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The Subaltern Can Speak: Revisiting Spivak's Concept in the Case of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) and August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (1984)

Abstract

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The term postcolonial literature refers to the literary works of the inhabitants of the ex-colonies. The theory of post colonialism and colonial studies gained momentum during the previous century. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (b.1942-) is considered to be one of the most important postcolonial literary critics. Her phenomenal essay: "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" revolutionized the postcolonial theory, and created the branch of postcolonial studies. In this essay, Spivak, came to the conclusion that: sadly, the subalterns cannot speak, because they will never be heard by the colonizer. This paper, challenges Spivak's concept of the "silenced subaltern". The dramatic works of both the Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka and the African-American playwright, August Wilson are living examples of the representation of the cultural identity of the colonizer.

The paper takes Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* as examples of the "un silenced postcolonial literature". The paper employs the analytic comparative method, within the framework of the postcolonial theory. The study reaches the conclusion that: postcolonial dramatist in their plays include African rituals and traditions in their works, as means of upholding their own cultural identity. Their dramatic works demonstrates the subaltern's ability to show their heritage, and their emotional and psychological independence from the colonizer's hegemony.

Keywords: Subaltern, Spivak, Ritual Theatre, Wole Soyinka, August Wilson.



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العنوان

التابع يستطيع أن يتكلم: إعادة النظر في مفهوم سبيفاك كما يتضح في مسرحيتي : الموت وفارس الملك للكاتب وول سوينكا(1975) وجو تورنر يأتي و يذهب للكاتب أوجست ويلسون (1984)

الملخص

يشير مصطلح أدب ما بعد الاستعمار إلى الأعمال الأدبية لسكان المستعمرات السابقة. اكتسبت نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار والدراسات الاستعمارية زخمًا كبيرًا خلال القرن الماضي. هذا وتعتبر الناقدة و الأكاديمية الهندية، جياتري شاكرا فورتى سبيفاك (مواليد 1942-) أحد أهم النقاد الأدبيين في فترة ما بعد الاستعمار؛ حيث أن مقالها الشهير: "هل يستطيع التابع أن يتكلم؟" أحدثت ثورة عارمة في نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، كما كان ذلك المقال مسؤولاً عن إنشاء فرعًا لدراسات ما بعد الاستعمار. توصلت سبيفاك، في هذا المقال إلى نتيجة مفادها: أن التابعين لا يستطيعون الكلام، للأسف، لأن المستعمر لن يسمعهم أبدًا. تقدم هذه الورقة البحثية مفهومًا مخالفًا لمفهوم سبيفاك عن "التابع الذي تم إسكاته" في الأعمال الدرامية لكلا من الكاتب المسرحي النيجيري، وول سوينكا، والكاتب المسرحي الأمريكي الأفريقي، أوجست ويلسون، و هم يعتبروا أمثلة حية على تمثيل الهوية الثقافية للمستعمر.

تأخذ الورقة البحثية مسرحيتي الموت وفارس الملك وجو تورنر يأتي و يذهب لأوجست ويلسون كأمثلة على "أدب ما بعد الاستعمار الذي يعبر عن الهوية الثقافية". وتستخدم الباحثة الأسلوب التحليلي المقارن، في إطار نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار في تحليل البناء الدرامي للمسرحيتين. توصلت الدراسة إلى استنتاج مفاده أن: الكتاب المسرحيين في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار تتضمن أعمالهم الطقوس والتقاليد الأفريقية، كوسيلة لدعم هويتهم الثقافية. توضح أعمالهم الدرامية قدرة التابعين على إظهار تراثهم واستقلالهم العاطفي والنفسي عن هيمنة المستعمر.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التابع، سبيفاك، مسرح الطقوس والشعائر، سوينكا، ويلسون

The Subaltern Can Speak: Revisiting Spivak's Concept in the Case of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) and August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (1984)

The process of colonialism resulted in the establishment of the colonial's political, social, economic and cultural dominance over the colonized. The colonizer perceived the colonized land as a place with underprivileged institutions with primitive and savage inhabitants, who need Europeans to civilize them. The colonizer tried to erase the history and culture of the colonized by imposing the colonizer's own culture. Consequently, this situation was reflected in literature. The problem of the representation of "The Other" became one of the most crucial issues in the postcolonial theory. In the postcolonial literature, especially the one written by previously colonized writers, there has been a great debate about the representation of the colonized. While some writers mimicked the European style of introducing the indigenous characters in their literary works, on the other hand, other writers decided on giving a true picture of the ex-colonized in their literature. The issue ignited another controversy within the critics' circles. Gayatri Spivak is one of the most important critics in the postcolonial theory. Spivak offers new concept about the representation of the indigenous in the postcolonial theory.

