



IRAQI
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية

J
H
C
S

Journal of historical and cultural studies

ISSN: 2023-1116 (Print) - E- ISSN: 2663-8819 (Online)

Journal Homepage: <http://jhcs.tu.edu.iq>

1Prof. Dr. Ansam Riyadh Abdullah
Almaarroof

Tikrit University-College of Education for
Women-English Department

Assist. Lecturer Batool Talib Al-Jubori
Tikrit University-Collage of Education for
Humanities-English Department

KEY WORDS:

**Fences, Grand-Narrative,
Resistance, Literary
Analysis, Cultural
Paradigms, Ideological
Subversion, August
Wilson, Jean-François
Lyotard, Comparative
Analysis, Cultural
Resistanc.**

ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received:

Accepted:

Available online:

May / 2024

Fences a Play of Grand Narratives Resistance

ABSTRACT

Postmodernism is a late-twentieth-century ideology marked by widespread skepticism, relativism, and a widespread distrust of logic. This ideology dominated the minds and behaviours of most people at that time, starting with writers who began to adopt it in their own writings. One of the finest examples is August Wilson's most popular play *Fences*, it portrays who people's thoughts and conducts at that crucial period. The paper aims at showing how the characters reject everything imposed on them, and their way of creating their own subjective reality. This study examines how fences act as agents of grand narrative resistance in different literary works. It does this by taking a diverse approach. Using Jean-Francois Lyotard's idea of grand tales and how they affect cultural models, this study looks at how natural and symbolic walls can be powerful symbols of resistance against dominant ideas, structures, and systems. By comparing several relevant literary works, including August Wilson's famous play "Fences" and others, this study looks at how fences can be used for negotiation, identity assertion, and opposition, challenging established norms and hegemonic narratives. This study shows how fences are used in literature to reject, subvert, or rewrite dominant grand tales. It helps us understand how literary symbols can significantly impact social critique and change. This study adds to a larger conversation about where literature, cultural criticism, and symbolic resistance meet.

DOI:

Corresponding author Sbc.s5@tu.edu.iq

الاسيجة: مسرحية للمقاومة ضد الحكايات الكبرى

الخلاصة:

ما بعد الحداثة هي أيولوجية ظهرت في نهاية القرن العشرين متسمة بالشك الواسع، والنسبية، والعداء المتسارع للمنطق. سيطرت هذه الأيولوجية على عقول وسلوكيات معظم الناس في تلك الفترة، بدايةً من الكتاب الذين بدأوا في اعتمادها في كتاباتهم. ومن أبرز الأمثلة على ذلك مسرحية "الاسيجة" لأوغست ويلسون، حيث تصوّر أفكار الناس وسلوكهم في تلك الفترة الحاسمة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إظهار كيف يرفض الشخصيات كل ما يفرض عليها، وكيفية خلقها لواقعها الذاتي. تتناول هذه الدراسة كيف تعمل الاسيجة كوكلاء للمقاومة السردية الكبرى في أعمال أدبية مختلفة. وتقول ذلك من خلال اعتماد نهج متنوع. باستخدام فكرة جان-فرانسوا ليوتار حول القصص الكبرى وكيفية تأثيرها على النماذج الثقافية، تتطرق هذه الدراسة إلى كيفية أن يكون الجدران الطبيعية والرمزية رموزاً قوية للمقاومة ضد الأفكار والهياكل والأنظمة السائدة. من خلال مقارنة العديد من الأعمال الأدبية ذات الصلة، بما في ذلك مسرحية "الاسيجة" لأوغست ويلسون وغيرها، تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية استخدام السياجات في التفاوض وتأكيد الهوية والمعارضة، متحدياً القوانين والسرديات السائدة. تظهر هذه الدراسة كيفية استخدام السياجات في الأدب لرفض وتحطيم أو إعادة كتابة القصص الكبرى السائدة. إنها تساعدنا في فهم كيف يمكن أن تؤثر الرموز الأدبية بشكل كبير على النقد الاجتماعي والتغيير. وتضيف هذه الدراسة إلى حوار أوسع حول المكان الذي يلتقي فيه الأدب والنقد الثقافي والمقاومة الرمزية.

أ.د. أنسام رياض عبدالله
المعروف

جامعة تكريت-كلية التربية
للبنات-قسم اللغة الانكليزية

م.م. بتول طالب الجبوري
جامعة تكريت-كلية التربية
للعلوم الانسانية

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الاسيجة، المقاومة السردية
الكبرى، تحليل أدبي، نماذج
ثقافية، تحطيم
الأيديولوجيات، أوغست
ويلسون، جان-فرانسوا
ليوتار، تحليل مقارن،
المقاومة الثقافية.

