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The politics of educational exclusion in the selected plays of Athol Fugard and August Wilson

Joseph Ngong Sam

Department of English, University of Maroua, Maroua, Cameroon.

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The South African regime during Apartheid spent more time educating white children than black children. As a result, millions of black South Africans did not go to school. Similarly, in the United States of America, during slavery, blacks were not allowed to read and write, although they did it secretly in underground prisons. The education they received in the 17th century was given to them by benevolent slave masters. This educational exclusion has recorded untold consequences on blacks in both communities and is still felt in the 21st century. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the politics of educational exclusion in Athol Fugard's and August Wilson's selected plays from the point of view of postcolonial theory. The data for this study were got by selecting drama texts that dwell on education, and the methodology employed is an analytical appraisal of the texts. The bone of contention in the study is that the literacy rate of blacks is still very low as compared to whites. Therefore, blacks have to take education more seriously in order to equate themselves with the whites. The study further argues that the solution to the problem of educational exclusion lies in the redemption of black education.

Key words: Education, politics, colonialism, neo-colonialism, postcolonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the politics of educational exclusion in Athol Fugard's and August Wilson's selected plays. The plays in question are Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1986), *The Blood Knot* (1972), *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2002), *Master Harold and the Boys* (1984), *Valley Song* (1996), *My Children My Africa!* (1990), *Coming Home* (2010), and Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (1990), *Fences* (1986), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1985) and *the Seven Guitars* (1986). Using the postcolonial theory, the study hypothesizes that the literacy rate of blacks is still very

low as compared to whites. It is noticeable that the playwrights are concerned with education of the "brain" and education of the "hands". They revitalise literacy. Therefore, blacks have to take education seriously in order to equate themselves with whites. However, education remains the most insidious and in several ways the most cryptic of neo-colonial transfigurations in that it is a massive weapon of artillery which is used to exclude blacks in all walks of life. The solution to the problem of educational exclusion lies in redemption of black

E-mail: ngangwo@yahoo.fr.

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education. The study is divided into two main sections: The first section is about Educational Exclusion in the selected plays of Fugard and the second section deals with Educational Exclusion in the selected plays of Wilson.

Education in the selected plays of Fugard

Styles in Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* cannot be promoted because he does not improve on his education. His director reminds him that if he wants promotion he has to enroll for a correspondence course in Damelin Correspondence College. In a monologue, Style recalls what his boss used to tell him about the importance of education. He notes that his boss obtained the following certificates; Standard Six Certificate, School Leaving Certificate and Third Class Honours. He promised to obtain a Junior Certificate, the Matric and Higher Diplomas. These certificates will help him to be a happy and self-employed man. Styles' boss is a white man who had so many opportunities, but these opportunities were hardly opened to blacks in Apartheid South Africa. The blacks in the play are not well educated because they have been excluded from attaining quality education. The monologue below clearly substantiates this view:

Styles: You see, Mr Styles, I'm forty eight years old. I work twenty-two years for the municipality and the foreman kept on saying to me if I want promotion to Boss-boy I need to further my education. I didn't write well, Mr Styles...I made it Mr Styles ! I made it but I'm not finished...(Fugard, 1986).

From the aforementioned quotation, it is obvious that learning never ends, but Styles' boss now makes a mockery of blacks who cannot be promoted because of little or no education. He pretentiously encourages Styles to pursue his education.

Styles prefers to abandon his job because he cannot obtain the afore-mentioned certificates. Styles represents black South Africans who did not go to school because the Apartheid regime spent more on educating white children than black children. For instance, Denise Golberg, a first generation South African testifies on *African Independent Television* that his parents were able to send him to school, but millions of blacks could not go to school. He further points out that the teachers who taught black children were less qualified than white ones. Also, most black children were poor and ill-educated where English, was not their mother tongue (AIT 9th December 2013).

Consequently, Styles has to abandon his job because he lacks adequate education. A better education does not necessarily give someone promotion or provide job opportunities, but it provides the individual with a sound mind. Blacks cannot be equal to whites because they do

not have the opportunity to study and obtain educational and professional certificates. In *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, we realize that blacks are in search for jobs, but they cannot be self-employed due to restrictions on education. Besides, the Man in the aforementioned play is an illiterate:

Man (Examining the backdrop with admiration. He recognizes a landmark). OK.

Styles: OK Bazaars...Mutual building Society, Barclays Bank...the lot!

Man: Feltex.

Styles: Yes...well, you see, I couldn't fit everything on, Robert. But if I had enough space Feltex would have been here....

Man: I don't read.

Styles: That is not important, my friend. You think all those monkeys carrying newspapers can read? They look at the pictures (21)

From the aforementioned dialogue, we notice that the Man cannot read. Ironically, Styles reminds him that it does not matter because many black people carrying newspapers do not read. Similarly, when the Man finds his friend Buntu, he makes it clear that he can only look for a job as a gardener because he cannot read (25). Most blacks are interested in the pictures. They can only recall their history through pictures:

Styles: ...This is a strong –room of dreams. The dreamers? My people. The simple people, who you will never find mentioned in the history books, who never get status erected to them, commemorating their great deeds. People who would be forgotten and their dreams with them. If it wasn't for Styles. That's what I do, friends. Put down, in my own way, on paper the dreams and hopes of my people so that even their children's children will remember a man... 'This is our grandfather'...and say his name. Walk into the houses of New Brighton and on the walls you'll find hanging the story of the people the writers of the big books forget about. (12 to 13)

From the aforementioned monologue, it is realized that blacks are unable to document their history because they lack the knowledge and educational facilities to do so. It is thanks to Styles that blacks in the play can recall the history of great black men. This implies that what is written by whites about black people is subjective because blacks in the play do not participate in the writing of their own history. Thus, black people in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* are excluded from writing about their lives and this make them inferior to the white race. The writers of big books as mentioned in Styles' discussion symbolize white scholars who wrote the history of Apartheid in their own favour. Edward Said, the Postcolonial theoretician purports that knowledge and representation are tools the west uses to dominate

others, particularly the East.

Furthermore, the problem of illiteracy is presented in Fugard's *the Blood knot* via Zachariah who cannot read nor write letters. Consequently, he looks inferior. He is easily manipulated by his own brother who can read and write. Ethel has received sound education and is able to request for a pen pal relationship, but Zachariah like thousands of South African blacks have not attained adequate education. Zachariah cannot even write his name. He thinks that he is very fortunate to have a brother who can read. Ironically, he is tricked by his own brother, Morris:

Morris: How do you spell your name, Zach? Come on, let's hear...Oh, no, you don't! That's no spelling. That's a pronunciation. A b c d e that's the alphabet.

