unexpected, coming as they do from a black playwright whose success has been built with the support of so many white theaters. If Wilson believes that such theaters as the Yale Repertory Theatre, the Goodman Theatre, the Old Globe, and the Huntington should not be producing black plays, then why has he continually selected them to produce his own work? Indeed, not a single Wilson play of the last twenty years has premiered at a black theater.

Consequently, some members of the theater community found Wilson’s statements not only unexpected but in fact hypocritical. As black playwright Suzan-Lori Parks expressed it, “August can start by having his own acclaimed plays premiere in black theaters, instead of where they premiere now. I’m sorry, but he should examine his own house.”⁴

Wilson’s speech also raised questions about his own creative process. Central to Wilson’s argument against diversification is the adverse effect white theaters have on black artists who “allow others to have authority over our cultural and spiritual products.”⁵ Wilson warns of tremendous danger in these circumstances.

We are being strangled by our well-meaning friends. Money spent “diversifying” the American theater, developing black audiences for white institutions, developing ideas of color blind casting . . . only strengthens and solidifies this stranglehold by making our artists subject to the paternalistic notions of white institutions that dominate and control art.⁶

Is Wilson thus admitting that in developing his plays at white institutions with primarily white audiences he, too, has endangered his creative cultural identity? When long, rambling stories are cut from *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, when supernatural elements are pushed out of *Fences’s* dramatic spotlight, when conclusions with greater closure are sought for *Piano Lesson*, does this demonstrate the influence of the “paternalistic notions of white institutions?”

At first glance, the answer seems to be yes. All of Wilson’s dramas have been strongly influenced by the American process of play development—a process in which new plays are open to significant professional and public review in the course of their creation. At institutions recognized within the American theater as bastions for the development of new work—New Dramatists, the Eugene O’Neill National Playwrights Conference, the Yale Repertory Theatre, and the Goodman Theatre are only a few of the dozens in existence—Wilson’s plays have been staged by eager personnel, poked at by inquisitive directors and dramaturgs, molded by ambitious artistic directors, and deluged by comments from theater professionals. Despite the fact that the text of Wilson’s speech makes this seem a treacherous undertaking, he has been committed to exactly such a process.

Although Wilson has never before raised this issue, his words give a new racially-oriented twist to the old debate about whether mainstream theaters, consciously or unconsciously, push playwrights into a more commercial mold. Many contemporary theater artists believe that the practitioners of traditional American dramaturgy may not truly have the playwright’s individuality in mind. Playwright and dramaturg Tom St. George, who has been an active participant at the O’Neill Conference, is outspoken regarding the risks posed by this most common process of play development.

One of the worst side effects in dramaturgical work in general, and in new play work in American theater in particular, is that there is a real impatience with anything that isn’t understood and can’t be explained. It’s very, very hard for a play to get through a developmental program without people wrinkling their nose at something they don’t understand. And, sometimes, work gets blanded out, particularly if it’s a younger writer who

is anxious to please everyone. August doesn't fall into that category, but I wonder if some of that didn't happen to his work, particularly earlier on.⁷

Although Wilson has never spoken publicly of his own plays in this context, the possible "blanding out" of his work has been a topic of discussion for those who have worked with him or followed the progress of his work. Critic and dramaturg Michael Feingold worked closely with Wilson at the O'Neill Playwrights Conference where Wilson developed: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, and *The Piano Lesson*. Feingold feels that "the more traditional play innately isn't the kind of play Wilson starts out writing; he is writing something much more free in form."⁸

Some Wilson critics, as well as some who believe themselves his truest fans, argue that the pressures of the developmental institutions tend to produce plays written in the Western, realistic tradition, and have moved Wilson away from his impulse to write in a mode that is closer to African literary and performance traditions, and more clearly reflective of the influence of his four "B's"—the creative inspirations Wilson acknowledges as having the most significant impact on his work: the blues, the African-American painter Romare Bearden, the African-American playwright Amiri Baraka, and the Argentinean short-story writer Jorge Luis Borges. Indeed, study of the progressive drafts of many of Wilson's scripts supports this argument as it reveals a consistent movement toward a more mainstream style. For example, Wilson's original ending for *The Piano Lesson*, with Boy Willie endlessly fighting off the ghost of the man who enslaved his ancestors, was lost in favor of greater closure as the ghost is defeated and Boy Willie and his sister Berniece amicably resolve their dispute over an heirloom piano.

