Conclusion

Ever since the arrival of the African-Americans in 1619, black people have been victims of the horror of Euro-American centre. This centre – white, Christian, masculine, capitalistic western narrative – has been wreaking havoc on ‘the other’ people, relentlessly annexing their rights, denying them humanity and essential human emotions, sentiments, needs and drives, invalidating their baggage of cultural practices: songs, rituals, tales, music etc. and reducing them to the status of commodity, property and beasts. This Euro-American centre measures the world with its own yardstick. But this narcissistic centre becomes more lethal when its monologue or ‘discourse-on-the-altar’ starts invalidating and not even acknowledging the existence, richness and significance of the parallel alternative centres or narratives. Wilson’s theatre is an attempt to redefine this centre, counter-narrate the history, to remove the veil from the horrors of the colossal Euro-American centre and show how this centre has muffled the polyphony of the alternative centres/narratives. By redefining this centre, Wilson attempts to restore dignity, respect and recognition to the humanity and experiences of the black people in America. The study suggests how owing to his clairvoyance in penetrating and presenting a reality that is timeless and temporal both at the same time, imparting a humanistic and positive vision, Wilson deserves to be considered amongst the ranks of great playwrights of America.

Wilson’s claim of redefining the centre perplexes the reader as he comes with a cultural signifier – African-American – that has inherent structural contradictions that register aversion to the idea or notion of centricity. The idea appears all the more problematic when one sets out to see how Wilson reconciles or establishes the African-American centre: can the black people be Africans without being Americans in the contemporary Post-modern world; can they erode their roots, history and culture and become Americans at the cost of their Africanness or is Wilson fathoming the new possibilities of negotiations between Africanism and Americanism? The study reveals that Wilson relocates the centre on the hyphenated space, African-American, remaining attendant to the negotiations, dialogues, fluidity and to-and-fro this space and this identity involve. This ethnic and cultural hyphenation itself defies the western capitalistic
Wilson believes that life’s complexity, richness, vibrancy, range and depth cannot be arrested and defined in such reductive measures of the Euro-American culture. This manichean outlook myopically accesses and perceives the experiences of the black people. This further leaves the Euro-American culture incapable of recognising and appreciating the beauty, richness, and vibrancy of the African-American people. Life and phenomena are far more inclusive, complex and consistent to be perceived and explained in uni-dimensional juxtapositions of manichean discourse. This one-dimensional approach and its imposition on the African-Americans galvanized Wilson to trace and show that the African-American culture is far richer, deeper, dynamic and vital than perceived and presented by the western discourse.

Wilson’s theatre and aesthetics indicate that he believes in acknowledging the validity and significance of those who have been pushed to the margins not only by the white mainstream culture but by the elites and celebrities of African-American community also. Historians tend to trace the trajectory of African-American annals through great and renowned names and figures. This tendency literally relegates the common black people, their experiences, emotions, problems and survival to non-entities. But Wilson brings all these common black people in the centre of his theatre, makes them heroes and villains, giving them minor as well as major roles, thus lending richness through a multi-dimensional treatment. His aesthetics constructs complex characters in a variety of roles, thus challenging and redefining the mainstream canon of drama that had been assigning only minor, uni-dimensional, simplistic roles to the black people. Further, to counter the mainstream assumptions that black life and aesthetics are tangential to the white canon, Wilson reduces the number of white characters in his plays. Unlike revolutionary dramatists who used their theatre to project the lines of conflict between the white and the black, his theatre resists this simplistic treatment of black life and aesthetics. The study reveals that Wilson has created a rich battery of characters, be they white or black. Although he keeps most of the white characters offstage, those who occupy the stage are also not stock characters – necessarily evil and supremacists. If Wilson has created the supremacists like Sturdyvant and Sutter, his characters also make references to good and noble-hearted whites like abolitionists and Sutter’s wife. His
concept of dramatic personae thus transcends the narrow race and propaganda politics. It also undermines the reductive ways of looking at the black men and women. They are good, evil and sometimes a complex of diverse range of emotions. Wilson clinically captures and dramatizes the inner realities of human nature holistically. His characters evolve through the course of the drama as their psyche, behaviour, choices and actions are shaped by their interaction with their racial-cultural realities. Consequently, they react and respond to their conditions in their respective peculiar styles. Troy, Berniece, Boy Willie, Harmond Wilks, Sterling, Risa and Rose all are complex characters who grow through the action and course of drama. Wilson’s penetrative observation and presentation of the most elemental and instinctual truths of human behaviour and personalities transform them into something with which spectators/readers, irrespective of their caste, class, race, gender and creed, identify and appreciate.