Zachariah: It pays to have a brother who can read, hey...Dear Zach, How's things?(55)

Morris: Stop it, Zach! I'm still here. I know I can't go! I explained everything. I was ready to go, man... until I realised that you couldn't read without me!(84)

From the aforementioned dialogue, Zachariah cannot read because he has never been given the opportunity to study because of the colour of the skin. Morris is educated because he resembles a white man. So he was given a slight opportunity to go to school. Zachariah now counts on his brother, but he is not conscious that from creation, a brother has always turned against his own brother. Cain killed his brother and Joseph's brother sold him.

Zachariah is short sighted because his own brother will make him a subject of ridicule. As earlier mentioned, illiteracy has made Zachariah an inferior being. He is not responsible for his ordeal because of the institutions that were put in place by the Apartheid regime. Zachariah is suffering from the impacts of illiteracy.

According to the "Social and Economic Impact of Illiteracy...", illiterates encounter greater obstacles in terms of social integration, not only on a personal level, but within the family and society. Illiterate people face serious problems of unemployment, given their low knowledge and lack of expertise. This can be caused by early departure from school to enter the labour market or the loss over time of the ability to read and write. Besides, illiterate people have little awareness of their rights and duties, and may incline to accept precarious low-quality employment contracts (Martinez and Fernandez, 2010).

In brief, illiteracy affects four main categories, education, economics, social integration and cohesion. With regard to health, illiteracy limits an individual's ability to understand messages and absorb knowledge necessary for self-care. In terms of education, illiterate persons like Zachariah tend to have lower expectations and aspirations for themselves and their children. Economically, illiteracy affects the income of the individual. With regard to social integration and cohesion, illiterate persons are often denied the social recognition

they deserve and suffer from self-low esteem. They also become victims of deception (ibid).

The solution to Zachariah's problem is education because education is regarded as a determining factor in economic growth. Zachariah can only be empowered through acquiring good education. Unfortunately, he symbolizes illiterate South Africans who have been excluded by the politics of education. Literacy is supposed to be for all, but in Fugard's *the Blood knot* it is reserved for whites and light-skinned people.

Fugard's *Sorrows and Rejoicings* celebrates the life of an educated South African. It revisits the memory of the Soweto uprising in 1976 where thousands of black students were killed. Despite these killings by the Apartheid regime, South Africa can still boast of her writers in the play (7). The most educated characters in the play are Dawid Olivier and Alison. Dawid Olivier is a writer on exile while Alison, Olivier's wife is a University Lecturer. Although Olivier is on exile, he prefers to be buried in South Africa. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Allison: Back in London I have to take a bus every morning to the university where I teach. On the way it passes one of those ghastly new cemeteries...He was with me in the bus one morning,...he turned to me ' If anything happens to me, Allison, for my soul's sake don't bury me in England. Get my body back home. (21)

From the aforementioned quote, Allison cannot teach in her country, so it is remarked that what has sent the South African writer to exile is the politics of exclusion. Allison first met Olivier during the Soweto Uprising. She declares that Olivier's combination of politics reminds her that "she is watching one of these evil agitators the government was warning about" (7). This point reminds us of what happened during the Soweto Uprising¹.

On the morning of 16th June 1976 thousands of students from the township of Soweto, outside Johannesburg gathered at their school to participate in a student organized protest demonstration. Many of them carried signs that read "Down with Afrikaans" and Bantu Education. To hell with it" (1).

In addition, Allison met Olivier the second time in a main lecture theatre hall. We are told that Olivier lectured them on the Poetry of W. B Yeats. At the end of the lecture she felt in love with him. In a flash back technique, Martha, Olivier's first wife, recounts to Allison her experience with her husband:

Marta: It was all that politics that got him into trouble.

Allison: That is perfectly true and David would have been the first to agree with you.

Marta: David Olivier was meant to be a poet, not a politician.

¹ Christian Root, "Soweto Student Uprising", Overcoming Apartheid :Building Democracy, Michigan State University, AoDL Publishing, www.Madrix.msu.edu, July 2015.p.1-2

Allison: And he would have told you that in this country you can't separate the two (22).

From the aforementioned excerpt, it is obvious that education has been politicized in South Africa. Olivier is a political poet. He decides to leave his beloved country because he believes that he can change the country by writing. He symbolizes South African writers in the Diaspora. We can get his view in the following excerpt:

Dawid: Yes, it is my decision...Half of the comrades are already over there...My message will travel to all the people. All over the world my charge will be heard... That is why I am leaving the country. My writing is the only weapon I've got. Without it I'm useless. I can't be read, I can't be published. I can't be quoted. You know what comes next... " Why bother? You know they 'll just wake you up again in the middle of the night, search the place, find the manuscript and take away like all the other stuff they have looted from your life. Exile is going to give my voice. (24)

From the aforementioned excerpt, we realise that *Sorrows and Rejoicings* handles the predicaments of South African writers in exile² who contributed to the battle against Apartheid. The Apartheid regime did not allow blacks nor whites to write about South Africa. Fugard himself on several occasions has pointed out that he was always called for interrogation by the South African police. When he wrote *The Blood Knot* and a few days after the screening of the play in Britain on the B.B.C television production, his passport was withdrawn by the Government. So the Government consistently refused to give any reasons for its action against Fugard. Fugard himself declares in the introduction to *Three Port Elizabeth Plays*³ that the confiscation of his passport was intended to intimate and force him into leaving the country permanently on a one-way ticket, the so-called "Exit Permit".

The Government use of withdrawal of passports, particularly in cases where it could not "get at" the person involved by actual imprisonment or by banning order, was seen as a means of purging the society of what it regarded as undesirable elements. Despite all these threats, the thought of leaving the country was always in his mind (xix). Thus, in *Sorrows and Rejoicings*, Fugard pays tribute to South African writers in exile. This is seen in the character of Dawid who claims that half of his compatriots are already on exile. So he has to join them because his writing is the only weapon he possesses which will be part of a better world (44). However, he cannot express himself in South Africa because of the

suppression of the writers' intellect.

Olivier in the play reaches London with very high hopes in education. The first thing he does is to search for a stationery store for writing material- paper, notebooks and pencils. He also gets a teaching job at a Posh school. He is very fond of a Latin Poet called Ovid, who had gone on exile and had written a book of poems about it. So Olivier had published some poems in magazines and in the Anthology of South African poetry (27). Marta on her part recalls the time she met Olivier. By then Olivier was still a student at the University. She remembers the time Olivier used to help her do her homework (38).

From the aforementioned discussion, it is noticeable that education is a predominant theme in Fugard's *Sorrows and Rejoicing*. Although blacks and whites were silenced and excluded in the South African apartheid system, the only option was to go on exile. Olivier in the above-mentioned play symbolises Oliver Tambo. He was an acting president of the African National Congress, the South African anti-apartheid political party. Tambo⁴ served primarily in exile for over thirty years and returned to South Africa in 1990. He handed over the party leadership to Nelson Mandela and died in 1993. In the above play the education of South African writers continues in exile.

Fugard's *Master Harold... and the Boys* also deals with the education of the characters. The subjects in the play are related to Literature, Law, History, Mathematics, Religion, Geography, General knowledge, Philosophy, politics and Music. Thus the type of education in the play is general education.