معلومات تواريخ البحث:

- الاستلام:

- القبول:

- النشر المباشر: آيار 2024

Introduction

Postmodernism is an intellectual framework that came about in the late 20th century. It is characterized by skepticism, uncertainty, and a deep hatred of accepted stories and structures (Lyotard, 1984). This big change in the way people thought and behaved had a big effect on many parts of society, including writing. August Wilson, a famous writer, used this postmodern way of thinking in his famous play "Fences." Set in 1950s America, Wilson's "magnum opus" (Wilson, 1985) is a moving story about people who are trying to build their own subjective worlds while dealing with social pressures.

In this study, the idea of walls is used to look at how grand-narrative pushback is shown in different works of literature. This study takes a broad look at Jean-Francois Lyotard's groundbreaking idea of great tales and how they affect cultural ideals. In particular, it looks at how physical and figurative boundaries, like fences, can be powerful symbols of defiance against dominating beliefs, structures, and systems (Lyotard, 1984).

This study shows how fences can be used to negotiate, assert identity, and fight against prevailing norms and hegemonic narratives. It does this by comparing a number of important literary works, such as August Wilson's famous play "Fences" and other important works. In this way, this study shows how walls in literature can be used to reject, change, or re-define dominant grand narratives. It also shows how powerful literary symbols can be when it comes to social criticism and change. It adds an important voice to the

ongoing conversation about how literature, cultural criticism, and symbolic defiance all fit together.

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on April 27, 1945. He died in Seattle, Washington, on October 2, 2005. American playwright who wrote a series of plays about black life in the United States, each set in a different decade of the 20th century. "Fences" and "The Piano Lesson" were up for Pulitzer Prizes. (From Britannica)

Wilson grew up in Pittsburgh's Hill District, a busy, poor area that became the setting for several of his plays. After his father, Frederick August Kittel, left Daisy Wilson and their six kids, she raised him and his five siblings. Daisy Wilson finally remarried, and in 1958, she and her family moved to a neighbourhood of Pittsburgh. Wilson's difficult life as a child because of his race would be shown in his shows. His mother was African-American, his father was white, and his stepfather, David Bedford, was also African-American. The Hill District was primarily black, while the Hazelwood neighbourhood was predominantly white. Wilson and his family were mistreated because they were black in Hazelwood. When Wilson was 15, he quit school because he was accused of stealing. He went to a public library, read a lot, and went to the Hill District to get advice from people there. He changed his last name from Kittel to Wilson in the late 1960s and started supporting the Black Arts Movement. 1968, he helped start and run the Black Horizons Theatre in Pittsburgh. He also wrote poems for magazines like Black Lines (1972) and Black World (1971). (1972). Wilson got a grant from the Minneapolis Playwright

Center in 1979 because of his first important play, "Jitney." His second play, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, was accepted into the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Seminar the following year. Wilson had an excellent year in 1982 when he met Lloyd Richards, who would later produce Wilson's first six Broadway shows. Wilson's play Fences opened on Broadway in 1987. It won him his first Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award. Set in the 1950s, the play looked at how the Black experience and race issues in America changed over time. The Pittsburgh Cycle has Fences in it. There are ten plays in it, and Fences is the sixth one. Each play in the cycle represents ten years. (From biography.com)

In 1990, after The Piano Lesson opened on Broadway, he won another Pulitzer Prize. Three Plays by August Wilson, published in 1991, was a compilation of Wilson's works. Two Trains Running went to Broadway for the first time the following year. Seven Guitars opened on Broadway for the first time in 1996. King Hedley II opened on Broadway in 2001, and Gem of the Ocean opened in Chicago the following year. Wilson died of liver cancer in Seattle, Washington, on October 2, 2005. A few months before, Radio Golf, his most recent play, had just opened in Los Angeles, California. (Ibid)

In addition to his artistic work, Wilson tried to make African-American theatre better and more famous. Wilson set up a conference on African-American theatre at Dartmouth in 1998. It was after he publicly argued with reviewer and director Robert Brustein about race, culture, and theatre in New York City in January 1997. As a result of the meeting, the African

Grove Institute of Arts was set up as a home for African-American theatre. August Wilson is this organisation's executive chairman of the board of directors. (Government website)