Those who have watched the development of Wilson's plays see a clear difference between where he starts and where he ends, often finding in Wilson's first impulse an energy lacking in the more "polished" versions that ultimately get produced. Feingold states, "There's always something fascinating to me in the early drafts of his plays. And it's rarely the structure and the resolution which a Broadway producer would think of as being important in a play: you know, what happens and what's the socko ending?"⁹ Gitta Honegger, Resident Dramaturg emeritus of the Yale Repertory Theatre, where five of Wilson's six most recent plays have premiered, "loved when August's plays were basically sprawling all over, because he's a poet. Before it was streamlined or whatever you want to call that, it was a mess, but it was wonderful."¹⁰

But Honegger recognizes the inevitability of that "streamlining" once the plays enter the system. She says the usual approach is to evaluate in terms of

traditional dramaturgy. "You wonder about the options. You hear the voice a playwright has, which may be completely unusual and completely nontraditional, and then you think, 'Well, what should we do with it?'"¹¹ "We" are the directors, dramaturgs, critics, theater managers, and other artists, who work at mainstream white theaters, and who have helped shape Wilson's plays.

How then is Wilson's choice to participate actively in this process to be understood in light of the arguments he has recently presented? Perhaps Wilson believed his work at the white theaters was less likely to be compromised because he was collaborating with a respected black theater artist, Lloyd Richards, who directed the premier productions of Wilson's six latest plays. But Richards's traditional dramaturgy may, in fact, have limited the scope of Wilson's work. Richards often focused on the structure of the plays, seeking to "make a dramatic event out of the material."¹² It was Richards, for example, who targeted the unusual structure of the original *Ma Rainey* script (in which Ma did not enter until the second act), which Wilson changed to a more traditionally unified action.

But Richards's voice was not the only one Wilson heard, or the only opinion. Michael Feingold, for one, was very vocal in his opposition:

I disagreed with Lloyd about what would be a full and effective version of *Ma Rainey*. He wanted it to be a play in the old Broadway sense and I've never been totally convinced that it was August's destiny to write those.¹³

But, as Honegger noted, Richards was extremely influential:

Lloyd knew very clearly what he wanted. Now myself, having worked with Lloyd over the years, pretty much I knew what he wanted or what his way of thinking was, and there was no question but that this was what's going to be done.¹⁴

Although Richards claims to promote fullness of expression as opposed to conventional structure, his work on Wilson's plays has been dramaturgically conservative, as described by many, including Honegger:

Lloyd, being a long practitioner of the theater, and having had the O'Neill so many years, knows very well what the structure of a play should be, using the model, I would say, more or less, of the well-made play, in the Aristotelian sense.¹⁵

Wilson himself never studied the well-made, Aristotelian-influenced play, which serves as the template for, and often the measure of, Euro-centric, western drama. According to Wilson, when he began playwriting, he had not read any dramatic theory and his contact with western-style dramatic literature was very limited. But over time he has clearly come to understand and to apply to his own inherently non-traditional dramaturgy the principles of standard Euro-centric dramatic structure. Richards did not speak to Wilson about craft, but says, "Wilson had to learn to write dialogue and he had to begin to dramatize. Then he learned other old tricks along the way."¹⁶ Thus, the environment may have changed not only the art but also the artist, resulting in the assimilation of an ideology rather than outright imposition.

Despite the abundance of input he has received from Richards and others, Wilson has always retained creative control of his work. But his own ideas about his work have changed in the course of his interactions with respected theater artists. Indeed, those who have worked with Wilson on the development of his plays remark on how much he has internalized the pressure to write structurally traditional drama, as perhaps most clearly demonstrated by *Fences*, in which Wilson, by his own admission, set out to prove he could write a play in a conventional style. Richards says any pressure Wilson felt "he imposed upon himself, and I don't think he did that badly."¹⁷ Indeed, *Fences* is Wilson's most commercially successful play. Thus if Wilson was indeed "subject to paternalistic notions," herein defined as pressure to write within the traditional western style, the conflict was not as clear-cut as Wilson described in his speech. And its resolution was perhaps bred from Wilson's contention that he was able to strike a balance.

Wilson knows he straddles two worlds, but believes himself to be integrating two traditions, and in so doing, paying homage to both:

In one guise, the ground I stand on has been pioneered by the Greek dramatists—by Euripides, Aeschylus, and Sophocles—by William Shakespeare, by Shaw and Ibsen, and by the American dramatists Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams. In another guise, the ground that I stand on has been pioneered by my grandfather, by Nat Turner, by Denmark Vesey, by Martin Delaney, Marcus Garvey, and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.¹⁸

But Michael Feingold believes successive drafts of Wilson's plays reveal a process not so much of integration as of subtraction—the displacing of one aesthetic in favor of another.