The principal characters in the play are Hally, Sam and Willie. Hally is a seventeen-old- white boy and a high school student. Sam Samela is a black man of about 50 years. He is a servant in the same house. We do not know much about Sam's academic profile but it is obvious that he is bookish. As the play unravels, we find him reading comic books. We are equally informed that he is knowledgeable in Romance. Therefore, he encourages Willie to "look and learn" (4).

Sam and Hally undergo a question and answer session in universal subjects. Sam picks up a Mathematics textbook entitled *Modern Graded Mathematics for Standard Nine and Ten*. He opens it at random and laughs at something he sees. They examine some mathematical problems.

Sam: " Introduction : In some mathematical problem and magnitude...

Hally: Magnitude

Sam: What's it means?

Hally: How big is it. The size of the thing.

Sam: magnitude of the quantities is of importance. In other problems we need to know whether these qualities

² Some South African writers who went on exile were, Alan Paton , Nadine Gordimer, J.M Coetzee, Peter Abrahams and Alex La Guma.

³ Athol Fugard, *Three Port Elizabeth Plays : The Blood Knot , Hello and GoodBye ,Boesman and Lena*, London : Oxford University Press,1994.p.xix.

⁴ "Tambo, Oliver." (2013) Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica.

are negative or positive . For example, whether is a debit or credit bank balance.

Hally: I don't intend to try.

Sam: So what happens when the exams come?

Hally: Failing a maths exams isn't the end of the world.

Sam. How many times have I told you that examination results don't measure intelligence?....(11)

From the aforementioned discussion, it is realized that Hally has become Sam's student in Mathematics. It is ironical that Mathematics reflects western education as Alan J. Bishop in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*: "Western Mathematics: the Secret of Cultural Imperialism" notes that mathematical ideas like any other ideas, is humanly constructed. Bishop further argues that Mathematics was a deliberate strategy of acculturation (72 to 74).

The setting of *Master Harold and...the Boys* is in the 1950s, when South Africa was still under the apartheid regime. Sam might have become a self-educated man, but he cannot be given a decent job. When Hally notices that Sam has got an upper hand in their argument, he reminds Sam that Winston Churchill did not do well at school. It is ironical that Hally thinks that examination is not the true test of Knowledge. At this juncture, Sam becomes Hally's private teacher.

Moreover, the two characters move from a history lesson to Science. Hally dwells on Charles Darwin's the *Origin of Species*. He believes that Darwin is greater than Napoleon because of his theory of evolution. "Sam illustrates about the struggle for an Existence", but Hally believes that Darwin revolutionized Science. Their debate about great men progresses but Hally still insists that Darwin is a great man of magnitude. Sam reminds Hally about what Abraham Lincoln (1801-1865) did in the United States of America. Lincoln has been described as one of the greatest leaders in American history, but Hally prefers William Wilberforce (1759 to 1833). Wilberforce was a social reformer who led the movement for the abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Following the aforementioned discussion, we realise that Sam and Hally have a mastery of some historical icons. Sam further moves from history to Literature. At this point, their discussion is centred on the literati. Sam mentions William Shakespeare and Hally recalls that he had once read William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. So Hally baptizes their discussion as an intellectual heritage of their civilization. Sam inquires to know another writer. Hally talks about Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy for his social reforms and literary genius. However, Hally thinks that his contribution to literary work is limited.

Also, the two characters drift from South African Politics to History. They discuss about the South African parliamentary system and Napoleon. Sam reads from a history textbook about how Napoleon concluded a peace treaty with Britain in 1802 and used a brief period of truce. Sam admires Napoleon and eulogizes him

because he introduced many reforms and equal opportunities for economic advancement which led to the abolition of the feudal system.

According to Sam, Napoleon was a social reformer. Nevertheless, Hally does not look at Napoleon as a man of greatness because he fought and lost the battle of Waterloo (11). They also make reference to Mahatma Gandhi who went without food to stop riots in India (30).

The aforementioned discussion is typically a history lesson. Sam and Hally are knowledgeable in history. It is important to note that Sam scores more points in the debate as compared to Hally. Thus, Sam is regarded as Hally's Superior. He deals with the force of argument and not the argument of force. It is thanks to these lessons that Hally scores good marks in his Continuous Assessments in school.

Sam and Hally skip from Literature to Religion as they discuss about Jesus Christ and Mohammed. Then they divert their attention to Philosophy, Psychology Medicine, Geography, Art and Music. In Philosophy, they talk about Socrates, Alexandra Dumas, Karl Marx, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche.

Concerning the domain of medicine, Sam stresses on Fleming's book entitled *Microbe Hunters* and comments that the book is a major breakthrough in the domain of medical science in the Twentieth Century. So Hally acknowledges that Sam is a resourceful person (12). In a geographical field, Sam educates Hally about the physical features of South Africa such as "Gold in the Transvaal, mealies and sugar in the Free State. He adds that one can find grapes in the Cape, the Orange, the Vaal, the Limpopo and the Zambezi. Hally becomes very grateful because Sam has got an extraordinary memory. Thus Sam is a resourceful person to Hally. As earlier stated, it is thanks to Sam that Hally does well in his examination.

In addition, the characters delve into Art and Sam baffles Hally on the definition of Art. Hally cannot give an appropriate definition. Sam gives him the correct definition and focuses on ballroom dancing. Hally intends to write about ballroom dancing although Old Doc Bromely, his English Language teacher does not like natives. He notes that even though his English Language teacher does not like natives he will point out to him that in strict anthropological terms the culture of a primitive black society includes its dancing and singing. He gives the definition as the releases of primitive emotions through movements.

Besides, the two characters round off their discussions in world politics. Sam alludes to the Pope and General Smuts. (Afrikaner hero) Hally declares that the United Nations symbolizes a "dancing school for politicians" They brainstorm about a "Little World without Collisions". That is, a global village where everybody will live in peace, happiness, love and harmony. Hally puts the title of his paper as "Global Politics on the Dance Floor" or "Ballroom Dancing as a political vision".

From the foregone analysis, it is noted that education is a burning issue in Fugard's *Master Harold and ...the Boys*. The subjects tackled by Sam and Hally include Mathematics, English, Literature, law, History, Religion, Philosophy, Geography, Science, Art, Politics and Music. It is ironical that the teacher in the play serves in a restaurant. Sam symbolizes intelligent black Old South Africans who cannot afford a job because they have been excluded in the job market. This is because of the Native Education Act that was put in place by the Apartheid regime. This view can be substantiated by the following quotation from "Education for Barbarism" by Tabala. Quoting Mr. N. Le Roux, he states:

we should not give the natives an academic education, as some people are prone to do so. If we do this we shall be burdened with a number of academically trained Europeans and non-Europeans, and who is going to do the manual labour in the country? I am in thorough agreement with the view that we should so conduct our schools that the native who attends those schools will know that to a great extent he must be the labourer in the country (5)

From the aforementioned citation, it is observed that black South Africans were not given adequate education. They were trained to graduate as servants and not as masters. Characters that obtained academic education like Sam were not given the opportunity to obtain decent jobs because, it had been designed by the Apartheid regime that Sam will end his life as a labourer or as a peasant as William Shakespeare has put in *As You Like It*.