Wilson’s drama unearths and defies several vectors of Euro-American centre. His characters are pitted against the overarching racial hegemony that wreaks havoc on the African-American people by floating derogatory myths and stereotypes about their identity, institutions and cultural practices. This racial canon rends the sense of self and integrity of the black people. Wilson’s construction of Sutter’s ghost in *The Piano Lesson* testifies to his vision that white hegemony is present everywhere but is perceptible to the black people only. It is through black people’s reactions, strategies, decisions and choices that Wilson explores the various possibilities, shades and dimensions of African-American identity. He outrightly critiques Marcus Garvey’s brand of African-centrism. Wilson makes this statement through Hedley (*Seven Guitars*). Wilson’s idea of human identity is dynamic and interactive and ever-evolving. In his view, after spending such a long time on the American soil, after tilling this wilderness with their blood and sweat to make it modern day America, blacks are entitled to the benefits and civil rights promised by the American Constitution to all its citizens. He also stresses that during this long stay in America, the African-American identity has acquired certain ways of talking, surviving and celebrating their experiences here in totality – ranging from voyage across the Atlantic to inhuman experiences in America under slavery through Emancipation to Civil Rights to the ascension of Colin Luther Powell, the first black, to the position of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and also Secretary of State; Condoleezza Rice, the black
woman, Secretary of State – constitute the African-American being. And following Garvey’s brand or exclusive adherence to the African pole of identity would be a denial of this very vital aspect of their being. King Hedley blames the white man for everything and glorifies everything black. Consequent upon the denial of an inevitable part of his being, he seems to have lost touch with reality. He wanders like a mad man. It also highlights that Wilson possesses and employs a very objective and clinical sensibility in penetrating the inner recesses of human psyche and its nature.

The study also underscores that Wilson does not see human identity as fixity, a monolith, impervious to external cultural environs. His theatre evinces the ramifications of embracing exclusively the mainstream American cultural ethics to survive or to attain the civil, professional and cultural benefits extended by American society. Such people internalize the American canon that denigrates every aspect of African-American self, identity, family, community and culture. To appease the white bosses and fellows to get normal reception and assimilation, they develop hatred, disgust and frustration for their own culture for their own being. But Wilson captures the hazardous nuances of this ‘intra-group othering’ or ‘defensive othering’ by these assimilationists and their failure in escaping the double bind of oppressed identities. Owing to their skin color, genetic structure and roots, a complete comfortable assimilation in the mainstream culture would remain elusive and chimerical. Such people have to undergo alienation, anxiety, loneliness, and other existential problems. Wilson highlights these ramifications in the cases of West, Caesar Wilks and Roosevelt Hicks. This denial of one’s culture and roots alienated Caesar not only from the community but from his own family. This Century Cycle further reveals how this denial comes at the cost of withering of human sentiments, fellow feelings and brotherhood. West’s making money by burying the fellow blacks also bespeaks how material desire and avarice have seeped into the mind and personality of such characters.