I think one thing you get in August is two very different aesthetics going on. He has conflicted impulses. He wants to do two quite different things at the same time.

One is a sort of condition of talk, as music, that makes the plays conversation pieces which are sometimes very static and very beautiful. And the other one is an effort to do a well crafted play in the old style.

I think if you look at what he writes before it gets to the O'Neill, it's more of a static conversation piece. Then, in the process of the O'Neill, and definitely at Yale, he moves it toward the well-made play.¹⁹

Still, non-traditional elements such as supernatural events and extensive monologues, contained in the original drafts and reflective of Wilson's dramatic instincts, were maintained in later versions. Thus, Wilson believes he successfully integrated and reconciled diverse impulses. Others disagree, some quite publicly. Gerald Bordman writes in *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre*: "This profusion of awards [for Wilson's work] is baffling, for while the plays have powerful scenes or moments, they are basically an unhomogenized melange of styles and techniques."²⁰

Ironically, even those who agree that Wilson has successfully incorporated a more familiar and thus universally "acceptable" structure, while retaining his original thematic focus, advance an argument that inadvertently validates Wilson's political point. *The Cambridge Guide to Theater* includes this reference: ". . . Wilson has certainly emerged as the richest theatrical voice in the United States of the past decade and has managed to transcend the categorization of 'black' playwright through his dissection of black families and communities to a broad-based audience."²¹ The implicit assumption here is that a black playwright must abandon a unique cultural identity in order to reach a wide audience, precisely the point that Wilson was making when he warned of white theatrical co-optation of the black experience.

If there is some truth to such an assumption, then the issue Wilson raised in his speech is a serious one: Can a black playwright working in the mainstream white theater retain a cultural identity? Wilson, while acknowledging that the theater in which he has chosen to work has its foundation in the "European theater," insists that he "reserves the right to amend, to explore, to add our African consciousness and our African aesthetic to the art we produce."²² If this right can truly be reserved, as Wilson espouses, then the danger for a black writer working at a white theater may not, ultimately, be as destructive as Wilson himself argues.

But reserving the right, exercising it partially, and exercising it fully are different things. And to exercise it fully may be to alienate much of the audience.

Certainly, Wilson's current artistic stature mitigates that danger for him and has likely inspired recent professional choices which initially indicate a reshaping of his work in accordance with his own internal mandates. For example, his latest plays do not reflect the influence of traditional western dramaturgy as strongly as his previous plays do; *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, and the revised *Jitney*, a Wilson play from 1979 recently rewritten and reproduced, do not have the easily identified rising action of *Ma Rainey* or *Fences*. The structures of these later plays indicate a move to recapture the style of the first drafts of previous plays, including, for example, more storytelling and less cause-and-effect-driven plot. But these new directions may be destined for short life, undermined by Wilson's history, his relationships, and his personal ambition.

None of the recent plays embodying this alternative aesthetic received the critical acclaim of those which immediately preceded them (*Ma Rainey*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner*, and *Piano Lesson*), and Wilson was unhappy with the length of the runs and the public response. Voices usually supportive joined those from whom Wilson was used to hearing criticism to express their disapproval. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Chairman of the Afro-American Studies Department at Harvard University and a Wilson enthusiast, wrote in *The New Yorker* that "an unruly luxuriance of language—an ability to ease between trash talk and near-choral transport—is Wilson's great gift; sometimes you wish he were less generous with that gift, for it can come at the expense of conventional dramaturgic virtues like pacing and the sense of closure."²³ Critic Robert Brustein said of *Seven Guitars*, "however colorful its subject matter, it cannot ramble willy-nilly for two and a half hours before establishing a line of action."²⁴

In the Town Hall debate, Brustein was also quick to issue a public challenge to Wilson to bring his work to black theaters. In what seemed to his supporters as a glaring omission, Wilson did not then mention his upcoming production of *Jitney*. At that time, *Jitney* had already been scheduled for spring 1997 production at the Crossroads Theater, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, described by its Artistic Director, Ricardo Khan, as "a professional environment for artists in black theater to develop, explore, and practice their craft."²⁵

The decision to produce at the Crossroads was Wilson's idea. But perhaps he did not feel comfortable invoking it in his own defense, since it was a move primarily driven by a change in the production schedule at the Huntington Theater in Boston, one that would have left the *Jitney* production idle for a full year after its run at the Pittsburgh Public Theatre in the spring of 1996. In fact, Wilson has stated that his decision to have *Jitney* produced at Crossroads was not a political one.