"Orlando: My father charged you in his will to give me good education: you have trained me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from me all gentlemanlike qualities..."(35).

So, even though blacks like Sam are educated, they will never be given better jobs. Furthermore, Fugard demonstrates a high sense of education in *My Children! My Africa!* In the play it is observed that a racial gap can be bridged through education. This play opens with a debate between Thamu and Mbikwana, a black student in the same school and Isabel Dyson, a white student from the Town's all White Camelebo Girls High School.

The hero in the play is a township high school teacher who has dedicated his life to his classroom because he is only concerned with what children learn. His neighbours call him teacher or Mr "M"(Anela Myalatya). He is a black man who has never travelled beyond the area where he lives but he voyages through books. His role model is Confucius. Confucius (551 to 479) was a Chinese Philosopher and educator. He is noted as one of the most important individuals in Chinese history. Mr. M has gone against the norms of Confucian objectivity.

He acknowledges that he has a favourite student called Thami Mbikwana. Thami is intelligent and eager to learn. So Mr. M hopes to mould him as one of the most educated men of doctors, lawyers and teachers. These professional educators symbolize the present and future South Africans. He manipulates their memories in order to inculcate a spirit of integrity so that they can transform social injustice that exists in South Africa.

Mr. "M" invites Isabel Dyson, a black student from a nearby white girls schools to debate about gender equality. Thami takes the cons, and Isabel handles the pros and emerges victorious. As a result Mr "M" is impressed and decides to launch a national quiz competition on English Literature. He organizes the two high schools to form a single team, consisting of Thami and Isabel as representatives. The school teacher come to conflict about education in South Africa during apartheid.

The school teacher is a man of traditional values. He believes in slow transition in education, but the young man is angry because he believes in violence as a response to violence. Here, Fugard contemplates if the best way to response to violence or to use bombs and bullets or if violence should be made with violence? He debated these issues internally because most of his friends during apartheid had resulted to violence. They had made local bombs and explosives and tried to explode the bombs. Consequently, they were caught and sentenced to death. Many had gone to exile and were planning to come back and fight. Fugard remained in the country and was forced to ask himself if he should join the fight or educate the people by writing a play. Then he concluded that putting words on paper is a valid form of action.

Mr. M in *My Children! My Africa!* symbolizes the colonial educational policy which alienates the history of blacks and their traditions. Mr. M informs the authorities about the rebellious political activities of his students. Consequently, he is murdered by the very students whose intellectual life he wants to construct. He is killed because he has been brainwashed by the colonizer. Mr. M has betrayed his students and his people. Before his execution, he offered a dictionary to Thami who rejects it:

Mr M: Be careful Thami. Be careful! Be careful! Don't scorn words. They are scared! Magical! Yes, they are. Do you know that without words a man can't think? Yes it's true. Take that thought back with you as a present from the despised Mr. M and share it with the comrades. Tell them the difference between a man and an animal is that a man thinks and he thinks with words ...If the struggles needs weapons, give it words Thami. Stones and petrol bombs can't get inside these armoured cars. Words can. They do something even more devastating than that...I speak to you like this because if I have faith in anything, it is faith in the power of the word. Like my master, the great Confucius, I believe that, using only words, a man

can right a wrong and judge and execute wrongdoer. You are meant to use words like that (Fugard, 1990: 220 to 221)

From the aforementioned citation, it is noted that you throw stones and bullets, but you can do much damage if you do not use words. Fugard himself observes that words can get inside the heads of people who are driving armoured cars. Thus, education can affect and change the audience watching or reading the play. Furthermore, Mr. M in his classroom holds a rock in one hand and a dictionary on the other hand. This implies that the dictionary is for those who believe in non violence while the stone is dedicated to those who believe in armed struggle to regain power. On the contrary, Mr. "M" believes in solving disputes through dialogue.

Besides, Fugard suggests that the English Literature which Thami and Isabel study is not necessary the main one, but it should be related to African literature which is strongly projected by Ngugi, Achebe and other African writers. The play also dwells on integration and reconciliation. For instance, after the school debate, Thami and Isabel briefly exchange their biographies and intellectual views about education.

In short, the play decries the old South African educational curriculum. Here, we notice the futility of the use of English text books in African education. The colonial system of education⁵ that promoted inequality and encouraged the superiority of whites over the blacks as Ngugi in *Homecoming* clearly asserts that: "the educational system reflected this inequality and encouraged a slave mentality, with reverent awe for achievements of Europe"(14). Thami in *My Children! My Africa!* lashes out against the educational system of Uncle Dave, the Regional Inspector of Bantu Schools. The type of education that is promoted by the inspector and his project and nourishes the image of the European world by claiming that Europe was the centre of the universe and that Africa was discovered by Europe. Africa was also regarded as an expansion of Europe. In this vein, it was represented and defined by Eurocentric values. It is in this connection that Thami informs the audience:

Thami: Do you understand now why it is not easy as it used to be to sit behind desk and learn only what Dawie has decided that I must know? My head is rebellious. It refuses now to remember when the Dutch landed, and the Huguenots landed, and the British landed. It has already forgotten when the Old Union became the proud young republic. But it doesn't know what happened in Kliptown in 1955, in Sharperville on 21st March 1960, and in Soweto, 1976. Do you? Better find out because those are dates your children will have to learn one day. We don't need the Zollie-classrooms anymore. We know

words really are...traps which have been carefully set to catch our minds, our souls (212)

From Thami's words, we understand, truly, that the education that was given to black South Africans was for the interest of the colonizers and not for the interest of blacks. Here we wonder why a black teacher like Mr. M encourages the participation of students in a context whose very core excludes the rich cultural heritage of Africans and is replaced by literature of the other. By implication, European Literature represents the cultural heritage of a relatively small handful of the South African population. This view is reminiscent of what Ngugi argues in *Homecoming* that "in history people learnt about the rise of the Anglo-Saxons as if they were true ancestors of the human race. Even in geography, the rocks of Europe had to be studied before coming to Africa"(ibid). Thami in the play comes to self-realisation and acknowledges:

"We have woken up at last. We have another school...anywhere the people meet and whisper names we have been told to forget, the dates and events they try to tell us never happened, and the speeches they try to say were never made" (Fugard, 1990: 212).