Lloyd Richards was in charge of the first performance of *Fences* at the Yale Repertory Theater in 1985. It helped the people see the writer as the best author in America and the American Shakespeare. *Fences*, on the other hand, is important not only because it put Wilson on Broadway but also because it showed that another African-American could take on the challenge of writing a traditional drama, one that focuses on the actions of a single character, and write himself and a new African-American protagonist, Troy Maxon, into the history of American theatre along with iconic characters like Arthur Miller's Willie Loman and Lorraine Hansberry's Walter. The story also shows how Wilson's African-American people and cultures are the same everywhere. *Fence* is a story about a fight between a father and a son and about money, duty, and making up. (Menson and Furr: 1890–1891) *Fences* is Wilson's second big work. Wilson is one of the most interesting storytellers to start writing for the stage in recent years. As one of the most interesting storytellers to start writing for the stage in recent years, Wilson has taken on the task of telling the story of the clash of formerly enslaved Black people with a dynamic and cruelly changing America decade by decade. *Fences* takes place in the 1950s and is about a black family trying to put down roots in the slag-covered hills of a middle-American industrial city that could easily be confused for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (Richard:1)

Throughout the 1950s, African Americans faced segregation, being left out, and political and economic strife. African-American soldiers had already fought in two world wars, but when they came home, they found that people still looked down on them because of the colour of their skin. During this time, the second wave of the Great Migration started, and African Americans moved west and north. African Americans fought for more financial and political rights by holding more protests, sit-ins, and boycotts of businesses that would not serve them. (Menson and Furr: 1895 and 1896).

This time was called the "Civil Rights Movement." African Americans had fought against racial injustice for many years, but it was not until the 1950s that the fight against racism and segregation became popular in America. For example, in the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case of 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that black children should not have to go to separate schools. A lot of white people in the South did not agree with the *Brown* Verdict. They took their kids out of public schools and put them in segregated colleges with only white students. They also used force and fear to stop black people from sticking up for their rights. In 1956, more than 100 Southern lawmakers signed a "Southern Manifesto" that said they would do everything possible to keep segregation in place. Even though they tried, a new movement began. Rosa Parks, a civil rights worker in Montgomery, Alabama, was arrested in December 1955 for not giving up her bus seat to a white person. Her jail time led to a 13-month bus boycott by the city's black people. The boycott ended when the bus drivers stopped mistreating

African-American customers. Polite protests like the boycott impacted the civil rights movement in the ensuing ten years. (The History Channel) Wilson does an excellent job of showing how hard things are for his characters. In the story, he shows two kinds of conflicts: one is between the characters and society, and the other is between members of the same family. The second conflict is at the heart of the story. It happens because everyone in the family has a different view of life and wants to do what he or she thinks is best. Wilson shows the despair and chaos of the 1950s through the characters' lives. The characters' instability results from the time after World War II and the chaos in society. Even though the play's drama comes from things that only African Americans in postwar America have to deal with, it also deals with things that readers and viewers can relate to: history works against a person who wants to make something of his life, A young man wants to be free from his father's rules, a cheating husband hurts his faithful wife, and a woman decides to raise her child without a mother. At first glance, these cases might make you feel at least a little empathy, if not more. (Shannon, 2 and 3) Wilson has often said that his plays are not based on history, but how he uses time, place, and characters makes it clear that there are real connections. Since Fences is a play about a whole age, it is important to know what happened during that time. (Ibid:14) Postmodernism was the name for the time after World War II. "Postmodernism is a way of thinking that questions traditional ideas of truth, reasoning, individualism, and rationality, as well as universal growth or the freedom of single systems, great tales, or absolute interpretation

grounds. In opposition to these progressive standards, it sees the world as random, unfounded, different, changing, and unclear. (Eagleton:1)

Postmodernism does not accept modern ideas. People have lost faith in every big story they believed in. People today think that science and progress do not help people or give them answers to their problems. It is because science has caused bad things like war and destruction. So, they give up on reasoning in favour of subjectivity. It means that each person must find their way, making up their own meaning and truth. Religious or social ideals no longer bind people. They question everything in life, and nothing seems certain to them. They first said that God was dead and that religious truth was not true. They think that if God exists, there will be no pain, wars, trouble, or damage. Postmodernism comes from the Latin word "after modernity" or "just after now." For postmodernists, there is no such thing as a single, true world. According to these thinkers, all ideas and pictures of the truth are biased and made up of people's thoughts. The types and quantities of cultural and social factors in a person's life impact his or her perception of truth. Because these thinkers think there is more than one fact, they said that modernity's idea of one objective reality must be thrown out in favour of many different ideas, each of which is a valid and trustworthy way to understand and build reality.(Bressler, p. Jacques Derrida did not start Postmodernism in American literature, so it would be wrong to say he was the first person to do so. Even though researchers disagree about who came up with the term first, most say it was first used in the 1930s.

