Journal of the College of Education for Women
مجلة كلية التربية للبنات
December 30, 2025 [Vol. 36(4)]
P-ISSN: 1680-8738; E-ISSN: 2663-547X

Lieu de Mémoire in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*

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https://doi.org/10.36231/coedw.v36i4.1890

Received: 20 July 2025; **Accepted**: 10 August 2025; **Published**: December 30, 2025

Abstract

In literature, places frequently serve as more than just physical settings. They actively participate in the plot of the literary text and represent the historical, social, and cultural aspects of the inhabitants who live in them. In August Wilson's *Radio Golf*, Ester's house and Pittsburgh's Hill District are important locations that capture the struggles and lived experiences of African Americans. Instead of being blank backgrounds, these places are storied settings that are filled with cultural heritage and memory. This paper explores the conflict between erasure and remembrance in Hill District and Aunt Ester's house. As a neighborhood on the edge of change, Hill District is portrayed in the play as being in danger of being cut off from its historical roots by gentrification and economic development plans. On the other hand, Ester's house acts as a sacred, nearly mythical place that keeps spiritual continuity and decades of African American memory. It turns into a moral compass that forces characters to face their heritage before pursuing a future aim. This paper embraces the theory of the human geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, showing how Wilson transforms places into archives of historical value by blending resistance into physical structures. This study highlights the value of cultural preservation in the face of displacement and contributes to current academic discussions in African American geographies, memory studies, and literary urbanism. Ultimately, by focusing on the Hill District and Ester's house, *Radio Golf* offers a deep reflection on how a place shapes its people's identity and collective memory.

Keywords: African Americans, heritage, Hill District, memory, place

موقع الذاكرة في مسرحية "إذاعة الغولف" لأوغست ويلسون

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https://doi.org/10.36231/coedw.v36i4.1890

تاريخ الاستلام: ٢٠٢٥\٧\٢٠، تاريخ القبول: ٢٠٢٥\٨\١٠، تاريخ النشر الإلكتروني: ٢٠٢٥\١٢\٣٠

المستخلص:

في الأدب، غالبًا ما تُعدّ الأماكن أكثر من مجرد بيئات مادية.. إنهم يشاركون بشكل فعال في حبكة النص الأدبي ويمثلون الجوانب التاريخية والاجتماعية والثقافية للسكان الذين يعيشون فيها .في مسرحية "إذاعة الغولف" لأوغست ويلسون، يُعدّ منزل إستر ومنطقة هيل في بيتسبرغ مواقع مهمة تُجسّد كفاح الأمريكيين الأفارقة وتجاربهم المعيشية. بدلاً من أن تكون خلفيات فارغة، تُعدّ هذه الأماكن بيئات تاريخية زاخرة بالتراث الثقافي والذاكرة. يستكشف هذا البحث الصراع بين المحو والتذكر في حي هيل ومنزل العمة إستر. كحيّ على حافة التغيير، تُصوَّر منطقة هيل في المسرحية على أنها مُعرَّضة لخطر الانسلاخ عن جذورها التاريخية بسبب التجديد الحضري وخطط التنمية الاقتصادية. من ناحية أخرى، يُعد منزل إستر مكانًا مقدسًا، يكاد يكون أسطوريًا، يحافظ على استمرارية روحية وعقود من ذاكرة الأمريكيون الأفارقة. ويتحول المنزل إلى بوصلة أخلاقية تجبر الشخصيات على مواجهة تراثها قبل السعي لتحقيق هدف مستقبلي. تتبنى هذه الورقة نظرية الجغرافي البشري يي-فو توان، موضحةً كيف يُحوّل ويلسون الأماكن إلى أرشيفات ذات قيمة تاريخية من خلال دمج المقاومة بالهياكل المادية. تُسلّط هذه الدراسة الضوء على قيمة الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي في مواجهة التهجير، وتُسهم في النقاشات الأكاديمية الراهنة حول جغرافيات الأمريكيون الأفارقة، ودراسات الذاكرة، والتخطيط العمراني الأدبي. في نهاية المطاف، من خلال التركيز على منطقة هيل ومنزل إستر، تُقدم "إذاعة الغولف" تأملاً عميقاً في كيفية تشكيل المكان لهوية شعبه وذاكرتهم الجماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأمريكيون الأفارقة، التراث، منطقة هيل، الذاكرة، المكان

1. Introduction

Place and memory work together to create a great deal of meaning for modern identities (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004). The majority agree with Edward Said that a lot of people today turn to this reorganized memory, particularly in its communal forms, to give themselves a sense of unified identity, and national story (2000). Several elements contribute to a place's exceptional visibility and rich feeling of place. One thing that sets houses apart architecturally is their style, which distinguishes them from other buildings in nearby areas. Another is time, which gifted the place's residents with long memories. Third are people and events that have added personality to the neighborhood (Tuan,1977). Place is a store of cherished memories and significant achievements (Tuan,1977).