Thami would like to study African history which has been distorted and obliterated. Thami's decolonization of the mind is a protest against the educational system of the colonizers which was intended to colonise the minds of the colonized. Ngugi argues in *Decolonizing the Mind*⁶ that if there is need for the study of historic continuity of a single culture, why can't African culture be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relation to it? (Ngugi, 1972: 15). Ngugi terms this situation "cultural bomb". As he puts it:

But the biggest weapon ... and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against the collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's beliefs in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capabilities and ultimately, in themselves. (3)

Ngugi further states that the Berlin conference of 1884 was affected through the sword and bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. He adds that the physical violence of the battle field was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom (9). From the preceding discussion, it is evident that education is a predominant issue in Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* Thus Fugard x-rays the South Africa's educational system and lampoons against the Bantu educational system that existed in South Africa.

⁵ Ngugi waThiong'O, *Homecoming*, New York :Lawrence and Hill Company,1972.p.14.

Postcolonial critics view education as the most insidious and in some ways the most cryptic of colonialist survivals. Older systems of education have been transformed into neo-colonial transfigurations. This is produced through established curricula, syllabuses, and set texts. In addition, the condition of production and consumption of education and its technologies have not uttered the unequal power relations between the educational producers and the peripheral consumers of education. So education, whether state or missionary, primary or secondary (and later tertiary) was a massive cannon in the artillery of empire (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

Fugard's *Coming Home* also addresses the problem of illiteracy. The title of the play symbolizes a psychological journey. That is, the journey within the individual. In this play it is realized that the black or coloured South African is still suffering from high rate of illiteracy. Mannetjie Jonkers represents a literate South African while Alfred stands for an uneducated South African. Alfred cannot read. When there is a letter he looks for someone to read for him. This view is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Alfred: Four letters. Here they are. I am keeping them for you. First this one, then this one... He was already gone when he came. I didn't open it. The day there was a letter we did almost no work. First I had to go find Harsie kloppers to read the letters for us. Remember him? He was almost as good as you in school. Then he would all sit under the walnut tree and listen to Hansie reading them...Oupa didn't believe Hansie was reading them everything in the letter, so he would argue with him telling him he was cheating and that he didn't read everything, because, why Veronica didn't say where she was living now and what he was eating...and all the things that Oupa wanted to know. And then Hansie would get the hell and tell Oupa not to ask him read anymore letters and walk off. Me and Oupa would go on sitting these with letters as if the letters were going to speak to him and answer all his questions (Fugard, 2010: 19 to 20)

From the aforementioned excerpt, we realise that illiteracy brings frustration as Oupa does not believe that everything has been read in the letter. He doubts the reader because of inferiority complex. He handles the letter in depression because the letters cannot talk to him. Similarly, Oupa takes Veronica's letter to Janmei to read it because she doubts if Veronica will tell him the truth in the letter (40-41). This is the effect of illiteracy in *Valley Song*. As stated earlier, illiteracy is an unceasing problem in South Africa because twenty-two years ago many black South Africans could not go to school. However, Mannetjie is regarded by Veronica as a literate and clever black South African. This can be illustrated as follows:

Alfred: Where is Mannetjie?

Veronica: Still at school. He is helping the new teacher.

Miss Viljeon-with something. I think he is her favourite. It's always Miss Viljeon wants this or Miss Viljeon wants that.

Alfred: Because he is clever.

Veronica: He knows all the words in his school books. Spell them right as well. There's even some words I don't know.

Alfred: Me also. I was okay at country, remember, but not reading and writing. I tried hard there in the classroom, but I could never get the big words right. And then what is the difference between a noun and a verb. No, thank you.

Veronica: Okay at counting? You were useless man. I was cheating for you all the time. All you ever tried hard to do was get a ride on somebody's bicycle. (26)

The aforementioned dialogue has educational undertones. We find two characters who are very interested in school life. In a discussion amongst Mannetjie, Alfred and Veronica, it is noticeable that Mannetjie is a good reader and a storyteller. Consequently, he ends up as a writer in the play. He symbolizes those whose future lies in their education.

Alfred: There you have it.

Veronica: Read us some of it while I get the supper ready-Bokkie... Come now! Why not? Don't be shy. We won't laugh if you make some mistakes, not so Alfred?

Mannetjie: I won't make any mistakes. I read it to Miss Viljeon and I didn't make any mistakes.

Veronica: That's wonderful, my darling, but now please read us a little bit as well.

Mannetjie: No. Not now. I'll read to you when he's gone...(34).

Veronica: But you make stories all the time. You are always telling me stories that you make up.

Mannetjie: Not like that. I mean like Klontie in a book.

Veronica: The same way, but instead of telling me, you write down on paper. And then one day somebody comes and puts it in a book. Klontie was first just a story in somebody's head first, and he wrote it down on paper. Get the story in your head first, and then write it down on paper using all your nice words. (37-38)

The foregone dialogue justifies the dictum that education is a predominant issue in the play. Mannetjie's hope is redemption in education. In other words, his future lies in education. Fugard stresses much on education because many black South Africans focussed their attention on a revolution and not on education. Most of them fought to overcome Apartheid; little did they know that education is the gateway to better job opportunities. So since Apartheid ended nothing has really changed in the economic lives of the blacks because they could not get lucrative jobs.

Nelson Mandela's domestic policy was centered on education of black South Africans. So he believed that

education is the only weapon that can change a nation. In addition, Jacob Zuma's speech in February 2014 stresses on the education of South Africans⁷ as he posits: "We are happy therefore that there is a huge increase in the enrolment of children in school, from pre-primary to tertiary level. The number of children attending Grade R has more than doubled, moving from about 300 thousand to more than 700 thousand between 2003 and 2011..." (8, State of the Nation Address 2014). Having analysed the politics of education in Fugard's plays, we are now going to examine education in Wilson's *Fences*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson* and *the Seven Guitars*.

Education in the selected plays of Wilson

The characters in Wilson's *Fences* do not have a reading culture because they are not initiated into it. Most of the characters have not received adequate education because they did not have the right to decent education. Also, ex-slave holders did not want equal education of black people. So this has affected the characters under study. Cory is the only student we find in the play, but he intends to abandon studies and play football. His father thinks that Cory is doing a part-time job in a company. The job can help him look after himself while studying. His father becomes very disgruntled when he realizes that Cory is only interested in playing football.

Troy: I thought you supposed to be working down there after school at A and P. Ain't you supposed to working down there after school?...You go and get your book learning so you can fix cars or build houses, or something, get you a trade. That you can have something can't nobody take away from you. You go and learn how to put your hands to some good use. Besides having people's garbage. (Wilson, 2011: 2263-2264)

Troy in the aforementioned excerpt thinks that technical education can provide a better future for his son, but he is angry because his son wants to abandon school. Troy believes in the American dream which entails a lot of hard work. So he advocates the educational policies of Booker T. Washington. The American dream has to do with the belief that freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success. That life has to be better for everybody depending on his or her achievement no matter the social class. He thinks that if his son works after school, he can make his life better. Ironically, the American dream has become a nightmare for African Americans because they have not been given equal opportunities in the job market. Furthermore, in a discussion between Bono and Lyons on the importance of reading, it is noted that white people read more than

black people. This point is buttressed by the following dialogue:

Bono: Your daddy got a promotion on the rubbish. He's gonna be the first colored driver. Ain't got to do nothing but sit up there and read the paper like white fellows.

