

The roses that grow from hard and rocky soil

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A tragic hero is an individual born out of nobility who rises to unimaginable heights, but as fate has it, is devoured by a fatal flaw, hubris, inevitably leading to his/her own demise. The endless tale woven throughout western literature since Aristotle's Poetics and Shakespeare's Macbeth and Hamlet. The circle of life.

We have Leaders we say we need then we leave them for dead. Moses, Huey Newton, Detroit Red. In more Archaic literature, the God's are recognized as the ultimate power, but in the 20th and the 21st century, society took that role from the God's, and we now answer to a higher power... Dinero and Benjamins. In August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize winning onstage production, Fences, the tale of rise and fall is conveyed in 1957 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Everyday U. S.

A for the typical African American family in this dark period in U. S. history. Wilson's uses the character Troy to embody this role. Wall Street Journal compared Wilson's depiction of Troy as "... a hero almost Shakespearian in contour". (Sylvaine Gold, Wall Street Journal).

Born into the obscurity of the Jim Crow era, Troy rose from the gutter. Wilson's character's heroic qualities included honesty, an immense capacity for hard work and noble strength. The ultimate hubris of this tragic hero that led to the destined demise was his inability to cope with the resentment he felt toward his father and the demons of internal conflict that accompanied his resent, along with an ignorance institutionally installed into African Americans cementing his archetype as a traditional tragic hero. Troy's character used " Fences" to protect his weak core by putting on a brash,

crude front and abusing his influence and power at every turn just to gratify his own tormented internal hopes, dreams and self-perception. Like every man ever born in America, Troy was striving for the American Dream.

Wilson uses the metaphor of a home run to convey this dream. And to Troy, it seemed that he just couldn't get home, because he was too proud to realize he was home all along. Some individuals never even make it to the plate. Thus, Troy's hamartia was his ideals and prolific ego. Send one over the fences, or go out swinging, he was too proud to walk and he knew how far bunting could get him. In Wilson's opening description he conveys Troy as having " honesty, a capacity for hard work, and his strength".

(Wilson Act I Sc I 1). As the play develops Wilson reveals how Troy's character had a rough upbringing, "(Troy's) daddy ain't had them walking blue's... But he was just as evil as he could be... My mama couldn't stand him. Couldn't stand that evilness.

She run off when I was about 8...He wasn't good for nobody. When my turn come to head out, I was 14 and got to sniffing around Joe Canewell's daughter... We done found us a nice little spot, got real cozy with each other. She about 13 and we done figured we was grown anyway...We down there by the creek enjoying ourselves when my daddy come up on us. Surprised us. He commenced to whupping me like there was no tomorrow... Now I thought he was mad cause I ain't done my work.

But I see where he was chasing me off so he could have the gal for himself. When I see the matter of it was, I lost all fear of my daddy. Right there is where I become a man, at 14...I grabbed the reigns and started whuppin on
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him myself... When my daddy turned to face me, I could see why the devil hadn't come to get him... cause he was the devil himself... I layed there and cried... The only thing I knew was the time had come for me to leave my daddy house."(Act I Sc 4 Pg. 51).

Coupled with the readers previous knowledge of Troy, his heroic qualities, his crude exterior, ego and his role as provider, Wilson now brings the tragic hero role full circle by providing a slum for this aspiring hero to rise from. Now the reader is able to identify that this harsh upbringing painted the hero's outlook on life outlook on life. An outlook full of pain and resentment. However, Wilson illuminated the beauty in the madness. Troy learned the value of hard work, strength and suffering as well as the necessity to be honest.

True, when your fuel is flamed by gasoline, it is only a matter of time until that flame gets out of control yet on cannot deny that Troy provided life to all that was around him, His friendship with Bono, Lyons and Cory, two sons who continued the cycle of resentment, Rose, an ideal support who enabled Troy's ego, and Raynell, a new hope. Troy was a " hard and rocky soil"(Act 4 sc 1)., as Rose calls him, which nourished beautiful life. Maybe the soil itself was not pretty, but one must acknowledge the miraculous nature that anything could grow from such barren land. One must also recognize that time and erosion has caused that soil to become hard and rocky and it is not by choice that the soil is so difficult to tend and requires much fertilization and care, sometimes more than it deserves. Wilson's character and his heroic traits fueled the other characters.

His strength, Honesty and Work Ethic was not evident in the other characters. In spite of his heroic qualities and ability to create something out of nothing, Wilson illuminates how with a weak foundation and core is impossible to avoid decay. Troy's character refused to openly embrace and encourage his children's dreams and aspirations, degraded his wife with regularity to reconfirm his superiority and the straw that broke the camel's back, infidelity and temptation. Each time Troy was confronted he was unable to recognize things how they were because he stayed within his defense mechanism, his fences. Through this narrative Wilson conveys that once you make it to a state of anagnorisis, or recognition that you have accomplished something, and have established these fences, you must realize that these fences were not built alone.

And all individuals in these fences are equal. Wilson reveals this when Troy is revealing he has made a child out of wedlock and he intends to keep seeing the mistress. " I done locked myself into a pattern truing to take care of you all that I forgot about myself." (Act II sc I 68). Troy blames his loss of self on Rose and the family for taking all he provided.

Rose rebukes " You always talking about what you give... and what you don't have to give. But you take too. You take... and don't even know nobody's giving!" (Act II sc I 69). That last line is so important, for it directly acknowledges Troy's prolific, hindering ego. The real issue is that he is only searching for his self-interests and inevitably found himself alone, wrestling those heavyweight demons till the last swing.

In the end, Troy's ultimate hubris proved to be his ego and selfish ways. " As long as it sets right in my heart ... then I'm okay. Cause that's all I listen to.

It'll tell me right from wrong every time." (Act I sc II 58). Wilson reveals another important part of the typical tragic hero, inability to recognize and adapt to one's own hamartia. Last, a tragic hero must accept his death with honor, " [Troy] seem like he swung that bat and stood there with this grin on his face... and then he just fell over"(Act II sc II 96). It's Lonzo in Training Day, Tony Montana in Scarface, Bishop in Juice, Saul in the old Testament. A story as old as man itself, greed and pride leading to self-destruction.

Though Wilson's work had various morals and illuminating insights, none was more evident than the character development of Troy as a tragic hero. Even then, Wilson's hero still leaves an ambiguous moral. Is it a dog eat dog world or are we all in this together? At the end of the day all you have is your family, things change and people come and go, but the bonds and relationships you build will last all the way to St. Peter's gates. Hence, quality is much more important than quantity. Troy's heroic qualities, his hamartia and the cards he was dealt proved to solidify Wilson's character as " almost Shakespearean in contour"(Wall Street Journal) Undoubtedly, we are only here for a short time and children are one of the only things you can provide to this world that will make a difference.

Wilson conveys how far too often in African American families forget this and must nourish and sacrifice for the next generation, so they do not repeat history and can break the cycle that is abuse, dependency and depression in homes of the impoverished and minorities across the U. S. We must not seek

for self, but build for a better community of tomorrow by enjoying the time we do have with the ones we do love. There will always be a car that's better than yours, a home more lavish. But you won't be happy until you love what you got, home is where you make it and you cannot find that anywhere but inside your own fences.