Wilson's Pittsburgh cycle consists of ten plays spanning several decades. A decade is covered by each play. Wilson's final play, *Radio Golf*, took place in the 1990s. *Radio Golf* (2005) follows Harmond Wilks, an ambitious African American candidate for mayor and real estate developer in his forties. Harmond is engaged in a project with Roosevelt Hicks, his business partner and college roommate, that aims to revive the neighborhood through urban development. Roosevelt advocates a business-first strategy, whereas Harmond is motivated by his ambition to develop the neighborhood and guarantee his political future as the first African American mayor. Mame, Wilks's wife for more than twenty years, is likewise going up the professional ladder in the governor's office and wants to work as his press representative. Together with his partner Roosevelt, Harmond devotes himself to changing the Hill District into a flourishing, modern neighborhood. They think the project will increase the local economy, but it also threatens the neighborhood's African American heritage. As the play progresses, Harmond is forced to face the moral and personal results of his choices. His meetings with Old Joe, a man of seventy-nine years who claims the ownership of an old house, Aunt Ester's house, and Sterling, a self-employed contractor and neighborhood handyman, make Harmond have a different way of thinking.

The space is abstract, but when people get to know it and associate it with their cultural values, social meanings, memories, and individual experiences, it becomes a place (Tuan, 1977).Hill District, a neighborhood of Pittsburgh, begins as a space for the whites after taking Pittsburgh over from the Native Americans. However, when the other ethnic groups, especially the African Americans, start to settle in and spend time living in it, they give it meaning. Therefore, it turns out to be a valuable place for them that is full of memories and shared experiences. Wilson is proud of his

American citizenship and his cultural heritage, and he wishes to honor both. He has done this by strategically setting all but one of his plays in Hill District, his former neighborhood (Bigsby, 2007). The Hill District is the cycle's central "lieu de memoire ′", to borrow Pierre Nora's term (2024), the place where memory crystallizes and hides itself at a specific historical moment, a turning point where awareness of a break with the past is connected with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn in a way that raises the issue of memory's being in particular places where a sense of historical continuity lasts.

Methodology of the Study

This study uses a qualitative, analytical approach that looks at Wilson's *Radio Golf* through the lens of place, memory, and identity. It is based on the idea that places are not only backgrounds for stories but active forces that hold history and meaning. The research focuses on Aunt Ester's house and the Hill District as places where memory is preserved. The theoretical framework is based on the theory of the human geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, which explains how spaces turn into meaningful places through lived experience and memory. His distinction between 'space' as something abstract and 'place' as something rich with value helps to show how Wilson presents physical places as carriers of African American heritage. The article offers a detailed examination of the play from a spatial point of view, paying particular attention to the settings, the memories of the characters, and the symbolic significance of place. The aim of the study is to investigate how *Radio Golf* captures the conflict between preserving memory as a means of forming identity and community and destroying the past through urban redevelopment.

2. Theoretical Framework

The French geographer, Vidal de la Blache, in his important work, *Principles de Geographie Humaine* (1922), emphasizes that human geography offers an entirely new understanding of how humans and the earth work together. Later, the focus switched to investigating the subject of how the physical environment affected human activities in the writings of Ratzel and Semple (Savita and Hira, 2003). The terms of 'space' and 'place' are not interchangeable. In his theory, Tuan defines space as an area where people do not have any social connections. This space has not been enhanced in value. While place is a center of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied. Many things contribute to a place's remarkable visibility and rich feeling of place. One thing that sets houses apart architecturally is their style. Another is time. Third are individuals and events that have added character to the place

(1977). The usage of architecture, which includes structures with cultural significance and bearing historical values and symbols, shapes the place's architectural image (AL-Aqbi et al., 2024).

Tuan argues that modern architecture may be aesthetically pleasing, but it frequently lacks a strong personality that smells may provide. Places and objects gain personality from their odours, which also make them more recognizable and memorable. Place is a store of humans 'cherished memories and significant achievements that inspire the present. A place or object becomes a concrete reality when people experience it fully, using all their senses as well as their active and reflective minds. The 'feel' of a place takes a long time to develop. It consists of experiences that are repeated over the years and day after day. It is a unique combination of sights, sounds, and odors, a distinct harmony of man-made and natural rhythms like times of work and play, sunrise, and sunset. With sight and the ability to move and control objects, sounds significantly enrich the human sense of space. A strong attachment to a place can be created by familiarity and comfort, the sense of safety and care, memories of sounds and smells, and shared activities and homely pleasures that have been gathered over time (1977).