Lyons: Hep pop... If you knew how to read you'd be alright. (2268)

From the aforementioned excerpt, Lyons thinks that anyone who knows how to read can live a satisfactory life if he is empowered. So it is noticeable that illiteracy is highlighted in the play. Although some blacks have got jobs which were only possessed by whites, they lack a reading culture. However, blacks have undergone informal education because they have retentive memories. Bono stresses that Troy has "some uncle Remus in his blood" because "he has more stories than the devil has sinners".

Uncle Remus was an old slave and folk philosopher whose proverbs were recorded by Joel Chandler Harris (1848 to 1908)⁸. He was a famous story-teller. Some of his stories provided an important record of black oral folktales in Southern United States. The collections of his stories include *Remus, His Songs and Sayings (1880)*, *Nights with Uncle Remus and his Friends (1852)*, and *Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit (1906)*. From aforementioned, it is evident that Troy has knowledge of Legends and events of local blacks. It is important to note that whites are highly responsible for the illiteracy level of blacks, because in the Southern parts of the USA. Reading and writing was synonymous to running.

Furthermore, Wilson delineates the problem of illiteracy in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. In this play Sturdyvant symbolizes an educated black American. It is ironical that he is self-taught but misunderstands and misapplies his knowledge. His insights are thought provoking (560). It is realized that most of the characters do not know how to read nor write. Let's take a glance at the following excerpt:

Levee: Toledo, I'd just like to be inside your head for five minutes. Just to see how you think. You done got mixed up there than the devil got sinners. You been reading too many goddamn books.

Toledo: What you care about how much I read? I'm gonna ignore you' cause you ignorant.(563)

Toledo: Ain't said nothing to you now. Don't let Toledo get started. You can't even spell music much less than play it.

Levee: What are you talking about? I can't spell music. I got a dollar say I can spell it! Put your dollar up. Talking about I can't spell music.

Toledo: All right, I'm gonna show you, Cutler. Slow Drag. You hear this? The nigger betting me a dollar he can

⁷ Jacob Zuma, "An Address of the State of the Nation". February 2014. www.thepresidency.gov.za, pebble.p 8 .

⁸ "Joel Chandler Harris"(2013).Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica.

spell music. All right. Go ahead spell it?...You ought to have learned how to read...then you'd understand the basic understanding of everything (Wilson, 2011: 564)

From the aforementioned dialogue, we realise that there is a scuffle about reading, spelling and writing. Levee complains that Toledo reads a lot. He has read over a thousand books. Toledo on his part responds that Levee should mind his own business, because he is not supposed to care about what Toledo reads. At this juncture, Toledo insults Levee that he cannot even spell the word music, but he wants to play it, and he stresses that if he learns how to read, he will understand the basis of everything. Slowdrag intervenes and reminds Toledo that he reads for pleasure. However, there are people who gain pleasure by doing other things. Cutler has a different line of thought about this. He thinks that African Americans used to have good time before reading was introduced. So he thinks that they can continue to live happily without reading. The following conversation bears witness to this view:

Slowdrag: Both of you all gonna drive me crazy with that philosophy bullshit. Cutler, Give me a reefer. (566)

Slow Drag: Toledo, just' cause you like them books and study and what not. That's your good time. People get other things they likes to have a good time. Ain't no need you picking them about it.

Cutler: Niggers been having a good time before you were born and they gonna keep having a good time after you gone.

Toledo: Yeah, but what else they gonna do?Ain't nobody talking about making the lot of the colored man better for him here in America.

Levee: Now you gonna be Booker T. Washington. That's the problem with Toledo reading all them books and things. He don't got to point where he forgot how to laugh and have a good time....(572)

Considering the aforementioned views, it is evident that the characters in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* are conscious of what education means to them. Cutler thinks that blacks can live successfully without reading, but he does not understand that a black man's life could be better if he improved on learning.

Booker T. Washington in the play epitomizes pioneers educated African Americans. He believed in vocational education for blacks in the United States of America. Washington rose from slavery to become an influential and effective black educator. He was the founder and first president of Tuskegee Institute which was devoted to the development of black teachers as well as agricultural and vocational education (Le Blanc, 2003: 55).

Also, Washington "from 1884 Speech" said whatever benefits the Negro will benefit the whites, and he strongly believed that the education of African-American men would settle the question of the civil rights. Hence, he claimed that quality teachers and a good pay package

will solve the problem of racism. In addition, he reminded blacks that the ex-slave holders did not want general education of the coloured man on the ground that when the black man is educated he ceases to do manual labour. He concluded that if the black man is educated mentally and industrially, there will be no doubts of his prosperity (Le Blanc, 2003: 129). However, Booker T. and W.E.B Dubois disagreed on the type of education that is needed for blacks. Consider the following discussion:

... Booker T., It shows a mighty lot of cheek to study Chemistry and Greek when Mr. Charlie needs a hand to hoe the cotton on his land and wants Miss Ann looks for a cook. Stick your nose inside a book.

I don't agree, ... W.E.B: If I should have the drive to seek knowledge of Chemistry or Greek, I'll do it. Charles and Miss can look another place for hand and cook. Some men rejoice in skill of hand and some in cultivating land, but there are others who maintain the right to cultivate the brain.

... Booker T:... Who shout about the right to vote, and spend vain days and sleepless nights in uproar over civil rights? Just keep your mouth shut do not grouse, but work and save and buy a house... W.E.B :... For what can property avail if dignity and justice fail. Unless you help to make the laws, they'll steal your house with trumped-up clause. ...No matter how much cash you've got. Speak soft, and try your little plan, but as for me, I'll be a man... (Emmanuel and Theodore, 1968: 491).

The aforementioned discussion is centred on education of the mind and education of the hands. The education of the mind refers to academic education while the education of the hands has to do with technical education. Wilson believes so much in self- education:

I think that both forms of education are necessary for the wellbeing of the society.

In an "Interview between Wilson and Bigsby" in *August Wilson Cambridge Companion*, Wilson reiterates that he did not want his mother to know that he was a school dropout. So he would go to the library and spend the time that he would have been in school. He found it liberating because he was confronted with various kinds of books. He was very fortunate that all the knowledge that man had accumulated was found in books. So he explored the library and all the subjects that attracted him:

Things like Anthropology and Theology. I read books that I never would have read had I not been free. I was feeling the responsibility to educate myself...I wanted to show the content of the lives of the people in order to show where music came from... I was fuelled by the ideas and attitudes I absorbed from reading. (Wilson, 2011: 203-208).

Wilson might have been influenced by a Richard Wright in the light of education. Wright's *Black Boy* presents a character who overcomes his impoverished background to pursue a career in writing. Wright describes how as an adolescent he would forge notes in order to check out books from the city library. The books he read taught him new ways at looking at the world (Tyrone, 2009: 177-178)⁹. In my humble opinion, black people all over the world should be concerned with all forms of education.