In the year 1988, the Indian-American academic professor, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, published her most famous essay: "Can *the Subaltern Speak?*" This essay is considered a landmark in the development of the postcolonial theory, in general, and in the establishment of the subaltern studies, in particular. Spivak, herself, was a subject of the imperial power. She was born in Calcutta, west of Bengal Province in 24th of February 1942. In her works, she focused on the plight of the marginalized people. Her writings reject the idea promoted by the colonizer, that the West is more civilized than the rest of the world.

Etymologically, the term "Subaltern" refers to a person holding subordinate position, especially, a junior officer in the British army. (Chandra 132). According to M.H. Abrams, "subaltern is a British word for someone of inferior rank, and combines the Latin term for "under"(sub) and "other" (alter)".(238). The term "subaltern" was first used by the Italian critic Antonio Gramsci in his prison memoirs. In order to pass his diaries away from the hands of the prison guards, Gramsci used this term to refer to the working class that needed guidance from the sophisticated elite. Gramsci was a Marxist, and he used the term to label the underprivileged proletariat. This class needed to be guided and organized by the Marxist thinkers to show off its political force.

In "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" Spivak questions whether the second-rate colonized subjects, for her women, because they are double oppressed, can have a voice to express what they really feel. She argues that the subaltern cannot speak for him/herself, because colonialism will never give them the chance to speak. Women, in particular, cannot speak because they are victims of double discrimination: being colonized subjects, and being victims of a patriarchal society. Bertens elaborates on this concept by saying: "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern had no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as a female is even more deeply in the shadow" (Bertens 212). Women, in a subaltern society, cannot fully represent them, even if they try.

Spivak gives an example of how the subaltern female is silenced in a colonial society, with the Sati tradition. The Sati (meaning the good wife) ritual was one of the oldest traditions in the Hindu culture. According to this tradition, the widow of the deceased should be burned alive on the same pyre of her dead husband. This action of self-sacrifice is supposed to purify her and her husband from their evil deeds. Additionally, it will help them in their afterlife. The British colonial power banned this tradition by the power of law in 1828. The British

occupation viewed the Sati tradition as an act of barbarism and atrocity against women. Hencefore, it was “the white man’s duty to save the savage and barbaric brown man from destroying himself and his society” (Spivak 68). On the other hand, **the nationalists**, the people opposing the British occupation, viewed the banning of the Sati as an act of colonial hegemony. The nationalist believed that the British were trying to impose their own customs and traditions on the Indians. This ban attempted to erase the Indian identity. So, **the nationalists** encouraged the performance of the Sati; this is why the Sati tradition continued for so many years after the ban. All this conflict and struggle between the nationalist and the British occupation occurred without even thinking of asking women in their opinion in performing the Sati tradition. According to Spivak, the weak and double-oppressed women were never allowed to have voice. Consequently, in her essay: “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” she came to the conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak.

This paper, attempts to challenge Spivak’s opinion that the subaltern is doomed to be silenced forever and will never be heard. Many subaltern playwrights try to establish their own cultural identities. They refuse the racial representation of the European literature. Obviously, European literature gives justification to the European colonial power. It gives justification for colonialism by portraying the colonized subjects as primitives and savages. Thus, the subaltern playwrights have always tried to return to their own heritage and traditions. By doing this, they will be able to articulate their own separate identities, free from the identity of the British colonizer. Unfortunately, this type of colonial oppression is not limited to the Indian culture. It can be also observed in colonized Africa and in America, at the time of segregation. Thus, Spivak’s concept of the subaltern is clear in the dramatic works of both Wole Soyinka and August Wilson, but only with difference.

There are several similarities between the two dramatists. Their dramatic writings are mainly concerned with recovering their people's cultural and national identities. These identities have been fragmented and displaced under the yoke of colonialism and slavery period. Wole Soyinka and August Wilson belong to two different backgrounds. Soyinka is one of the most famous African dramatists. He was born in Nigeria. He employs drama as a method to retrieve the Yoruba tradition and restore a nationalist cultural identity. On the other hand, August Wilson is an American dramatist of African descent, who upholds the heritage and traditions of his ancestors in his plays. Wilson believes that the preservation of traditions is a step forward towards freedom and independence from racial discrimination in the American society. This paper tackles Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, as two examples of how the subalterns can speak and retrieve their own cultural identity. This is conducted by using the analytic method, and according to Spivak's concept of "subalternity", within the framework of the postcolonial theory.