One can become familiar with small places by experiencing them directly, including the use of their senses of touch and smell (Tuan, 1976). Since people are social and embodied beings, they require intimate places— houses, neighborhoods, and relatives— for care and support. As political beings, people must have a sense of belonging to a greater whole as well as to their home or neighborhood (Tuan, 1997). Unaided by the discriminating eye, individuals can subconsciously recognize a place through touch and remembered scents. Over time, people can develop a profound sense of place by accumulating such modest stocks. However, sometimes people become entirely aware of their attachment to a particular place only after they have left it (Tuan, 1979). When applied on *Radio Golf*, Tuan's theory provides an interesting perspective on how place can serve as an archive of human memory.

2.1 The Concept of Place in Literature

In literature, place is more than just geography or backdrop; it becomes a center of conflict, emotional attachment, historical memory, and identity development. Place is not only the setting for stories; it is an active force that shapes characters, societies, and the political climate, as scholars from a variety of fields have long noticed. Literary places, whether in urban or rural settings, frequently serve as heated places where matters of race, class, history, and identity are discussed. In this section, the concept of place in literary studies and its use in texts that explore memory, identity, and spatial

politics are investigated. *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* by Una Chaudhuri (1997) offers an important foundation for understanding place as a force of drama. The way that characters' settings impact them emotionally and psychologically is referred to by Chaudhuri. Chaudhuri states that modern dramas increasingly create settings that express social alienation, mental conflict, and displacement rather than presenting place as a neutral backdrop.

Richard Rankin Russell examines how the Irish playwright portrays place in the context of modernity in his work *Modernity, Community, and Place in Brian Friel's Drama* (2013). According to Russell, Friel's plays use place to highlight the conflicts between tradition and change, showing how settings affect both personal identities and social structures. Russell explores how Friel's heroes are impacted by their settings. Whether they are responding to the fixed ideas of national identity or the forced politicization of societies, Friel's major plays all challenge the very concept of home.

Long Shi and Qingwei Zhu's (2018) article, "Urban Space and Representation in Literary Study," examines how urban places are portrayed in literature. They claim that through using narrative, literary works actively contribute to the creation and change of urban settings in addition to describing these places. This viewpoint highlights how literature and the urban settings it depicts are closely linked.

In "Place, Space, and Identity in Modern Drama: Analysis of Four Selected Plays" by Mohd Ahmad Rawashdah (2020) explores how contemporary playwrights represent the connection between identity and place. Through an analysis of four plays from various cultural contexts—Wakako Yamauchi's *And the Soul Shall Dance*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life*, and Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*—Rawashdah makes the argument that people are becoming more and more tied to their place. They associate their identities with place. Since place is frequently influenced by social and economic shifts, identity becomes fluid and complex, which causes an identity crisis.

The article "Space, Place and Identity in Bernard Shaw's *The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman*," (2023), written by Justine Zapin, examines how George Bernard Shaw uses the futuristic Irish setting to discuss colonialism, nationalism, and identity. The play, which is set in 3000 A.D., depicts an Ireland in which age is the main social differentiator, and usual social differences are no longer meaningful. Shaw uses place to identify people and people to identify place. Shaw's description of Ireland's mythic landscape, according to Zapin, is a powerful aspect that turns the setting into a utopian setting that challenges the political realities of contemporary times.

2.2 Literature Review on Wilson's *Radio Golf*

The last work in August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle, *Radio Golf* (2005), is a strong reflection on African American identity, memory, and place in urban America. Through the potential demolition of Aunt Ester's historic house, which stands in the way of an urban renewal project in Pittsburgh's Hill District.According to Sandra G. Shannon's "Framing African American Cultural Identity: The Bookends Plays in August Wilson's 10-Play Cycle" (2009), Aunt Ester acts as the African Americans' moral and spiritual core.

Eknath Bhalerao presents *Radio Golf* as a final piece that captures a century of African American hardships and accomplishments in his thesis "August Wilson's Ten-Play Cycle: A Socio, Economic and Cultural Study" (2011). He highlights the play's symbolic title, stressing out that golf, which is connected to white prosperity, represents the African American middle class's desire for the American Dream in the 1990s. Bhalerao sees Roosevelt Hicks as representative of the risks of assimilation and unrestricted ambition. Bhalerao shows the house's symbolic significance as a spiritual and cultural center for the African American community. Harmond's final resistance to the demolition reflects a return to cultural identity at the expense of financial gain. According to Bhalerao, this scene represents the play's emotional core.