Wilson makes it quite clear that he identifies himself and the black people in America with the African ethnic culture in America ever since the first African set foot on the this continent. “Africa” or “African” does not refer to the continent as space; rather it signifies or functions as a trope to refer to culture, mores, values, rituals and
experiences of those black people who were forcibly brought to America. Unlike Garvey and others who promoted a retreat to Africa, Wilson employs “Africa” as a cultural-spiritual-ethnic totality, a ‘ritual,’ ‘a dance’ a “song” that American slavery tried to extinguish. This idea has been embodied aesthetically in *Gem of the Ocean* where Aunt Ester comes for the first time on the stage. She is the embodiment of the black life and experiences and claims to have been born in 1619, the year first African-Americans were brought to America. Aunt Ester facilitates a reconnection and redemption of the black people by making them revisit the “City of Bones.” This “City of Bones” also refers to the deaths and remains of those blacks who died on their voyage to America. Thus, Aunt Ester and the rituals she performs make it clear that ‘African’ is a cultural trope, a totality, a centre, and blacks in America must acknowledge it to survive meaningfully in America.

Wilson does not profess/preach a selective or discriminatory approach to history, identity and roots. Rather, he advocates embracing of all the experiences, events and upheavals that constitute the present day African-American culture. Conversant with the problems and dangers inherent in such an approach, Wilson creates plays and characters that are pitted against such dilemma – what to do with history? The study shows that slavery is as essential a constituent element of black identity as the Emancipation, Harlem Renaissance and Civil Rights Movement are. Wilson addresses this voluntary amnesia of history and slavery, shared by many blacks, and shows that it is bound to arrest their growth and development as integrated individuals and self-respecting community. Berniece and the Charles family face the white threat of Sutter until she realizes the vital significance of her history and roots. Boy Willie also chides her and encourages her to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation. Wilson’s treatment of the past, history and slavery evinces his holistic view and perception of life.

Again Wilson’s insistence on reality as a dynamic, organic and ever-evolving organism can be seen in his construction of African-American canon. His theatre counters the myth that different identities and cultures can be inherently opposite and antagonistic by virtue of being different. He subverts the myopic vision of the Euro-American centre which strictly forbids the experiences, contributions and cultural
practices of the other. Wilson criticizes this reductive approach by constructing an African-American value system that is holistic, inclusive, evolutionary and redemptive. He shows that African-American people should embrace and use their (in)human experiences during slavery to face the present-day problems of white society. Solly always carries the chain links that shackled him during slavery; Aunt Ester uses her “Bill of Sale” as a boat to redeem and reconnect the anguished black people, by visiting the “City of Bones.” Wilson’s mythopoeia is an assortment of rich, diverse, polyphonic experiences of the black people in America. These “chain links,” “Bill of Sale” and “song” are American interactions with the black culture and African-Americans must subscribe to them in totality. Similarly, by carving the image of the Charles family on the piano, a seemingly European instrument is transformed into a symbol of African-American family, history and struggle.

A commendable aspect of Wilson’s art is that it reveals the inner realities, frustrations, instincts and laughter of black people, unhindered by his explicit cultural project. Despite the cultural and social degradations, his characters reveal their human self. Instead of exposing the structures of exploitations and their agents, Wilson zeroes in on how it affects the life, mental health, personal integrity, family unit and social images of the black people. His characters find solace, redemption and home in the recognition of their roots, heritage, self and culture. Wilson’s theatre suggests that their ethnic culture never fails to alleviate their anxieties, but this redemption and alleviation must be initiated by individuals. Aunt Ester asserts that black people have their centre, this song, this “City of Bones” within themselves, all they have got to do is realize it and identify it. Citizen, Black Marry, Memphis, Sterling and Harmonds do it, whereas West and Roosevelt fail to recognize it. But this realization of the “centre” or “song” or identity is quite different in Wilson’s drama from the Euro-American capitalistic glorification of self. Their identities and personalities are rooted in their culture and ethnicity and in those blacks who share this concern. Wilson abhors the materialistic self-aggrandizement and prescribes the ethics of community, sharing, brotherhood and fellow feeling. For Solly, individual means nothing so long as his fellow blacks are forced into slavery in the south. Individualism and self-aggrandizement are the logical ramifications of the Euro-American capitalism and its narcissism.
Capitalistic ideology, an interacting vector with racism, homogenizes the black community as a classless, identical, ill-mannered, degraded, unsophisticated and uneducated group of people, manifesting the ‘orientalist’ inclination of dis-recognizing the dynamism, plurality, variety, discreteness, cultural and artistic drives of the African-Americans in order to ensure their participation in the process of their own subordination. Debunking this myth, Wilson constructs a gallery of characters in his Century Cycle hailing from diverse walks of life. They are engaged in different occupations, trying to make it “big.” His spectrum includes characters of different educational and professional levels: from share croppers and mill workers to realty developers and businessmen; from seemingly dispossessed and disenfranchised to mayoral candidates and potential press representatives of the Governor; from celebrity singers, and struggling musicians to gamblers, murderers, athletes, cab-driver, number players, farmers and garbage pickers. Their diversity resists the attempts of compartmentalization of the black people into the same class.