Wole Soyinka is one of the most renowned African playwrights. He obtained the Nobel Prize in Literature in the year 1986. His literary works contain all types of drama: comedy, tragedy, political satire, and Absurd Theatre. He was born in Nigeria, under the colonial rule of the British occupation, in the year 1934. "He studied in the University college of Ibada, and then completed his studies in drama at Leeds". (Pushpa 4). Later on, he was appointed as a lecturer of literature at Lagos University in 1965.

Soyinka writes various genres of literature. His literary works included: drama, poetry, novel, autobiography, cultural and political criticism. He is one of Africa's most prolific writers; the total amount of his books is about thirty books. In drama, Soyinka was very much influenced by the works of the Irish dramatist, Synge. He considers drama to be a basic tool to voice and express the social ills of any society. Most of his plays are concerned with the African

culture and the Yoruba traditions. Example of his plays are: *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), *A Dance of the Forest* (1963), *The Road* (1965), *Kong's Harvest* (1967), and *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), and many other literary works.

Death and the King's Horseman is a great example of Soyinka's theatrical model. Soyinka argues in his book: *Myth, Literature and African World* that he builds his tragic theatre on "rituals, tragic songs, dances, and the national traditions". (35). Rasheed Musa believes that: "in drama, Soyinka blinds the Yoruba rituals, dramatic technique, music, and dance with the foreign language, which is English. He uses all these elements to achieve his dramatic effect". (148). Additionally, Musa argues that: "the concept of tragedy is not overtly pro-Western, yet it is not totally Aristotelian in conception but majorly communalistic in African theatricality" (224). "Soyinka also fuses Western elements with dramatic techniques rooted in Yoruba folklore and religion" (Musa 180).

Death and the King's Horseman is a continuation of Soyinka's representation of Africa and the African tradition. He composed this play during the years of exile. Although the play is based on a true historical event, Soyinka changed some of the real historical events to focus on the moral conflict within the tragic hero of the play. Naveen Kumar argues in her article: "Indigenous Tradition in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*" that: "The play is a tragedy in five acts. It is based on the historical event that happened in Oyo Kingdom in 1946. This Kingdom was very strong that was able to resist colonialism. But Soyinka changed some of the precious details." (376).

In his book, *Art, Dialogue, and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture*, Gibbs discusses the moral dilemma of Olunde saying:

My circumscription of the possible areas of "argument", my rejection, for

instance of the option to make Olunde reject suicide because of “overseas” enlightenment is a creative prerogative, logically exercised, I have no wish to demonstrate that the colonial factor is ethically superior to the indigenous... the concept of “honor” in that Oyo[African] society is, for this dramatist precisely on the same level of honor, mission, duty, as revealed in the imperialist ethic that brought Europe to Africa in the first place.(128).

The play tells the story of the king's horseman, who should perform a ritual suicide to accompany his king to the kingdom of the ancestors. Nevertheless, Elesin, the horseman, is distracted from his mission because of his love of life. According to the Yoruba traditions, when the king died, he must be followed by his horse, horseman, and his dog to the other world. Within a period of one month, they should accompany the king to the realm of the dead. The play is based on a real event in 1946, when a royal horseman was prevented from committing suicide by the British colonial power. Soyinka changed some events, putting the responsibility on Elesin.

The play opens after the death of the king. Elesin, the late king's horseman is walking in the market. He wears expensive cloths and is being prepared to leave the earth. He is followed by drummers and praise singers. He sees a beautiful girl and wishes to marry her. The girl cannot refuse his proposal, because he is the one who will save the community. According to the Yoruba traditions, the horseman by killing himself to follow his master, the king will save the tribe from the bad spirits. This man becomes highly appreciated by the whole tribe, and all his demands should be answered. He is being warned by the tribe's wise men that in

case that he will not committ suicide, he will bring a curse to the whole community. The news of the ritual suicide circulates till it reaches the British colonial District Officer. The British Officer decides to arrest him and prevent the tradition of ritual suicide.

Olunde, Elesin's eldest son, who studies medicine in England, comes home to bury his father. However, his father refuses to die. This act is considered a shameful act in their community. Olunde takes his father's place in the ritual. He decides to kill himself in order to preserve the Yoruba traditions and save his community. The last scene of the play takes place when Elesin sees the dead body of his son. He was completely devastated, and takes his own life at the end of the play, by strangling himself. Olunde , the son shows more courage than his father, and has true sense of responsibility towards his community, according to the whole tribe. At the end of the play, the head of the tribe blames Elesin , for his love of earthly pleasures, and blames the British Officer for misunderstanding the traditions of the people.