Haley Radcliffe's article, "Ethnocentricity and Ethical Autonomy in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*" (2019), offers a way of understanding the challenges that Harmond Wilks has while attempting to balance his personal aspirations with his communal responsibility. Radcliffe argues that the ethnocentric norms of a white-dominated society make it impossible for Harmond to pursue ethical autonomy, which means acting in accordance with community-centered ideals rather than selfish interests. According to this analysis, attempts to empower the African American community inevitably defy white centrality and are thus repressed, making ethical autonomy a contested site.

In his work "History and Sense of Belongingness in August Wilson's Plays" (2022), Kirtikumar Ramesh makes a claim that *Radio Golf* uses place, Aunt Ester's house and the Hill District, as a representation of African American identity, history, and struggle. He reflects how seeking the past gives characters like Harmond Wilks purpose and moral clarity. The Hill is more than just a location; it is a sacred place that contains the core of African American identity.

As Olfa Gandouz reveals in her work, "Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism, Postcolonialism and Hybridity in Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun and August Wilson's *Radio Golf*"(2024), Eurocentric ideology is still

popular in African American literature, even in contemporary masterpieces such as Wilson's *Radio Golf*. *Radio Golf* highlights the continuing existence of Eurocentric norms, white assimilation, and capitalist goals in African American communities. Roosevelt is described as having internalized racism and self-estrangement because of his embrace of a Eurocentric worldview. Harmond Wilks, on the other hand, represents an Afrocentric worldview. Gandouz compares Harmond to Barack Obama, a leader who is trying to balance racial empowerment with success in a society that is dominated by white people.

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Site of Memory in *Radio Golf*

In literature, spatiality has become more than just the setting for a story; it also reveals its complex nature (Ali and Ali, 2025). Hill District is more than just a background for *Radio Golf*. It is a very vital and rich place, so all these elements that Tuan suggests, which contribute to a place's exceptional visibility and rich feeling of place, are found in it. Individuals use all their senses to perceive the world (Tuan,1974). Visual space is enhanced and expanded by senses like smell (Tuan,1977). So, through their senses, Hill District's people collect, over decades, valuable memories and experiences of their neighborhood. For example, there is the fried chicken place of Miss Harriet that used to be around the corner, and people used to line up for its chicken. On Saturdaynight, the line would stretch around the corner. Old Joe remembers the fried chicken shop directly after smelling the scent of chicken in Harmond's office. So, places can gain personality from their odors, which also help people remember them (Tuan, 1977).

Another place that adds to the unique character of Hill District is the Green's Groceries of the African American man, Sam Green. Old Joe recalls it while talking with Sterling. It is described by Old Joe as being the biggest grocery store there that sells chicken and vegetables and that everybody used to shop from it. Since the place serves as a storehouse for memorable experiences that motivate the present (Tuan,1977), Hill District as a place that is full of the cherished memories and experiences of its inhabitants, deserves to be valued. This can be found in Sterling's speech with Harmond about his memory in Hill District with Raymond, Harmond's brother, as he states, "you remember me and Raymond used to play together? We used to play cowboys and Indians… We was on the football team together." (Wilson, 2020, pp.14-15). These memories help Hill District's citizens to create a strong attachment to their neighborhood, as deep attachment to a place can be created by memories and shared activities that are gathered over time (Tuan, 1977). This sentimental attachment contradicts the plans for reconstruction, which put modernization above preserving the neighborhood's inherent value.

Harmond's construction office itself has its own personality that adds to the character of the neighborhood and its unique architectural style. The office has embossing on its tin ceiling. This artifact imbued the place with memory, meaning and heritage. This tin ceiling is part of the social environment of Hill District, as if the place and its objects keep talking, expressing the identity of Hill District and its culture. In a meaningful place, retreating to a private or quieter spot does not mean abandoning the social life. Rather, the place and its artifacts continue to express the identity of its inhabitants. Through its objects and design, the place itself functions as a living conversation (Tuan,2002). These places with their unforgettable owners construct the strong feeling of place and the great visibility of the neighborhood. Even though the Hill District is physically decaying, its longtime residents find their experiences and memories in it. It symbolizes not just their past, but also a way of life that strengthens ties throughout the community and preserves cultural traditions.

Harmond wants to revive the neighborhood. He declares that "we fixing It. We're going to redevelop this whole area. We'll get the Hill District growing so fast people from all over will start moving back" (Wilson, 2007, p.22). However, his way of doing so is not the right one. America, as a place, is not the golden land for the Africans (Tuan,1996). They are treated as strangers and as being the greatest threat to law, so they are treated badly by the whites out of fear (Tuan,1980). Hill District is a place that is filled with its inhabitants' memories. It is a physical manifestation of African Americans' resistance in the face of the racism that they face in America. African Americans are treated as unwelcome strangers. That is why Roosevelt and Mame want to assimilate with the whites' society. African Americans are looked at as being suspicious in America. This is shown when Old Joe talks about Sam Green, an African American man who owns a grocery. Green goes to Shadyside to buy some furniture, and the police arrest him and send him away to the hospital wearing a straitjacket just because his ethnic background makes him "suspicious" (Wilson, 2007, p.57). Old Joe states, "he found out he living with people who look at him with suspicion… Wherever he go and whatever he do… He found that out and that sent him straight to the hospital" (Wilson, 2007, p.57). In America, racism was common and continues to be a destructive force (Tuan, 2002).