Wilson shows the hazardous ramifications of the myth of class and American dream. American dream necessitates adherence to certain capitalistic procedures and value system. Wilson questions the politics and ambiguity of American dream. American capitalistic culture floats this dream with implicit dubiousness – happiness and prosperity on the one hand and on the other relentless frustration at the impossibility of accomplishing this dream through structural and institutional discrimination. Further, as this dream is rooted in white capitalistic value system, it tends to uproot the black people from their community, family, history and self. His theatre is a bold refusal of this myth. He underlines the fact that in every walk of life, the upward social mobility is countered and checked by the white capitalism. Roosevelt Hicks, Caesar, Sturdyvant and some other characters in Wilson’s drama act as the agents of the capitalistic exploitation and a very large number of black characters remain exploited. Race, gender and class notwithstanding the class structures move at their own pace.

Wilson’s drama systematically debunks the myth of American Dream and upward social mobility as available to all. African-Americans’ pursuit of this myth is always underscored by threat to their ethnicity, roots, cultural mores and black self. Wilson re-
examines the relevance and validity of capitalism, consumerism, money and luxury as the core indicators of status, and happiness. This American Dream that measures happiness and status in terms of accumulation of wealth even commodifies the relations and fellow feelings, thus distancing and alienating the aspiring blacks not only from the black community, but from their genuine and essential human self. The dramatic conceptualization of characters like Roosevelt, West, Caesar and Levee and the intersection of these individuals with the surrounding institutional set up vindicates Wilson’s critical stance. Wilson’s theatre not only alienates such characters from other characters, but distances and drowns them in the estimation of the audiences. His assignment of antagonistic roles to such characters ensures that their material possession and accomplishments are never eulogized and celebrated. It also keeps them outside Wilson’s redemptive model for the African-American community.

Wilson’s redefinition replaces the self with community. His message is that blind pursuit of materialism is detrimental to their self. Through the personae of Aunt Ester, Wilson defies capitalistic norms of money, possession, accumulation, power, elitism and superiority in a very subtle manner. Wilson’s view is pantheistic that sees world without neat hierarchies. These hierarchies evaluate and assign value and status to everything in terms of monetary and market value. Consequently, middle classes flaunt their elitism in terms of tidiness, cleanness, grammatically correct English, and sophisticated food habits in contrast to the dirty, dusty and working class. Through Aunt Ester and Solly, Wilson shows the accommodative African-American culture that sees nothing as trivial, petty and below standard. Wilson further underlines the eco-centric worldview of the African-American community that reveres the co-existence of all creatures, let alone human beings, in contrast to capitalistic American rhetoric of man’s superiority over nature. Ma is committed to the welfare of her band members. Jim Becker too sees his jitney station as a service provider to black community and society at large. Sterling ensures a posthumous redemption of Hambone who lived a life of dispossession and denial.