Yoruba Religion believes that life, Death, and Ancestors are linked together. In *Myth, Literature, and the African World*, Soyinka, indicates the relationship between men, gods, and ancestors. In Yoruba culture, a king never "dies". A king wanders "in the void". His spirit represents danger to his tribe. Thus, his horseman should perform the ritual suicide to act as a mediator between the dead and the living. He must accompany his king to the realm of the ancestors.

Many critics believe that this play is Soyinka's tragic masterpiece. According to Jeyifo: "Soyinka's purpose in using mythical figures is not to evoke nostalgically a perfect past but rather to fashion them for modern world and enable them to speak to present day humanity"(94). Another critic, Williams notes that:

The crisis in the play stems from an acute political and psychological

threat to the ritual of human sacrifice. This is indeed a critical moment of history, and since the play is a reflection of an actual historical event, it is bound to provide the playwright with an appropriate forum for seminal reflections on a communal impasse. (69).

Naveen Kumar defines the act of human sacrifice as “the act of killing human beings as a part of religious ritual. This practice was a dominant one in ancient cultures. The rituals are expected to please the gods, the spirits and the ancestors”. (376).

Elesin, the king's horseman, is raised to appreciate the importance of the ritual, and to acknowledge his duty towards his community. Elesin is a subaltern, a follow, who is taught everything in his life by a greater power: his community. He is ready to commit the ritual suicide, in order to preserve the peace and stability of his community. Olakunle George explains in his essay: “Cultural Criticism in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*”:

That Elesin at the moment of self-sacrifice embodies the collective social and psychic aspirations of the Oyo community; he is a ritual scapegoat who mediates the world of the living, the dead, and the unborn. His death thus ensures renewed harmony between the three levels of existence constitutive of traditional Yoruba cosmic order.(72)

Elesin, the subaltern chooses to refuse the ritual suicide imposed upon him by his tribe. He decides to embrace the earthly pleasures instead of the traditions of his own community. Elesin is a lover of food and women. His love for women and earthly pleasures makes him marry a young girl, on the night; he is supposed to perform the ritual suicide. So, Elesin's

refusal to die at the specific time is an act of speaking, an act of will, and an act of rejection to what is imposed on him. The British colonialism has nothing to do with this. Eleisin says: "I would have shaken [the 'weight of longing on my earth-held limbs'] off, already my foot had begun to lift but then, the white ghost entered and all was defiled" (65). Although the play ends with the act of Elesin killing himself, this was not an act of adhering to the traditions. Elesin killed himself as an act of sorrow and regret over his son's death. When the body of Olunde brought to him at the prison, Elesin was deeply touched with what his son has committed. So, he killed himself out of sorrow.

Olunde is another subaltern character in the play. He is the eldest son of Eleisin Oba, the king's horseman. Olunde is supposed to succeed his father in this position. He returns home from England when he knows about the death of the king. He wants to show respect to his father whom he expects to be dead, according to the Yoruba traditions. Olunde studies medicine in England with the help of the British Officer, and this was against the will of his father. The British Officer's wife, Jane, expects that his life in England would change his character. On the contrary, Olunde's character shows that his African traditions are deeply rooted in him. Olunde was so faithful to his Yoruba traditions; his stay and education in England could not change his beliefs. Olunde appears on the stage with western garments, but with a traditional character deep inside. Soyinka describes him as "a man whose experience and education in European world gives him a deeper understanding of his heritage and tradition. It increased his faith in his tradition" (77). During his stay in England, he uses the English language perfectly; he can argue with Jane in a superior language. The British officer describes him saying: "He's picked up the idiom alright, would not surprise me if he's been mixing with commies or anarchists over there" (66).

However, the character of Olunde is Soyinka's tool to criticize the European society. In the dialogue between Jane and Olunde, Soyinka shows the conflicting views about the concept of self-sacrifice. This dialogue: "makes the audience sympathizes with Olunde sensitive approval of heroic self-sacrifice, and condemns the white woman's failure to recognize its spiritual mobility" (Ogunba, p.77). Jane can never understand the African tradition. She believes that Olunde should not destroy himself. He should also protect his father from the barbaric tradition. However, Olunde knows that his father's sacrifice gives him "the deepest protection the mind can conceive" (George, p. 53).