Green realizes that, in America, he is not looked at as an American citizen but as a stranger and as a source of threat. This realization destroys his mental health, which sends him to the hospital. Old Joe thinks that Green might be dead because of this, proposing that "living like that is hard on your body" (Wilson, 2007, p.57). In America, racial discrimination is subtle, widespread, and continuous. For many African Americans, the daily consequences of this discrimination can be deadly (Utsey, 1997). Sterling

highlights his belief that some African American people, such as Roosevelt, are unable to perceive their identities properly. Roosevelt, according to Sterling, wrongly seeks whiteness or believes he can blend in with a white-dominated social system. Since people are affected by their place (Tuan,2002), the African American people are influenced by their living in America and the treatment that they receive in their homeland which makes them develop such beliefs.

The treatment of being second-class citizens makes some of them, like Roosevelt and Mame, want to assimilate, and some of them start to have a kind of internal racism towards their people. Members of underprivileged groups have a motivation to adopt the dominant culture and blend in with the most privileged social group. This usually happens in an uneven society with severe ethnic divisions, where one social group enjoys privileges while others do not (Eguia, 2011). Experience is the totality of means by which people come to know and understand their world (Tuan,1979). So, all the experiences that African Americans go through help to shape their ideas and attitudes. African Americans have endured the harm in many ways because they are a racially different group and because America has always been a racist society. Some African Americans have made an effort to assimilate into the larger society to free themselves (Pinkney, 1969).

As a result of what African Americans suffer in America, some of them want togive up the African heritage and distance themselves as much as possible from their race and follow the white ideals. This reaches the state of having internal racism. Mame and Roosevelt keep referring to the other African American people as 'niggers' (Wilson, 2007, p.77), which is an insulting title and a result of being in a culture that supports negative stereotypes about African Americans. Roosevelt adopts the white race's view towards his fellows. Harmond, Roosevelt, and Mame's behavior and actions are impacted by living in America, as the social behavior is influenced by the setting (Tuan,1974). They want to embrace the white culture, and this is stated in their plan to revive the neighborhood.

Golf has long been seen as a white social activity. The wealthy can now show their upper-class position with a sense of exclusivity because of the establishment of private clubs. On the other hand, the African Americans' sport is football (Rosselli, 2011). The redevelopment project includes destroying the only football field in the neighborhood. So, they try to erase a representation of their African American identity, the football field, to build a golf course, a symbol of the white culture. Roosevelt expresses his feelings about playing golf to Harmond, saying, "I hit my first golf ball I asked myself where have I been?…I felt free…For the first time….. I felt like the world was open to me…That was the best feeling of my life" (Wilson, 2007, p.13). Then he keeps talking about golf saying, "That'll set

you on a path to life where everything is open to you. You don't have to hide and crawl under a rock just'cause you black" (Wilson, 2007, p.13). Roosevelt's speech mirrors the harmful consequences of assimilation. In addition to providing Roosevelt with a sense of liberty, golf emphasizes the losses and isolation that come with sacrificing one's cultural identity in order to fit in in a country that is racially exclusive. Sometimes assimilation goes so far as to make these individuals forget their own origins (Tuan, 1996). Roosevelt intentionally forgets his heritage by cooperating with forces that represent a threat to his community. He neglects the fact that redeveloping the area will destroy a neighborhood that is full of memories, experiences, and value to his community. Roosevelt is offered by Bernie Smith, a white businessman, to have a radio program, not a TV program, to talk about golf. The usage of golf and the radio is very significant even in the title of the play.

African American cultural resilience and identity development have been fixed by oral tradition, which is characterized by elements like improvisation, and communal participation. These traditions became essential tools for cultural survival and resistance to oppression as they adapted and preserved during the transatlantic slave trade. From one generation to the next, storytelling is a means of transmitting values, customs, and information. The African American community establishes collective memories and develops identity through oral storytelling. Millions of Africans were forcibly transported to America by the transatlantic slave trade, where they endured aggressive attempts to deprive them of their cultural identities. African captives carried with them strong oral traditions that acted as a resistance and survival strategy in spite of these hardships (Mustafa, 2024). As a form of oral communication, radio represents the past and the oral traditions that are necessary for African American culture. It reflects the storytelling, the sense of community, and the historical continuity that shaped African Americans' identities in the past. In contrast, golf is a symbol of integration and the desire for upward mobility in America. As a sport that has historically been linked to privilege, and the exclusion of minorities, it serves as a powerful metaphor for the difficulties African Americans encounter while trying to succeed in the business context of America. So, by setting the golf, a white sport, with the radio, an oral means of transmitting heritage for the African Americans, together in the title, Wilson shows the danger that threatens the African American culture and history that are found in Hill District.