But through this critique Wilson doesn’t mean that blacks can waive off materialistic advancement. They must dream “big” and work hard for it. He recognizes their needs and sets his characters in confrontational conditions where they are forced by
the pulls of both of their identities to maintain integrity from being “torn asunder.” He understands the importance of modern education and training to realize one’s dreams. Wilson subscribes to the American part of their identity which grants certain democratic civil rights to all Americans. He encounters the popular myths and perceptions that see African-American as outsiders and others. His characters take recourse to court, police and other authorities to ensure their dues are not snatched from them. He proposes implicitly an African-American Dream that validates the pursuit of material advancement while remaining rooted in black ethnicity. This Dream, in contrast to capitalism, acknowledges the contribution of those who remain at home. Thus, women like Rose through their economy of emotions and instincts, contribute to their household. Adherence to African-American Dream recognizes the need of balance between needs and dreams of the individuals and their duties, responsibilities towards community, family and self. It also locates the centre of their life within themselves, giving them a fair, humanistic and emotional idea of themselves as well as the world around. Underlying paradoxes also inform Wilson’s challenge and redefinition of the centre. The dominant Euro-American centre perceives the pursuit of money as upward social movement. But for African-American Dream, this pursuit has to be accompanied by the ethnic concerns of history, heritage, roots and shared past. Consequently, Wilson’s dramaturgy, inherently ethnocentric, constructs the black middle class assimilationists’ economic and financial elevation as the downfall, a fall in an endless abyss where only loneliness, desolation and alienation awaits them. Whereas, Wilson reconfigures the fall of those affluent blacks, who recognise their roots and heritage and face the threat of the mainstream capitalistic system aesthetically as birth, rise and integration. Wilson thus redefines the dominant ideology, myth of the American Dream and classism.

Wilson’s project also entails questioning, exposing, challenging and redefining another meta-narrative, i.e. gender. Wilson transcends the fallacious interpretations of gender and patriarchy as systems that exploit women only. His penetrative gaze explores the intersecting forces of racism, classism, gender and sexism and reveals how they marginalize and exploit all the products of gender of the African-American community. The study reveals that black males are exploited by the archetypal manhood – native-born, white, hetero-sexual, and middle class – established by the Euro-American
capitalist culture, further cowering them under the load of psychohistory that configures black males as irresponsible and castrated inhuman figures. Attentive to the subjugation of black manhood to diverse forces of stigmatized masculinity, dominant and elusive masculinity, pervasive masculinity, co-opting masculinity with diverse range of derogatory stereotypes, Wilson conceptualizes through his theatre a masculine code that is counterproductive to the mainstream evaluation of the black men only as a problem.

Wilson criticizes “Paradigmatic black men,” who submit their manhood before the white patriarchs with the hope of winning their favour. At the same time, they tend to recuperate and compensate this degradation of their human self by asserting authority and power over poor black masses. Caesar and Roosevelt, for example, manifest the symptoms and aetiology of this malaise. Wilson shows the ramifications of this voluntary partial castration and emasculation which keeps them outside his resurrective manhood model. He further counters such self-centred brands of masculinity that grow apathetic towards fellow blacks. Floyd Barton and Levee, for example, embody this cultural code thereby helping Wilson question the capitalistic manhood and the one in the vogue during the 60s Civil Rights Movement that see aggression and violence as essential masculine behaviours. He underlines the fact that for the radical and integrating movement to be meaning-endowing, rage, aggression, energy and violence have to be tempered and guided by the African-American values and traditions leading thereby to larger good of the community.