When Olunde sees his father as a prisoner at the hands of the British colonial power, he understands that his father failed to perform his duty towards his tribe. The British colonial forces arrested Elesin to prevent him from thinking the suicide all over again, and performing it under the pressure of his tribe. Actually, the British consider this ritual to be an act of barbarism, and not an act of self-sacrifice. Olunde condemns this act of not committing suicide by his father. He rebukes his father by saying: "I have no father, eater of left-overs" (Act V, p. 203). Olunde takes the position of his father and commits ritual suicide to save the honor of his family and community. He does not escape from his roots and duty, like his father. In fact, by Olunde's death, he is linked with his own heritage and ancestors. Unfortunately, Olunde's death increases his people's misery rather than elevating their sufferings. The Praise Singer Says:

What the end will be, we are not gods to tell.

But this young shoot has poured its sap into

the parent's talk, and we know this is not the

way of life. Our world is tumbling in the void

the void of strangers. (Act II, 75)

Puspha refers to the reason for Olunde's death and the central idea of the play by saying:

Olunde in the play has come out of the catastrophic environs of self-interest. He does not view the ritual as a cluster of dogmatic valued.

The power-drive launched by the whites has to be crushed by an enlighten African. The ritual suicide is an off shoot of ageless wisdom. It is not the result of blind faith or superstition. (95)

Actually, Olunde's act of killing himself, for the sake of tradition, can be seen as an act of resistance. Olunde's self-sacrifice is the subaltern's way of voicing his refusal of colonial power. Olakunle George believes that Olunde's "conceptual universe remains deeply tied to traditional Yoruba culture even though his job requires him to repudiate that culture" (76). Olunde's performance of the ritual suicide proves that the African traditions are deeply-rooted in Olunde, despite the European interference. Summer Pervez notes that : "Olunde's sacrifice reflects the conflict of the play: The British will still interfere with the Yoruba , but they will not succeed in replacing the Yoruba world-view with their own"(68). Olunde's act indicates the impossibility of the imposition of the European culture on African tradition.

All through the play, the reader can notice the struggle between the colonial desire to impose its power, and the African resistance to keep the Yoruba traditions." The real tragedy of the play lies not in the failure of the British , but in their successful ability to interfere with the ritual and disturb the Yorub world, something that may not have occurred without their presence" (Pervez 72). In fact, the portrayal of the characters of Elesin and his son represent a challenge to Spivak's concept of the silent subaltern. Both the horseman and his son try to resist

the conditions imposed on them. Elesin voices his rejection of the community's traditions that he does not like by simply refusing to perform the ritual suicide. While, on the other hand, Oulande, as another subaltern, expresses his rejection of the British ban of the ritual Yoruba tradition by performing the ritual suicide, instead of his father. Hence fore, the play proves that the subalterns can speak and defy the prevailing dominant colonial power of their time.

Similar to the main theme of Soyinka's play, that is breaking traditions and the limitations of the subaltern, August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* discusses the same point. In this play, Wilson gives an artistic vision of the African –American cultural heritage and traditions. August Wilson believes that the preservation of tradition is a step towards freedom and independence.

Wilson was born as Frederic August Kittel in Pittsburgh, The United States of America, in the year 1945. He was the son of an African-American cleaning maid and a German father, who immigrated to America. During his first year of infancy, his German father abandoned the family. Later on, his mother married another man. The relationship between the young Wilson and his step- father was not a good one. He had an awfully miserable childhood. Wilson embraced the culture of his mother and her African ancestors. He adopted her maiden name, and started to write as August Wilson. Wilson passed away in 2005 because of liver cancer.

August Wilson was very much interested in the African-American experience and heritage. Therefore, he wrote ten plays to bear witness on the African-American conditions during each decade of the 20th Century. Each play of "The Pittsburg Cycle" covered a decade, starting from *Gem of the Ocean* that covers 1900s till the *Radio Golf* that deals with the events of 1990s. Wilson received many awards for his "Century Cycle Plays" like the Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize. In his plays, Wilson portrays the everyday lives of the ordinary African-American. He was able to give voices to the marginalized lower class servants, workers, and

ex-slaves, who inhabited the Hill District. Wilson's plays demonstrate the bitterness and the angry stories of the poor and underprivileged African-Americans.

Joe Turner's Come and Gone takes place in Pittsburgh in 1911. This specific point in history represents a great socio-political change identified as The Great Migration. At that time, thousands of African-Americans escaped the poor and rural southern areas to the industrialized and more civilized North. The title of the play is taken from an old Blues song (this type of music is part of the African-American experience). It refers to the story of the historical American figure of Joe Turney, the brother of the Tennessee's governor, Peter Turney. Although slavery was illegal at that time, **Joe Turnery** ignored the law and forced African-Americans to work for seven years in his farm.