The redevelopment project of Harmond and Roosevelt includes a house that turns out to be the house of Old Joe that he inherited from his mother, Ester. Old Joe returns to his house after leaving it for twelve years. Space is freedom, and place is security; people are attached to one and desire the

other (Tuan, 1977). This is stated in Old Joe's conversation with Harmond as he states, "you probably got places to go and people to see. That's what I told my mama when I left home" (Wilson, 2007, p.20). So, he returns to live in the house because he is attached to his home and to Hill District. The concept of place appears before the concepts of time and movement in the minds of the earlier humans (Selman, 2019). The house is taken by the government because the taxes on the house have not been paid for many years now. Bedford Hill's Redevelopment buys the house before going to the auction and without giving notice to Old Joe. Thus, the process of buying the house is illegal.

Aunt Ester represents the African history and culture like a living memory. No culture can exist without its past, which is essential to the formation of identity (Baykara, 2018). Wilson uses Aunt Ester as a key character to explore the African American mythological and spiritual traditions (Bhalerao, 2011). She is a spiritual support for her community. Aunt Ester represents African American history, and the core of theiridentity. When African Americans visit Aunt Ester, she confronts them with their past, which is stored in her memory, as well as the truths that affect all African Americans (Baykara, 2018). Through private meetings where they would narrate folktales and share memories of their native nation, enslaved Africans were able to keep their oral traditions. These meetings act as sites of cultural resistance against the brutal conditions of slavery in addition to offering consolation and strength. Africans who were slaves protected a sense of community in the face of hardship, maintained their cultural identities, and reinforced their resiliency via storytelling (Mustafa, 2024). Oral traditions are a form of intangible cultural heritage (Khalil and Ameen, 2023). Since Aunt Ester served as a cultural and religious adviser to African Americans, her home is part of the African American heritage. Heritage reflects national identity and people's memories (Abdulameer, 2019). This house is included in the redevelopment project, though it stands for collective memory, heritage of culture, and opposition to the redevelopment that erase African American identity.

The place is an archive of pleasant accomplishments as well as delightful memories that motivate the present (Tuan, 1977). This is reflected in Aunt Ester's house. One of Old Joe's memories of the house is stated when he talks with Harmond, saying that when it is raining, he and other members of the family would sit on the stoop; he says, "if you ask somebody what they was doing they'd tell you they was sitting. We'd sit there and that was the best expression of life…Everybody just sitting out. That was some of the best times I had in life… I like my house" (Wilson, 2007, p.59). Sitting on the stoop was a shared human experience that represented life and connection, and all these things are found in Aunt Ester's house. When a

person goes back to their place of birth, they get a reflective vision while thinking about the happy memories connected to that place (Rashid and Hamad, 2024). Sterling also has memories related to the house. He states, "That's Aunt Ester's house…. She was sitting in this room.…Had this peacefulness about her. Aunt Ester told me I got good understanding….Told her my whole life story…. Told me if I wanted to carry something carry some tools. I've been carrying tools ever since and I've been at peace with myself" (Wilson, 2007, p.54).

The house is a physical place with spiritual and emotional importance that is related to individual growth and communal memory. A sense of community centered around the house is evoked by Sterling's description of a line at her door every Tuesday, emphasizing its significance as a local landmark and shared resource. The house serves as a place where people are recognized and accepted, as demonstrated by Aunt Ester's capacity to see Sterling's value without his having to express it. In contrast, Sterling's status as an orphan made him feel unworthy in the outside world. Aunt Ester helps him refresh his identity by encouraging him to carry tools, which ground him in action, purpose, and self-worth instead of victimization. This is stated in the idea that the primary meaning of home is a place of nurturing refuge. It is the only setting where individuals can freely acknowledge their weaknesses and fears. When individuals are exhausted, that is, when they are unable to keep up a brave face in front of the world, they go home. (Tuan, 1975). The transformational impact of the house as a location of guidance is demonstrated by Sterling's lifetime adoption of Aunt Ester's advice.