Education in *The Piano Lesson* concerns the history of African-Americans. Felicia Hardison in "The Piano and its history" points out that the importance of history in the play is to find out who you are and where you have been. History in this play is not the kind that people learn in a school. It is a repository of family and community. It is projected through storytelling which awakens some elements of the past and contributes to the lives of the living (144). Besides, Wilson in the preface to *King Hedley II* stresses that:

"...The tributary of streams of culture, history and experience have provided me with the materials out of which I make my art (Viii).

The main problem in the play is that Willie needs to sell a carved piano from Berniece's parlour and use the share of his money to buy land. His relatives do not want him to sell it because the piano has a family history which dates back from the period of slavery (42). We are informed that the characters in the play are about seventy-two years from slavery. Doaker gives an account of the family history in the following words:

Doaker: See, our family was owned by a fellow named Joel Nolander. He was one of the Nolander brothers from down Georgia. It was coming up to buy his wife...Miss Ophelia was her name...He was looking to buy her an anniversary present...he ain't had no money. But he had some niggers. So he asked Mr. Nolander to see if maybe he could trade off some of his niggers for that piano. Told him he could give him one and a half niggers for it. That is the way he told him. He didn't want Sutter to give him just any old nigger. He say he wanted to have the pick of the litter. So Sutter lined up his niggers and Mr. Nolander looked them over and out of the whole bunch he picked up my daddy when he wasn't nothing but a little boy of nine years old. They made trade off and Miss Ophelia was so happy with that piano that it got to be just about all she would do was play on that piano...Now, that's how all that got started and that why we say Berniece ain't gonna sell that piano. Cause her daddy died over it. (42-47)

The aforementioned quotation reiterates the importance of history in the lives of African Americans. It is senseless

and useless to acquire wealth without knowledge of the history of wealth because wealth may diminish. The white Sutter family can be traced back to the slave owner Robert Sutter who acquired the piano for his wife, Miss Ophelia, in exchange of two slaves. Robert Sutter was the grandfather of James Sutter whose ghost now haunts the black family.

While the history covers three generations of white Sutters, the black Charles family has an oral history which transcends three generations. Their history can be traced back to Boy Charles who married Mama Esther and fathered Willie Boy. The family history was carved by Willie Boy's wife, Berniece and their nine year old son were auctioned to a man named Joel Nolander from Georgia. We are told that Willie Boy's son was freed and returned to Mississippi where he became the father of three boys. Boy Charles, Wining Boy and Doaker. The eldest, Boy Charles married Mama Ola and her two children: Berniece and Boy Willie. Berniece's eleven-year-old daughter Maretha, by her late husband Crawley is the sixth generation of the Charles family. Maretha practices on the piano, but she knows nothing about its story.

The debate about the piano becomes very serious that Berniece fetches a gun to stop Willie from taking it. Both children acknowledge that their family history is related to the piano. They differ over how the historical past should be allowed or used to impact on the present. Wilson stresses on the importance of a family's legacy by posing these questions: What do you do with your family legacy and how do you best put it to use?

The family portraits carved on the piano decorate its exterior, and the horrors of slavery are contained in the interior. Even though Berniece refuses to play the piano, she does not want to wake the spirits of her tormented ancestors. She thinks that it would be a betrayal to sell a piano which so much family blood was shed. Boy Willie argues that if Berniece were using the piano to give lessons and generate income, he would be happy to have it stay in the family. Since she does not play it is useless. It stands in the living room like a mere piece of wood. It could be sold to provide money to build his future. The piano is very valuable in that it represents the status of folk art. Pianos originated from European music literature. With black hands on the keyboard, the instruments produce a new world of musical material like blues and jazz that was appreciated by white musicians. Wining Boy also tells us that the piano can be used as a means of survival:

Wining Boy: Go to a place and they find out that you play the piano, the first thing they want to do is to give you a drink, find you a paino, and sit you right down. And that's where you gonna be for the next eight hours. They ain't gonna let you get up...You can't do nothing else. All you know is to play that paino. Now, Who am I? Am I me? Or am I the piano player? (113-141) highly didactic

From the aforementioned quotation, *The Piano Lesson* is

⁹ Tyrone Williams (2009) *Masterplots II, African American Literature*. Ed. New Jersey :Harlem Press Inc. p.177-178

in the sense that it stresses on the importance of a family history and cultural heritage. It gives the characters a sense of belonging and the quest for roots. Hence, education in the play is centered on a history lesson. The characters in the play have not received formal education. That is why they depend on the piano in order to recall their history. They would have documented their history in a written form.

Education in *The Seven Guitars* can be examined in the character of Hedley. Hedley reminisces about a time when he was younger and this calls up the memory of his father. When Hedley was a boy in school, his teacher was teaching a lesson on Toussaint L'Ouverture and basically told Hedley and his classmates that they would never be like him, since then, Hedley wanted to be like him. When he returned home from school, he asked his father why he did nothing instead of being like Toussaint L'Ouverture and that landed him a kick in the mouth. From that point on, Hedley gave up hope on becoming anything and remained silent in the presence of his father. On his father's death bed however, Hedley came to apologize for this incident and when he said his long speech, he realized it was too late and his father was already dead. This made him sorrowful and as he states that until Marcus Garvey comes and says that it was not true. The aforementioned idea is illustrated in the following speech:

Hedley: When I was a little boy I learn about Toussaint-L'Ouverture in the school. Miss Manning. She say, Listen, you little black-as-sin niggers, you never each and none of you amount to nothing, you grow up to cut the white man cane and your whole life you never can be nothing as God is my witness, but I will tell you of a black boy who was a man and made the white man run from the blood in the street. Like that, you know. Then she tell us about Toussaint-L'Ouverture. I say I going to be just like that. Everybody say that, you know. I go home and my daddy he sitting there and he big and black and tired taking care of the white man's horses, and I say, —How come you not like Toussaint-L'Ouverture, why you do nothing? And he kick me with him boot in my mouth. I shut up that day, you know, and then when Marcus Garvey come he give me back my voice to speak (Wilson, 1986: 108).