The play tells the story of Herald Loomis. Loomis was forced to work for seven years in Joe Turney's plantation. After his release from his slavery, he realizes that his identity is lost. All through the play, Loomis tries to free himself from the spiritual slavery that he tries to free himself from. He tries to get rid of the chains and bondage of the spiritual slavery that clouds his mind and prevents him of determining his future.

At the beginning of the play, Loomis, a recently freed-slave from the Turner Plantation, tries to find his wife, Martha, and his daughter, Zonia. He finds his daughter at his mother-in-law's house. However, he cannot find his wife. He starts a journey in search of his wife, Martha. With the help of People Finder, he finds her in a distant church. Nevertheless, the family is never reunited. Loomis finds his wife, Martha, embracing Christianity, the white man's religion. Loomis refuses the white man's religion; he is embracing the African Traditional religion.

In the final scene, when Loomis sees his wife, becoming a member of the white Christian church. Loomis imagines Jesus as a dictator who wants to take away his identity. He

does not allow Jesus to bleed for him. Loomis uses a knife to bleed himself, instead. Loomis cuts his chest, in a ritualistic act of exorcism, crying "I don't need nobody to bleed for me! I can bleed for myself" (Act II, p.5). In doing so, he takes responsibility for his own identity and, as a result, finds his song ("My Legs stood up! I 'm standing"). Thus, he chooses the African Traditional Religion over the religion of the white man.

Kamara defines African Traditional Religion as:

The observance of rules of conduct in the way the individual conducts his or her daily life, the practice of rituals, and the recognition of the ever presence of the living-dead (ancestors) to allow the person to coexist in harmony with other members of the community and nature. (503)

Wilson, in his play, presents subaltern characters who were able to speak up against the dominant culture of their masters, and other characters who became submissive to the culture of their master. In addition to the character of Loomis, the protagonist, who is keen on embracing his heritage and original culture, there is the character of Bynum. Bynum is the first character the readers/ spectators encounter in the play. Wilson explores the African-American heritage through the character of Bynum. Shannon argues that:

Bynum's rituals with the pigeons in the morning, his search for the Physical evidence of his visions(i.e., the shiny man who looks like "new money"), his ability to supernaturally bind people together, and his belief that "the song" of each person's life is a spiritual expression that establishes their identity all position him as what he would likely be in

an African village... a spiritual leader. (13)

In the first scene, Bynum enters the stage and tells the story of the Shiny Man. He says that he has met a Shiny Man in the road. When the Shiny Man disappears, Bynum sees his father. Bynum's father comes to help him find his song. August Wilson uses "the song" as a metaphor to show the true identity of the person: "I had the Binding song. I choose the song because that's what I seen most when I was travelling...So I take the power of my song and bind them together" (Act I, p.111). Sandra Richards believes that: "the story of a shiny man is suggestive of the Yoruba gods Ogun and Esu who encourage fellow travelers to claim their predestined "song" in life"(92).

Both the characters of Loomis and Bynum are examples of subaltern characters in a discriminating white society. On the other hand, there are other subaltern characters in the play, like: Martha, Seth, and Bertha who choose to embrace the culture and of the ex- master; they choose to be silent. However, Loomis and Bynum refuse to be silent. They both express their rejection of the heritage and traditions of their ex-mater. They endorse their cultural heritage and tradition as the only way to find their true identity. Sandra Shannon believes that: "Loomis must confess that in order to go forward, The African-Americans must visit those pasts" (125). August Wilson chooses the African Traditions as the only way of salvation to the protagonist. "Loomis does not permit Jesus to bleed for him and takes the responsibility for his soul to find his identity. In the end of the play, African Traditional Religion wins over Christianity." (Rudolph 569-570). The title of the play is quite symbolic. Joe Turner" the ex-master" can come and go, but the traditions, which are the symbol of the real cultural identity, must stay forever.

In conclusion, both Soyinka and Wilson portray subaltern characters in their plays: *Death and the King's Horseman* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. However, the subaltern

characters in both plays challenge Spivak's notion that the subalterns are silenced and cannot speak. Elesin, Oulande, Loomis, and Bynum decide to voice their protest and make their voice heard and not to surrender to the status quo. Embracing their own heritage and cultural identity was their own way of making their voices to be heard.

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