The house reflects a shared past and a common wisdom that ties people to something greater than themselves, so the experiences and aspirations of a people are reflected by the place (Tuan, 1979). Familiarity and comfort, a feeling of security, memories of sounds and scents, shared activities, and homely delights are collected over time. All contribute to the development of a deep attachment to a place (Tuan, 1977). All these elements are found in Aunt Ester's house where the African Americans are attached. Humans use all their senses to simultaneously understand their world (Tuan, 1974). Sight has a special role in how the human setting is organized (Tuan, 1977). Colors have been the first symbols that people used because of their importance in human emotions (Tuan, 1974). The door of Aunt Ester's house is red. It means warmth and activates the nerve system. Another impact of red is to make something appear heavier than it is. Red represents energy and life. It is the color of blood, and blood is life, yet blood that has been spilled causes death. Red also represents action, action that is intended to preserve life, even though it may end in death (Tuan, 1974). The red door is more than simply a physical element; it is a symbolic entrance that speaks to the viewer's feelings and sense of place and identity. The door appears

alive and active as red reaches out. The red color of the door refers to the community's vitality and its rich historical heritage. Ancestral sacrifices are represented by the color red. It acts as a reminder of the group struggles that contribute to the life of the community. The blood color of the door can link the African Americans to the Native Americans whose land was taken over from them by the Americans and who face oppression in their own homeland. This is shown in Sterling's comment about demolishing the house and the usage of law in doing so, as he says, "that's the kind of shit they did to the Indians. They sign a treaty and as soon as the Indians walk out the door they start plotting how to break it" (Wilson, 2007, p.51).

The door becomes an anchor, both emotionally and visually. Aunt Ester's home stands out because of its red door, which represents its significance and individuality in the community. It acts as a visible reminder of the importance of preserving historical and cultural heritage (Petru, 2006). The address of the house itself is important. The address is 1839 Wylie. The Amistad rebellion occurs in 1839, when fifty-three Africans took control of a slave schooner, sail it to Long Island, New York, form an alliance with American abolitionists, and secure their freedom through a long legal battle (Rediker, 2013). Wilson makes an intentional choice to give the house a more profound historical and symbolic meaning. The house stands as a memorial to those who have sacrificed for freedom. What makes the house valuable is the emotional bond it has with the people of the Hill District.

Old Joe does not know that the house is sold because of the unpaid taxes, and he says, "that's my house. I got the deed on record down at the courthouse." (Wilson, 2007, p.24). He tells Harmond that his mother, Aunt Ester, tells him that their family does not pay taxes. Every time she goes to pay for them, she finds out that they are already paid. Later, Old Joe finds out that Harmond's father has paid the taxes. Old Joe refuses to give up his house, insisting, "I like my house" (Wilson,2007, p.59). This is reflected in the idea that most people identify a particular setting, usually the one in which they are raised. Exotic travel can be exciting and enjoyable, but it can also make people more aware of how much they love their home (Tuan, 1996). It is reasonable to be unfavorable when one lives in an awful place, but one's behavior should also improve as the setting does (Tuan,2002). This can clearly be seen through Harmond. He is a perfect example of the African American middle class, who relocated to the wealthier area of the city (Shadyside) years ago from the Hill District and lost contact with those who remained.

Harmond, who at first agrees with the ideas of redevelopment and modern progress, changes as he returns to his roots, his sense of belonging, and his fundamental beliefs. Harmond is presented at the beginning of the play as an elegant, ambitious real estate developer who is running for mayor.

Through the Bedford Hills Redevelopment project, which includes many modern comforts, he hopes to renew the Hill District. His emphasis on contemporary aesthetics and economic growth shows a lack of awareness of the Hill District's cultural and historical value. He tells Sterling, "we're going to bring the Hill District back" (Wilson, 2007, p.15). From the beginning, Harmond has been presented by Wilson as a man who has good seeds in him. Harmond situates his campaign office in Hill District, where he was born and raised, not any other place. He decides to choose the redevelopment project for Hill District as his candidacy programme. All these things show that he cares about his community, and he keeps it in mind. Respect for the past and attachment to objects are often associated. Anyone who appreciates oak ceiling beams is undoubtedly a history supporter (Tuan, 1977). Harmond reflects this idea as there are many boxes in his office, a thing that upsets Mame. Unlike Mame, who sees it as being raggedy, he admires the embossing on the tin ceiling of his office. He is proud of his identity, which is shown in his insistence on renaming the hospital of Model Cities Health Center into Sarah Degree, the first African American registered nurse in the city. He wants to remember her and to honorher achievements as an African American individual. Harmond also keeps a trophy of Raymond on his desk. This shows that he appreciates old objects and the memories they hold. He has memories and shared activities and experiences in Hill District, as reflected in his conversation with Sterling. They used to go to the same school. So, this creates a sense of attachment to Hill District, as strong attachments to a place can be built through familiarity, memories, and shared activities that have been accumulated over time, even if it is subconscious (Tuan, 1977).