It was not a consideration. It just was a theater that might do the play and it seemed like a good idea. I wasn't totally unaware that they were a black theater. But I didn't say, "Oh, let me go and seek out a black theater." It's just that there we were, talking last July or August 1996, and we were talking about going into rehearsal in Boston in September 1997 and it seemed like such a long time away. I thought "can't we do it before then?" And there was the chance to do it at Crossroads.²⁶

Indeed, despite his awareness of Crossroads as the only organization within the League of Regional Theaters (LORT) which consistently produces work by African-American playwrights, Wilson had not considered it for production of any of his previous plays. He explains that he did not know much about the theater and that it was his recent social contact with Khan that encouraged him to bring *Jitney* to Crossroads. Khan welcomed the opportunity both because of his long-standing artistic respect for Wilson and because black theaters need the press, prestige, and box office income that a Wilson play can offer.

Wilson admits to finding a greater sense of "community" at Crossroads than at other theaters in which he has worked, and he was impressed with the dedication of its artists and staff. But by his own admission, Wilson's next play is more likely to premiere at one of those "white theaters" that offer higher production values. It is a catch-22: without money, small black theaters cannot raise their levels of production sufficiently to attract an August Wilson; without an August Wilson, they cannot attract the money. So, despite a foray to the Crossroads, Wilson will continue his former associations, acknowledging that he has "very carefully worked out a relationship with various theaters that have supported my work."²⁷ Support began with an open door for a little-known playwright; support continues with high quality productions, expansive audiences, and a ready road to Broadway—opportunities few, if any, black theaters can offer.

Still, Wilson is personally addressing the issues he raised in his speech. In spite of his relative comfort at those "various theaters," during his most recent productions at the Goodman Theatre and the Pittsburgh Public Theater, Wilson altered his method of revising his plays in a way that seems intended to insure the integrity of his work. He is now doing most of his revisions as an organic part of the rehearsal process, which enables him to open himself to input from the many black theater artists with whom he works and, at the same time, free himself from the kind of external pressure that his former process entailed. Previously, he did most of his rewriting immediately following a production, so that the revisions were more likely to have been shaped by prospective management, the public, and by the critical response to the play. Now that the bulk of his revisions are done

during rehearsal, Wilson does not redraft his plays immediately after they open and are reviewed, but instead, he waits until the play goes into rehearsal for its next production. In the case of *Jitney*, that meant a delay of almost a full year. Thus, Wilson has more time to filter or maybe to forget the public and critical response. Still, if Wilson's plays continue to follow the route to which he has become accustomed, he knows his next venue will be a large regional theater within the white establishment, financially dependent on strong box office, and tuned into word from the critics.

Ultimately, Wilson will have to decide whether the style, structure, and content of his plays are to be affected by the need to fill theaters that accommodate audiences so large that they will inevitably be multiracial. Will that mean, as he himself said it did in his speech, that he must then make a choice between art "that is conceived and designed to entertain white society and art that feeds the spirit and celebrates the life of black Americans by designing its strategies for survival and prosperity"?²⁸ Again, Wilson's words and deeds clash.

Although Wilson's Princeton speech seems to deny the possibility that any playwright who seeks a white audience can simultaneously speak powerfully to a black audience, his own plays suggest otherwise. And he seems almost willfully blind to the reasons his work might appeal to a white audience. Explaining his popularity with white audience in sociological terms, Wilson says:

The rush is on to do anything that's black. Largely through my plays, what the theaters have found out is that they had this white audience that was starving to get a little understanding of what was happening with the black population, because they very seldom come into contact with them so they're curious. The white theaters have discovered that there is a market for that.²⁹

But it is doubtful that the white audience response to Wilson's plays is merely enthusiastic voyeurism, issuing from "curiosity" about a remote people. And it is unlikely that this is all Wilson intends. Certainly Wilson creates plays which "feed the spirit and celebrate the life of black Americans." His plays are a vital encapsulation of African-American history and contemporary life. They are quests for historical and spiritual truths and they are very specific to the African-American experience. But Wilson himself recognizes that "being a black artist does not mean that you have to disengage yourself from the world, and your concerns as a global citizen or from the ideas of love, honor, duty, betrayal, etc., that are the concerns of all great art."³⁰

White audiences attend Wilson's plays precisely because he has not disengaged himself from universal concerns and ideas. He may claim, in the course of arguing for separate theaters, that "we can meet on the common ground of theater . . . but we cannot meet on the common ground of experience,"³¹ but racially diverse audiences come to Wilson's plays because he has succeeded in creating powerful dramas recognizable to all who encounter them; they come because he can simultaneously feed both the black and white spirit. Black audiences will continue to support Wilson regardless of where his work is produced. And, in spite of his call for separatism, white theaters and their predominantly white audiences will continue to support Wilson as well. As expressed by critic Michael Scassera, "Wilson need not consider his work universal for it to be so."³²