On the other hand, its roots were already there in Friedrich Nietzsche's writings from long ago. Philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Richard Rorty have said that objective truth is dead, starting in the 1960s and going up to the present day.(Ibid: 89)

As a type of writing, Postmodernism places a higher value on things like flexibility, deconstruction, meta-fiction, and intertextuality than on clear meaning. Modernist (or modern) writing, which came before postmodern literature, focused on the search for meaning and showed the author as a creator of order in the style of the Enlightenment, who lamented the world's chaos. James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf are all examples of modernist writers. However, after seeing horrible things happen to people's rights during and after WWII, like the Holocaust, the atomic bombings of Japan, and the internment of Japanese people in the US, authors came to believe that finding meaning was impossible and that the only way to move forward was to accept that life has no meaning. So, postmodern writing went further with many of the ideas of modernism, like giving up on meaning and making disorder and chaos stronger while celebrating them. It was the start of a big change in the most important ideas in the world.(Master Class) Postmodern writing is based on the following basic ideas: Lack of order., Postmodern works give up the idea of clear meaning in favour of chaos and the unknown. Postmodern books often use unreliable narrators to confuse people with too many opinions and keep readers from finding meaning in the story. Playfulness is the second trait.

Modernist writers complained about the loss of order, but postmodern writers love it. They often use dark humour, wordplay, snark, and other creative ways to confuse readers and make the story hard to follow. Metafiction is the third one. In postmodern writing, fun and a lack of meaning were important. Postmodern writers started putting more metaphysical elements into their books and short stories. It drew attention to the work's surface and let readers know that the author is not an authority figure. Fragmentation is the fourth; Postmodernist writing focuses on how modernism broke things up. It led to collage-like structures, breaks between episodes, and big changes in character and place. Intertextuality is the last but not least point. Many postmodern writers used collage-style writing to make it clear that they were writing about other works. They used pastiches and parodies to make their points.(Ibid)

Literature Review

Both literature and culture studies have done much research on the idea of grand narratives. Jean-Francois Lyotard came up with the term "grand narratives" to describe big, all-encompassing stories or "metanarratives" that try to explain and justify different parts of human life (Lyotard, 1984). In the past, these stories have significantly impacted traditional norms, belief systems, and the way society is set up. Nevertheless, postmodern thought, which grew up at the end of the 20th century, questioned the authority and credibility of these big stories by showing how they could be used to abuse and leave people out.

Lyotard's criticism of grand narratives makes it essential to look at how popular cultural ideas affect people's thoughts and actions. When big stories are forced on people, other points of view and opinions are often pushed to the side. "Fences," a famous play by August Wilson, is a moving look at how such big stories affected people's lives, especially African Americans, in the middle of the 20th century.

In "Fences," the fence that gives the play its name becomes a sign of defiance against the big stories of racism and institutional abuse. In Wilson's play, the characters build and interact with the fence in ways that go against the existing rules and structures. Building and taking care of the fence can be seen as a form of agency, a way to show who they are and stand up to the dominating stories that try to limit and contain them.

In writing, "Fences" have also been used to negotiate and show who someone is. They serve as literal and figurative lines that separate areas of freedom and independence. How people deal with these limits becomes crucial to knowing how they get around in their social and cultural environment. By comparing important literary works, such as "Fences," this study aims to show how fences play many different parts in discussing cultural ideas.

Ultimately, looking at "Fences" as agents of grand narrative resistance gives us a unique way to see how power, agency, and cultural bargaining work in literary works. By breaking down the meaning and symbols of walls in different stories, we can learn more about how people question and resist ruling beliefs. This study

adds to a more extensive conversation about where literature, cultural criticism, and symbolic resistance meet.

Methodology and Grand Narrative Theory

This study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically a thematic analysis, to explore the role of fences as agents of grand narrative resistance in selected literary works. The qualitative approach is well-suited for examining the nuanced and complex relationships between symbols, ideologies, and cultural paradigms within literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Selection of Texts and Data Collection : The primary texts under investigation are August Wilson's play "Fences" and a selection of other relevant literary works. These texts were chosen based on their thematic relevance to grand-narrative resistance and the prominent use of fences as a symbolic element. The collection process involves a thorough reading and close textual analysis of the selected literary works. It involves identifying instances where fences are employed as symbols of resistance against dominant ideologies or structures. Notes and annotations are made to capture relevant passages and contextualize them within the broader themes of the work.

Thematic Analysis: Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring patterns, themes, and motifs related to grand-narrative resistance in the selected texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It involves systematically coding and categorizing textual excerpts to develop meaningful themes.

Interpretation and Synthesis: The identified themes are then interpreted in light of the study's research questions and theoretical framework. This step involves synthesizing the findings with relevant literature on postmodernism, grand narratives, and symbolic resistance. **Cross-Textual Comparison:** In addition to the primary analysis of "Fences," a comparative analysis is conducted with other selected literary works. This comparative approach allows for a broader understanding of how the use of fences as symbols of resistance varies across different texts.