From the aforementioned quotation, Hedley was cautioned that he will never be something in life. In other words, he will end up as a useless man. But he came to understand that through education, he can be equal or better than the whiteman. Hedley's speech is reminiscent of Marcus Garvey's speech on "African Fundamentalism (1925): A Racial Hierarchy Empire for Negroes. Negro's Faith Must be Confident in itself. His creed: One God, One Aim, One Destiny". It should be borne in mind that Garvey is an African-American theoretician. Here, Garvey asserts that Africans and African-Americans must inspire a literature and promulgate a doctrine of their own without

any apologies to the whites. He stresses that African-Americans are entitled to their own opinions and not obligated to or bound by the opinions of whites (Le Blanc, 2003, 133). He also posits that Africans-Americans should not be discouraged because the Arts and Sciences that are in Europe and America were stolen from Africa (133). As indicated earlier, Hedley in *the Seven Guitars* is inspired by Marcus Garvey:

Hedley: It was on my father's deathbed, with Death standing there, I say to him, Father, I sorry about Toussaint-Louverture, Miss Manning say nobody ever amount to nothing and I never did again try. Then Marcus Garvey come and say that it was not true and that she lied and I forgive you kick me and I hope as God is with us now but a short time more that you forgive me my tongue. It was hard to say these things, but I confess my love for my father and Death standing there say, —I ready took him a half hour ago. And he cold as a boot, cold as a stone and hard like iron. I cried a river of tears but he was too heavy to float on them. So I dragged him with me these years across an ocean. Then my father come to me in a dream and he say he was sorry he died without forgiving me my tongue and that he would send Buddy Bolden with some money for me to buy a plantation. Then I get the letter from the white man who come to take me away. So I say, —Hedley, be smart, go and see Joe Roberts. We sat and talked man to man (Wilson, 1986: 109).

From the aforementioned excerpt, we realise that there is the suppression of the intellect. Marcus Garvey, the African-American theorist, urged Africans to recognise their own saints, create their own martyrs and elevate them to positions of fame and honour.

In brief, he stated that Africans should believe in themselves. Hedley's dream to become like Toussaint L'Ouverture has been suppressed by his history teacher and his father. These two people symbolize intellectual repression in the African-American community. Toussaint was self-educated. He acted as physician to the insurgent army and became a leader of the Haitian slave revolt, a 1791 black slave uprising against the French colonial regime. After France abolished slavery in the territory in 1794, Toussaint supported the French rulers of the country against British invaders and was made a general in 1795.

In 1801, he succeeded, after many struggles, in liberating Saint-Dominique from French control and became president for life of a new republic. In 1802, Napoleon sent troops under the command of his brother-in-law, General Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc, to subdue the Haitians. Toussaint was defeated, captured, and accused of conspiracy. He was taken to France, where he was imprisoned and died the next year. He is honoured today as one of the founders and heroes of Haiti (Encarta 2009). Wilson expresses the quest for knowledge by Hedley in the *Seven Guitars*, but this

knowledge has been shattered. Marcus Garvey used to talk about Toussaint L'Ouverture and his exploits.

The type of education that blacks in America received in the 17th century was given by benevolent slave masters. In the South, teaching literacy to blacks was an offense which was punishable by huge fines and imprisonment. It is in this connection that Gary Pauls (1997) in *Sarny: a Life Remembered* describes African Americans in the plantations:

Women at first had the time and some kind of toughness so they could learn at night even after working in the day. Men were little slower. They worked until they dropped, busted and sore and didn't have much left for learning, but they did just the same, only slower. Seemed everybody was reading and then it spread...one would help two and two would help four and nearly everybody came to know reading and writing and then it went to other plantations and they tried to stop it. The men with whips and dogs they tried to stop it because they knew what it meant. Meant we were learning, coming to know how it was other places, other times...Some read and some listened to the others who read, some started to run. Run north. Running was the same like reading. It started slow like molasses at first. They'd to run and get caught, get whipped, get cut, get hung sometimes, get killed sometimes. But they kept running, trying it, because they knew from reading could they stay with it,...they could be free. Free to read what they wanted to read, know what they wanted to know, free to be more (9-10).

From the aforementioned quotation, it is noticeable that blacks in the South of America did not have the right to education. In the North the situation was different because, many educators attempted teaching former slaves various skills and trade that would enable blacks possess economic independence.

Dubois, the African American theoretician, became a national figure because of his classic debate with Booker T. Washington. The debate centred on the future direction and the training and education of African Americans. Dubois felt that while there was need for industrial training, pursuing education in the liberal arts was also essential for African Americans. He thought that academic education would serve blacks better than vocational training, and he argued that vocational education would put blacks in permanent servitude to whites. Furthermore, he claimed that only academic education would lead to social, economic and political equality between blacks and whites. So Dubois emphasized on learning Greek and Latin, and he occupied students with the works of Shakespeare.

On the contrary, Washington felt that since the primary opportunities available for African Americans were in industrially oriented occupations, it was more appropriate for African Americans to fill the need at all cost, including the forfeiting of some rights. Booker T. Washington

argued that the minority status of blacks could prevent them from gaining political or social equality and proposed that blacks should purchase large farms and learn trade which they could offer goods and services to the white community (Taylor 23).

In addition, Washington in "The Struggle for an Education" recounts that the first black students graduated in the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia. He points out that the older he grows the more he is convinced that there is no education which one can get from books and costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women. So instead of studying books so constantly, it is advisable to study people and things (30).

Washington's ideals are propagated by Willie in *The Piano Lesson*. In the play, Willie Boy wants to sell the Piano which symbolizes the family legacy because he wants to buy land. He believes that land, products and skills would give blacks economic independence and establish strong relationships with whites. It is against this backdrop that education becomes political.

Some African writers are also preoccupied with the theme of education in their works. For example, John Nkemngong, (2004) Nkemngasong's *Across the Mongolo* unfolds with Ngwe's educational profile from Class One in primary school to the university level. After a sound high school education in the Anglophone State of Kama, Ngwe Nkemasaah goes to the Ngola to acquire university education in Besaadi, the only state university in Kamangola. However, Ngwe experiences difficulties as he studies in a language he does not understand. Consequently, he is excluded from the educational system. He suffers from schizophrenia and returns to Kama for cleansing (1).

CONCLUSION

We have examined the politics of educational exclusion in the selected plays of Fugard and Wilson. It is observed that both playwrights are concerned with literacy. Most of the characters in the selected plays do not have a reading culture. It is also discovered that white people read more than blacks. However, blacks have undergone informal education which is helping them. They need formal education to improve on their standards of living.

Hence, education becomes very political when it has to be examined and confirmed by the 'other'. The problem of education in the selected plays under study has not yet been solved because the education of blacks is still tailored by whites. The gap between the whites and the blacks in terms of educational standards is still very wide in South Africa and the United States of America respectively.

Black people need to put more efforts on all forms of education in order to equate themselves with white people. This may help to narrow the gap between black

and white races. The whites dominate and rule Africans and African-Americans through what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. Education is regarded as a conquest of another kind of territory. Therefore, education remains one of the most powerful discourses within the context of colonialism and neo-colonialism (Ashcroft et al., 1989: 425-430). Education means liberation. Wilson and Fugard have dwelt on the role of education in the lives of the characters.

From the aforementioned analysis, it is noticeable that the solutions to problems raised in the plays lie in education. Educational curriculum and planning should therefore be tailored by Africans for Africans and African-Americans, so that the gap between the “servant” and the “master” can be narrowed. Education should also serve black interest rather than a blind espousal of Western curricula with its colonising content.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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