The early drafts of all of Wilson's plays—heard for the first time at New Dramatists or the O'Neill Playwrights Conference or the Yale Rep or the Goodman Theatre—were powerful and moving. Many plays by other playwrights begin and end their theatrical lives in this nascent state. But over months and years, Wilson revises, experiments, focuses, redefines, in response to opinions from many conflicting voices. The result—dramatic texts very close to the original vision in the strength, energy, and depth of their message, and yet very far in style and commercial viability—speak to the influence of the American play development system, for better or for worse.

Wilson has consistently received powerful input from artists whose tendency was to push the playwright to include traditional elements of western drama. And Wilson understands that this input, about which he warns other black theater artists in his keynote address, is the same input which has helped transform his work into drama that has found large, enthusiastic audiences. Indeed, it is unlikely that a young writer who follows Wilson's words and not his deeds will achieve his prominence.

Whether directors, dramaturgs, critics, audience members, or actors have in any way limited Wilson's work, the collaborative process in which he has participated has resulted in great critical and commercial success for him. It is difficult to dismiss pressure that leads to extraordinary audience response as well as two Pulitzer Prizes. Wilson himself expresses no regrets. Reviewing his work, he claims, "I ain't sorry for nothin' I done."³³

Thus Wilson has come to terms with the existing American theater and learned to work within it. But he has not done so without question—not without raising issues about its foundations and not without calling for change. If, indeed, success in the contemporary theater in any way mandates the moderation of an individual voice, then the process through which plays come to production on our stages needs to be reformed. The issues of loss of cultural identity are profound

and despite a certain discordance between what he says and what he does, Wilson is a worthy leader of “a movement to reignite and reunite our people’s positive energy for a political and social change.”³⁴

Notes

1. August Wilson, “The Ground on Which I Stand,” Wilson’s keynote address of June 26, 1996 to the Theatre Communications Group National Conference, reprinted in *American Theatre*, September, 1996: 71.
2. Wilson 73.
3. August Wilson, “August Wilson Responds,” *American Theatre* (October 1996): 105
4. Suzan-Lori Parks quoted in Henry Louis Gates, “Chitlin Circuit,” *New Yorker* (3 February 1997): 47. Ms. Parks’s plays are most often produced at black theaters.
5. Wilson, “The Ground on Which I Stand” 72.
6. Wilson, “August Wilson Responds” 105.
7. Tom St. George, interview conducted by the author, January, 1994. Mr. St. George has also worked as a dramaturg at several professional theaters.
8. Michael Feingold, interview conducted by the author, January, 1994.
9. Feingold interview.
10. Gitta Honegger, interview conducted by the author, January, 1994.
11. Honegger interview.
12. Lloyd Richards, interview conducted by the author, January, 1994.
13. Feingold interview.
14. Honegger interview.
15. Honegger interview. The term “well-made play,” is a translation of the French *pièce bien faite* and referred originally to a form of play, codified by Eugene Scribe (1791–1861), which thrives on causal events, logical resolution, and action which consistently meets audience expectations. The term has come into common theatrical usage referring to a play written according to the traditional formula.
16. Richards interview.
17. Richards interview.
18. August Wilson, “The Ground on Which I Stand” 14.
19. Feingold interview.
20. Gerald Bordman, *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992) 718.
21. Don B. Wilmeth, *Cambridge Guide to American Theatre* (New York: U of Cambridge P, 1995) 1201.
22. Wilson, “The Ground on Which I Stand” 73.
23. Gates 47.
24. Robert Brustein, “Subsidized Separatism,” *The New Republic* (October 1996): 27.
25. Ricardo Khan quoted in Frank Bruni, “From the Wings, a Prayer: A Black Troupe Improvises,” *The New York Times*, 12 February 1997: C1.
26. Wilson interview 1997.
27. August Wilson quoted in Don Shirley, “Colorblind Casting has Wilson Seeing Red,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 1 September 1996, Calendar Section: 46.
28. Wilson, “The Ground on Which I Stand” 16.
29. Quoted in Gates 48.
30. Wilson, “August Wilson Responds” 106.
31. Wilson, “The Ground on Which I Stand” 71.
32. Michael Scassera, “In the Driver’s Seat, August Wilson and *Jitney*,” *Performing Arts* (November 1997): 17.

33. Wilson, interview conducted by the author, February 1994.
34. Wilson, "The Ground on Which I Stand" 73.

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