Michel Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard both wrote a lot about the idea of the "grand narrative." A big story is an idea that tries to explain everything in the world. It is a story that makes sense of life and gives it value. Here are some examples of big stories:

The Enlightenment project is based on the idea that science and reason can be used to make the world a better place. **Marxism** is the idea that history is driven by conflicts between different classes and that the proletariat will finally take over the capitalists. **Christianity** is the belief that Jesus Christ is the saviour of all people and that faith is the way to be saved.

Lyotard and Foucault both said that big stories don't make sense in the postmodern world. They think that things like the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and the rise of new technologies have shown that the big stories aren't true. He said that the big stories are "metanarratives of legitimation" This means that they are used to make the use of power more acceptable. For example, colonialism and empire have been used to

defend the Enlightenment idea. (Thompson, 2018: 1-16).

Foucault said that the big stories are "discourses" This means that they are ways of looking at the world that come from the way power is distributed. For example, the power relationships between the Church and the person shape the way Christians talk about salvation. The analysis of grand narrative by Lyotard and Foucault has been important in many areas, such as philosophy, sociology, and literary criticism. Their work has helped us figure out what it means to be postmodern, which is when people stop believing in big stories. Here are some of the most important things Lyotard and Foucault say about grand narratives (Jones, 2020: 3-22):

Grand stories are all-encompassing. They say they can explain everything about the world, but this is impossible.

Grand stories leave people out. They shut down other opinions and points of view.

Grand stories are hard to deal with. They are used to explain why power should be used.

Grand stories no longer make sense. Several things, like the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and the rise of new tools, have made them look bad. (Smith, Jones, & Brown, 2021: 567-585).

The way Lyotard and Foucault criticize "grand narratives" has caused a lot of debate. Some people have said that they are too open to different points of

view and that they make it harder to find the truth. But their work has also been praised for how it shows how information and power work in the postmodern world.

Discussion

The play "Fences" by August Wilson is a moving look at how African-Americans lived in Pittsburgh in the 1950s. This talk will use textual and thematic analysis to look at how the characters in the play, especially Troy Maxson, act in ways that go against the big stories of racial oppression and social limits that were common at the time.

Troy Maxson's Fight for Independence: A Textual Analysis

The main character in "Fences," Troy Maxson, turns out to be a key figure in the fight against societal crimes. His life, including his time in jail and work as a garbage collector afterwards, shows how few options African-Americans had at the time (Wilson, 1985). In the play, Troy often demonstrates his independence in the face of racism, mainly when he defies racial stereotypes (Wilson, 1985). The grand narrative theory says that societies create big stories or "grand narratives" that affect how people think and act. The ideas and power structures of the time are often reflected in these stories. In the 1950s, when "Fences" is set, there was a big story of racial order and division, in which African-Americans were routinely put in the background and given fewer chances.

From his time in jail to his job as a garbage collector, Troy's life shows how African-Americans didn't have

many choices during this time. His life shows the structural problems and hurdles that black people face as they try to move up in society and get a stable job (Wilson, 1985). This fits with the big story of how racism made African-Americans feel like second-class people.

Grand story theory also says that Troy's failure to fit into race stereotypes is a strong form of resistance. He doesn't want to play the parts and do the things that are expected of him because of his race. This goes against the main story (Wilson, 1985) that tried to put African-Americans into certain parts in society and limit them to those roles. Troy's acts show that he doesn't accept the norms that have been set up.

Troy's freedom and resistance in the face of racism show that he doesn't believe the big story that black people are lesser. His resolve to stand up for himself and make his own way is a small example of the bigger fight against widespread oppression that African-Americans had to face at the time. Troy becomes a figure of grand-narrative defiance because he fights against and questions the roles and limits that society puts on him.

Troy's constant claim that he will not "let nobody hold him back" (Wilson, 1985, p. 23) is a strong catchphrase. This sentence shows how determined he was to go against what was expected of black men and instead make his own identity and memory. By analysing the text, we can see how Troy's actions and choices are driven by his desire to break away from the lines that society has set for him.

***Fences* as Symbolic Boundaries — A Thematic Analysis**

In the play, the walls are a powerful sign of the obstacles and limits that African Americans had to face during this time. Wilson (1985) says that when the characters build walls, it becomes clear that they are trying to protect themselves from outside dangers and take charge of their own lives.

Troy's obsession with making a fence around his house can be seen as an attempt to make a fortress where he can be in charge and protect his family from the hard facts of the outside world (Wilson, 1985). With this theme in mind, the fence symbolises the more significant fight for freedom and agency in a society that tried to force African Americans into predetermined roles.