Wilson’s gallery entails a range of such male characters who are set to make it “big,” but their bigness is integrating, inclusive, rooted and integrated. Boy Willie dreams of purchasing the land of Sutter, and reverse the relation of his family with their previous white master. Memphis too wants to move back to the south and reclaim his land from Stovall and his gang. These figures represent those who undergo a psychological incarceration and reclaiming their land is the only panacea to their predicament. Their manhood is not imitative and self-denying since it emanates from within, enforcing a cultural integration. Similarly defying the dominant myth of capitalistic narcissism, Harmond adopts a black ethnic masculinity as it is defined and governed by his commitment to the larger good and not the pejorative capitalistic personal self-interest.
Wilson exposes the politics behind the black man’s stereotypes as an irresponsible, careless patriarch and hence such characters do not find the dramatic and the structural support in his drama. Being sensitive of adverse circumstances, he creates characters like Sterling and Boy Willie who don’t want to have children as the newborn would remain in trouble in such hostile society. At the same time, he also creates characters who face many troubles and travails so that their kids can have a good and respectable life. Troy Maxson, Jim Becker, Harold Loomis and Papa Boy Charles all reflect this facet of the range of Wilson’s dramatic personae. These characters remain rooted in quite Afro-centric ethnic conditions and patterns, thus liberating the black masculinity from seeing the white patriarchy as the desirable idol. Wilson’s redefinition accesses the most intimate and instinctual aspects of his male character, sex. The mainstream canon sees the black man’s sexuality in ambiguous terms: either he is stereotyped as sexual beast, a predator, always incapable of harnessing his libido, or as an impotent and castrated figure. This castration is further expandable to his role and image in the black family and society. Wilson’s approach reveals that such stereotypes are the products of white man’s phobia of black man’s heightened and superior libido, and their desire to stimulate in the blacks inferiority complex. Wilson assents that sex as an act and discourse is tinged in racial and patriarchal colors. It becomes a domain of power and authority where repressed and bruised masculine pride seeks manifestation and recognition in assertive and authoritative manners. Levee’s sexual bravado, desperation and recourse to aggressive sexual metaphors are suggestive of his troubled psycho-sexual childhood experiences. Levee’s mother’s rape is also an attempt of the white people to show a respectable and decent black man his place in the society. Wilson’s oeuvre challenges the simplistic and unidimensional assessment of such a vital instinct. He uses it as a metaphor, a field to show the psychological scars of the black males. Harold Loomis blasphemes the Holy Ghost by unzipping his pants and attempting to outsize him with his genitals. Troy’s intercourse with Rose is permeated by his responsibility and duty, whereas with Alberta, it is a remedial act which allows Troy reinstate and establishing his manhood, alleviating his anxieties and heeling his bruises. The study reveals that women also act as nuclei in his project of redefinition. Wilson claims his matrilineal heritage as against the dominant patriarchal discourse. Many of his black
women characters are shackled by the intersecting discourses of race, class, gender and sex, and like their male counterparts they too come to realize that majority of ways of resistance available to them have been codified stereotypically to pre-empt any reversal of values. Thus, Wilson’s redefinition explores new dimensions and strategies of resistance for black woman’s liberation.

In this way, Wilson exposes the politics of concept of beauty by making his female characters resists the discriminatory and oppressive system of beauty and womanhood as Ma Rainey adorns herself lavishly in “royal fashion” with certain pride of being encased in a beautiful black body. Wilson also defies the commodification of black woman as a passive object of male’s desire in making Risa perform her “ritual of scarring” and demand not to be interpreted merely in terms of her physical assets. Through this ‘ritual’, Wilson puts forward the complex relationship between primordial African cultural mores intersecting with the late twentieth century capitalistic mores which challenge and cancel each other and reinforce and validate each other simultaneously. This complex relationship acts as the platform where women characters’ assertion of the African ethnic values transcends and resists capitalistic structures. Wilson extends further the dynamics of resistance by showing that sex and sexuality assign to males the power, status and authority to categorize, control, dominate and use the supposedly passive female body and sexuality. Wilson recasts this proposition in making Ma Rainey seek liberation in lesbian bonding. Wilson thus re-writes through her body, gesture, style, song and authority the script of her integrated self-hood and identity.