Urban heritage is a cultural treasure involving the historical identities of peoples and nations (Al-Tabali and Al-Zaidi, 2019). Harmond stands for those who are proud of their identity and heritage. He starts to regain his racial awareness and identity as a result of coming back to Hill District. He aims to become the mayor while preserving Aunt Ester's house, planning to incorporate it into a redevelopment project that he plans to build around the property. If Harmond becomes a mayor, he will be a good one since he is a moral man. He wants power to develop the city. This goes with the idea that regionalists attempt to make the local place the main focus of devotion, but they can only succeed if they hold political authority, and the place has both a sentimental and political identity (Tuan, 1975). Harmond believes that he has the right to be a mayor in America, as it is his and his ancestors' homeland. In his candidacy speech, he calls for equality in economic opportunity and police treatment. When Sterling asks Harmond if he is going to be a mayor for the whites or the African Americans, Harmond answers,

"I'm going to be the mayor of everybody. It's not about being white or black, it's about being American" (Wilson, 2007, p.56).

Harmond is told by Old Joe that Harmond's father used to pay the taxes of Aunt Ester's house. Then it turns out that Harmond's father used to pay the taxes because his father, Caesar Wilks, used to pay them. They discover that the birth name of Aunt Ester is Black Mary, and she is the half-sister of Caesar Wilks. They have different mothers but the same father, Henry Samuel. This makes Harmond and Old Joe cousins. After knowing that he has family ties in Hill District, Harmond wants to return to Hill District and live in the house that he grew up in, as humans need intimate settings like homes, communities, and family members, for support, because they are social beings. Humans need to feel like they belong to both their home or neighborhood and to a larger total as they are political beings (Tuan, 2024). Harmond's choice to protect Aunt Ester's house is faced with rejection from Roosevelt and Mame. They refuse to build the redevelopment around it as they have signed a contract with Whole Foods and Barnes & Noble and changing the original plan will change their store layout and cut their customer parking in half. Harmond tells them that he is going to the courthouse and filing an injunction to stop the demolition. Mame tells him, "If you for that you're throwing everything away. All our hard work. Your career. Your reputation" (Wilson, 2007, p.70), but Harmond refuses to go against the law. The layers of Aunt Ester's home capture the historical depth, memories, and shared experiences of the community, much like the yearly rings of an ancient tree. Though Harmond is granted a temporary injunction, Roosevelt says that the judge dismissed the temporary injunction. Roosevelt chooses to buy Harmond out. By doing so, Roosevelt turns their partnership into a strictly business-related partnership, putting money above mutual respect or a shared past. Harmond's viewpoint represents the idea that though old buildings take up a lot of city space and often contradict the aims and demands of the present, preservationists are motivated by the need for material objects that can reinforce a sense of identity (Tuan, 1977). Roosevelt acts as Harmond's antithesis. He adopts the self-centered attitude that Harmond rejects.

Mame tells Harmond that he could have been a mayor, then governor, then Senator Wilks. Harmond faces the risk of losing their common ambitions as well as political potential if he does not follow the plan she sees. Her rationality and Harmond's developing sense of moral duty stand in sharp contrast, reflecting a major tension within their relationship. This shows the clash between staying loyal to one's heritage, valuable memories, and community and assimilating into the dominant power systems of America. Harmond answers her, "I've been following plans my whole goddamn life. … I can't follow the plan this time, Mame. I'm afraid you look away from

what's right too long you won't turn back" (Wilson, 2007, pp.71-72). Harmond's decision is an important turning point in his life as he expresses his moral awakening and rejection of the route that society, his family, and his job responsibilities have selected for him. When Harmond gets the chance to choose what he really wants, his first choice is to protect his heritage. Historic places are important treasures that need to be protected for the next generation since they are reminders of their past identities and cultures (Chabuk and Al- Amiri, 2023).

4. Conclusion

This paper examines how Wilson skillfully shows the importance of place as a site of memory in *Radio Golf*, where individual and societal histories come together to form identity. Tuan's spatial theory makes it clear how meaning is put into spaces, turning them from merely physical spaces into places with deep cultural, emotional, and historical value. The Hill District in *Radio Golf*, notably Aunt Ester's home, is an excellent manifestation of this transformation. The Hill District is shown in the play as more than just a setting; it is a storehouse of African American history that represents the community's hardships, victories, and resiliency.

Aunt Ester's home and the Hill District are significant memory sites that work to maintain the African American identity and heritage. The weight of collective memory can be seen in Hill District. In the center of this landscape lies Aunt Ester's home, a cultural and spiritual icon that captures the soul of the community and its ancestry. The importance of these places as archives of memory grows even greater as gentrification forces threaten to destroy them. Characters like Harmond are reminded by the presence of these places that protecting the heritage that is recorded in a place is necessary for restoring one's identity and achieving genuine progress.

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