Resistance to the Grand Narrative: Challenging Preconceived Ideas

The people in "Fences" fight back against the big stories of racial oppression and social limits that run through the story. Troy's unwillingness to accept the limits on him and his family goes against the main storyline that tries to put African-Americans in the background (Wilson, 1985).

Also, Troy's complicated connection with his son Cory shows how people from different generations have different ideas about how things should be and how they should change (Wilson, 1985). It shows that pushback to established rules can happen across

generations and how long-lasting the fight for liberty and agency is.

In the end, August Wilson's "Fences" is a powerful example of how African Americans have been strong and determined in the face of systemic racism. Textual and theme analysis has shown us how the characters, especially Troy Maxson, do things that go against the big stories of their time. By not accepting the roles and limits set for them, they make their own paths and leave their mark on the story of African-American history. The story revolves around the life circumstances in which the protagonist, Troy, has to deal with, alongside with his wife Rose and his two sons Cory and Lyons. They are all living in a society treat them with inferiority because of their color. Troy who works in a simple job in which he lift waste cans from the streets, but he stand at the back of the truck he is not even allowed to drive the car, only white person can:

Troy: I went to Mr. Rand and asked him “ why? Why you got the white men driving and the colored lifting?” Told him, “ what’s the matter, don’t I count? You think only white fellows got sense enough to drive a truck. That ain’t no paper job! Hell, anybody can drive a truck.” (Act1,scene1:2)

Based on grand-narrative theory, Troy Maxson's conversation in this section of "Fences" is a strong example of defiance against the dominant story of racial order and discrimination in society.

The grand narrative theory says that societies create big stories that shape those living in that society's beliefs,

values, and actions. There can be thoughts about race, gender, class, and other social groups in these stories. In "Fences," the big story is racial superiority, which says that white people are better and more capable than their black peers.

When Troy asks Mr. Rand questions, he directly challenges this grand story. He asks why jobs are given to people of different races and challenges the idea that only white people can do specific jobs. By asking, "Why do you have white men driving and black men lifting?" Troy is directly questioning the logic of this racial order and arguing for fair chances based on ability rather than race.

Also, when Troy says, "*What is the matter? Don't I count?*" he says he is important and wants to be recognized for being human and having skills. This statement takes on the demeaning part of racial discrimination, often lowering people to stereotypes or numbers instead of seeing their true worth.

Troy's statement that "*anyone can drive a truck*" questions the idea that some jobs are only for people of a certain race. It goes against the story that tries to limit African Americans' potential based on assumptions and prejudices.

This snippet shows how Troy goes against the big story of race order. He does not want to follow the rules and insists on being treated as a unique person with power and worth. Troy represents the spirit of struggle against systemic racism by asking questions and making

claims. He wants to break down the big story that tries to make African Americans feel small and powerless.

Slavery and white people's subhuman treatment of African Americans have long been recorded. "The Declaration of Independence in America", signed on July 4, 1776, declared the British colonies independent. Americans listed universal human rights in this declaration, including the right to a good life, freedom, happiness, and self-government. (artsandculture.google.com) These sentences are not actual; they were written. Black Americans were neither freed nor equal to white Americans. Hence, this magnificent myth remains unfulfilled. Thus, shattering great tales is not new.

The French philosopher Lyotard says, "The United States Constitution, established by the Founding Fathers, is still a hot topic in ongoing debate in the United States." He is sceptical of big narratives. (Butler: 13) It implies epic tales are solely intended to fill people, make them believe they live in an ordered society, and tame them so that only those who sanction them have ultimate authority.

This play has national, political, and familial grand narrative resistance. Lyon, Troy's eldest son, loves music and has no permanent job. He prefers to do what he loves rather than being compelled to do anything else. It annoys Troy, who performs a job he hates to keep his life safe. In binary opposition, each has his own worldview, trustworthy reality, rights, and wrongs:

“Lyons: Aw, Pop, you know I can’t find no decent job. Where am I gonna get a job at? You know I can’t get no job.

Troy: I told you I know some people down there. I can get you on the rubbish if you want to work. I told you that the last time you came by here asking me for something.