Wilson further re-writes the definition of black family and the central role women play in this institution. He has created assertive, confident and mature women like Rose who define their selves from the point of view of family, sublimating the personal into familial. She knows her material rights but her understanding is informed by mutual love, concern and respect for individual differences. Mrs. Becker and Martha Pentecost are other such characters. The sense of self and identity of these women is firmly entrenched in their cultural roots and rituals. Wilson acknowledges women’s contribution in maintaining the black family in terms of their emotional, physical and intellectual assets as against capitalistic patriarchal system that invalidates domestic contributions of
women. They also trespass the domestic threshold to earn money to fend for themselves and for family. They are equally assertive, confident and multidimensional in the public domain as well. Ma Rainey and Mame’s characters establish Wilson’s positive propositions about black women and help him counter white capitalistic patriarchy and politics of the stereotypes they are caught in. Besides these attempts at redefining the gender in relation to black women on personal, familial and public fronts, Wilson further extends his redefinition to ethnic, cultural and spiritual levels, thereby displaying the central role women play in his scheme of things. Aunt Ester is the embodiment of African-American culture experience and wisdom. Through her, Wilson establishes once and for all that he sees the black culture in America as matrilineal one and in such a culture women are bound to play pivotal roles.

Wilson’s theatre registers a strong distrust and doubt over any adherence to exclusive identity parameters. His dramatization of a dynamic, evolutionary and complex identity shows that Wilson dives into the most primitive, authentic, realistic and humanistic recesses of human personality. Two egos are bound to interact and influence each other howsoever subtly and silently, irrespective of individual’s consent or intent. Wilson’s theatre is embodiment of African characters, rituals and ethics in America and their interaction and negotiation with the Euro-American culture/centre. Wilson probes deeper in the human psyche and his objective dissection manifests that African and American poles of identity shape, influence and color each other irrevocably despite their disgust and differences with each other. Any denial of such a vital aspect of one’s personality would be detrimental for any people. This realization, transcending his own bitter experiences of Euro–American centre, coaxes Wilson to galvanise black people to embrace the totality of their experience and presence in America – racism and slavery, American dream and capitalism, stigmatizations as beasts and inhuman along with Emancipation proclamation, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement and attitudinal potentialities of the complex contemporary American culture and politics. However, his theatre exorcises the ghosts of negation, denial and amnesia of black people towards their roots, history and legacy as well as makes them see and realize the importance of their American experiences and their legitimate entitlement to the promises of American Constitution to all its citizens. And the reception of the dramatization of African–
American centre/culture in mainstream American theatre shows Wilson’s prowess in architecting the drama that is particular and general at the same time. His challenge and redefinition of the centre is deeply entrenched in his understanding of human nature beyond or under politics of cultures, ethnicities, colors, genders, classes and beliefs. That’s why, his definition is more inclusive, realistic and humanistic. Realizing the exigencies of surviving in a culture of hostility, indifference, competition, capitalism and materialism, Wilson perceives the pursuit of wealth, ‘bigness’ and power as normal and inevitable. But this pursuit and participation in the mainstream culture should not be governed by Euro–American centre. Wilson urges the black people to remain true to their roots, history and culture, the African part of their identity, thus locating the centre in their very black being and heritage and making them feel right with themselves.

But his project of redefinition doesn’t aim exclusively on the black audiences whom he claims to orientate. He, as an African-American playwright, executes his duty in galvanizing the white people about the havoc that Euro–American centre wreaked on the lives of black people because it is as important to define the centre from the African-American perspective for the black people as making the mainstream white people recognise and respect the validity and difference of ‘other’ cultures like African-American. In order for redefinition, difference, plurality, democracy, negotiation and polyphony to become normal part of American culture, participation of all the stakeholders is necessary. Unless this culture of participation, mutual respect becomes a norm, the marginal communities are likely to keep facing hate crimes. Wilson saw that the ascension of Condoleezza Rice and Colin Luther Powell changed nothing so far as common African-American’s life was concerned. Thus, he could foretell the events after his death that a black man’s becoming the President of America would remain immaterial if conscious and active endeavours are not undertaken to stall the unicentric culture and spreading the democratic ethics of equality, liberty and fraternity. And like a great artist, Wilson does not make any definitive and final statement on the issue of centre and its politics, rather like a soothsayer, he shows the possibilities through a theatre that is interpretive and creative.
Works Consulted


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