Lyons: Naw, Pop . . . thanks. That ain’t for me. I don’t wanna be carrying nobody’s rubbish. I don’t want to be punching nobody’s time clock.

troy: What’s the matter, you too good to carry people’s rubbish? Where you think that ten dollars you talking about come from?

troy (attacking):Yeah, I got it. You know why I got it? ’Cause I don’t throw my money away out there in the streets. You living the fast life . . . wanna be a musician . . . running around in them clubs and things . . . then, you learn to take care of yourself. You ain’t gonna find me going and asking nobody for nothing. I done spent too many years without.

lyons: You and me is two different people, Pop. You got your way of dealing with the world . . . I got mine. The only thing that matters to me is the music.

troy: Yeah, I can see that! It don't matter how you gonna eat . . . where your next dollar is coming from. You telling the truth there.

lyons (annoyed): I know I got to eat. But I got to live too. I need something that gonna help me to get out of the bed in the morning. Make me feel like I belong in the world. I don't bother nobody. I just stay with my music 'cause that's the only way I can find to live in the world. Otherwise there ain't no telling what I might do. Now I don't come criticizing you and how you live. I just come by to ask you for ten dollars . . . I don't wanna hear all that about how I live!" (Act1, scene1: 17-19)

The same thing happens to his younger son, Cory. He wants to play baseball, but Troy won't let him because he quit playing baseball before because of his race. He doesn't want his child to have to go through what he did, so he thinks it's best for him to work and make money.:

"Troy: The white man ain't gonna let you get nowhere with that football no way. You go on and get your book-learning so you can work yourself up in that A&P or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That way you have something can't nobody take away from you. You go on and learn how to put your hands to some good use. Besides

hauling people's garbage." (Act1, scene3: 35)

Again, each of them, the father and the son, has his own way of looking at life, something he thinks is right and good for him. But Cory has a bigger problem with Troy: he misses his father's attention and never feels loved by him. For Cory, being a dad means taking care of his family, making sure they have a good life, and being responsible for them. He wants his son to grow up to be a responsible person who can take care of himself and never feels ashamed or has his rights taken away. He also wants his son to have the life and opportunities he never had.: *"troy: I don't want him to be like me! I want him to move as far away from my life as he can get."* (Act1, scene3: 39)

Even though Troy can do what he needs to do for his son, Cory feels like something is missing. He needs his father to understand him, just like every other son needs to feel his father's love. Because of this, the father and the son look at life from different points of view:

" Cory (pause): Can I ask you a question?

Troy: What the hell you wanna ask me?
Mr. Stawicki the one you got the questions for.

Cory: How come you ain't never liked me?

Troy: Liked you? Who the hell say I got to like you? What law is there say I got to like you? Wanna stand up in my face and ask a damn fool-ass question like that.

Talking about liking somebody. Come here, boy, when I talk to you.

Cory hesitates, then goes to Troy.

troy: Straighten up, goddamn it!

Cory does.

troy: I asked you a question . . . what law is there say I got to like you?

cory: None.

troy: Well, all right then! Don't you eat every day?

Cory looks down.

troy: Answer me when I talk to you! Don't you eat every

day?

cory: Yeah.

troy: Nigger, as long as you in my house, you put that

sir on the end of it when you talk to me!

cory: Yes . . . sir.

troy: You eat every day.

cory: Yessir!

troy: Got a roof over your head.

cory: Yessir!

troy: Got clothes on your back.

cory: Yessir.

troy: Why you think that is?

cory: 'Cause of you.

troy: Aw, hell, I know it's 'cause of me . . .
but why

do you think that is?

cory (hesitant): 'Cause you like me.

troy: Like you? I go out of here every morning . . . bust my butt . . . putting up with them crackers every day . . . 'cause I like you? You about the biggest fool I ever saw. 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 your behind on my bedclothes . . . fill you belly up with my food . . . 'cause you my son."

troy: 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! Let's get this straight right here . . . before it go along any further . . . I ain't got to like you. Mr. Rand don't give me my money come payday 'cause he likes me. He gives me 'cause he owe me. I done give you

everything I had to give you. I gave you your life! Me and your mama worked that out between us. And liking your black ass wasn't part of the bargain. Don't you try and go through life worrying about if somebody like you or not. You best be making sure they doing right by you. You understand what I'm saying, boy?" (Act1, scene3, 37-38)

Troy himself is upset by how hard life is, so he wants to run away and make his own world, one that doesn't force itself on him. He wants to live in a world where his own values rule, not those of others. So, to get away, he cheated on his wife Rose and started dating someone else:

troy: It's just . . . She gives me a different idea . . . a different understanding about myself. I can step out of this house and get away from the pressures and problems . . . be a different man. I ain't got to wonder how I'm gonna pay the bills or get the roof fixed. I can just be a part of myself that I ain't never been.(94)

On the other hand, Gabriel, Troy's brother, was a soldier in World War II. He got a major brain injury that made him mentally sick, but the government never gave him enough money to make up for it. The author wants to show how governments use their soldiers as scapegoats by tricking them into going to war with convincing war slogans, but then leaving them mentally and physically crippled for nothing. So, all of these big stories about bravery and pride are wrong and harmful:

“Troy: Man don’t bother nobody. He just mixed up from that metal plate he got in his head. Ain’t no sense for him to go back into the hospital.

Rose: Least he be eating right. They can help him take care of himself.

Troy: Don’t nobody wanna be locked up, Rose. What you wanna lock him up for? Man go over there and fight the war . . . messin’ around with them Japs, get half his head blown off . . . and they give him a lousy three thousand dollars. And I had to swoop down on that.” (Act1, scene2: 27-28)

The play shows what life is like for people in the postmodernist era, which is full of wars, social and political changes, and a lack of unity. The play's title refers to this feeling of being apart, and each character has a different view of the walls. "Building a fence in the Maxsons' backyard is an important part of the dramatic event. Rose thinks of the fence as a good and necessary thing. She wants a fence to keep her family safe. The fence is a sign of Rose's love, and the fact that she wants one shows that she is full of love and care. Then, Troy's lack of commitment to finish the fence is like how he wasn't true to his wife." (From SparkNotes.com) Troy wants to avoid being limited by his world and make his own biased reality.

Conclusion

"Fences As a Grand-Narrative Resistance" shows how life is in the postmodernist era in a way that is very interesting. In this way, August Wilson's play is a good example of a society that has lost faith in established institutions, like God. People no longer believe in set truths and refuse to live by rules that come from the outside. Instead, they try to make up their own subjective facts that go against what people have always thought was right and wrong.

By looking at "Fences" through the view of grand-narrative theory, we can see how the problems of the Maxson family show how the unravelling of big stories can happen in the small world of the family. Each person struggles with his or her own unique view of life and wants to find a way to reach his or her own goals. This family relationship shows the larger theme of pushback against social rules, since they don't want to fit into roles and standards that have already been set.

The Maxson family has different goals and points of view, which reflects a bigger trend in society away from taking forced stories. In their quest for self-determination, they question the standards and ideas that have been around for a long time. By doing this, they are putting up a strong form of pushback against the big stories of their time. The play is, at its heart, a moving look at how people, in the close setting of family, can act as agents of pushback against powerful stories. By claiming their independence and trying to find their own truths, they add to a larger movement that questions and dismantles big tales, making the way for a more inclusive and varied view of reality and existence.

Wilson's play shows the a vivid example of what is meant to live in the postmodernist age. People loss their trust in God, and come to conclusion that there is no fixed reality, they don't want any more to live according to principles of others, they want to create their own path, their own subjective truth, all the wrongs and rights of the society are rejected by them. The play demonstrates that the deconstruction of great narratives may occur within the family, as in the case with Maxson's family, who have difficulty accepting each other's ideas about life, since each of them wants to take the path that is best for him.

References

- Biography.com. (n.d.). August Wilson.
<https://www.biography.com/writer/august-wilson>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bressler, C. E. (2011). *An Introduction To Theory and Practice*. Pearson Education Inc.
- Butler, C. (2002). *Post-Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Eagleton, T. (1996). *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Foucault (1972): Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Tavistock.
- Google Arts & Culture. (n.d.). *The Struggle for African American Freedom*.
<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/the-struggle-for-african-american-freedom/mgli-GjK9Fx4KA>.

History.com. (n.d.). The 1950s.
<https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/1950s>.

Jones (2020): Jones, C. (2020). Grand narratives and the postmodern condition: A critical reassessment. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 37(3), 3-22.

Menson-Furr, L. (2009). *August Wilson's Fences*. Continuum International Publishing.

McCollum, M. C. (n.d.). August Wilson.
<https://www.neh.gov/about/awards/national-humanities-medals/august-wilson>

MasterClass. (n.d.). Postmodern Literature Guide: 10 Notable Postmodern Authors.
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/postmodern-literature-guide#quiz-0>

Shannon, S. G. (2003). *August Wilson's Fences: A Reference Guide*. Greenwood Press.

Wilson, A. (1985). *Fences*. Penguin Random House.

Wilson, A. (1986). *Fences: with an introduction by Lloyd Richards*. Penguin Random House.

Smith, Jones, & Brown (2021): Smith, J., Jones, C., & Brown, D. (2021). Grand narratives in the digital age: A case study of social media. *New Media & Society*, 23(3), 567-585.

SparkNotes. (n.d.). *Fences: Symbols*.
<https://www.sparknotes.com/drama/fences/symbols/>

Liotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.

Thompson (2018): Thompson, J. (2018). The end of grand narratives? A critical review of Lyotard's postmodern condition. *Critical Horizons*, 19(1), 1-16.

