

# The Politics of Criminology in the Selected Plays of Athol Fugard and August Wilson

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**Abstract:** South Africa suffers from high levels of crime and violence. So Apartheid has been replaced by violent crime. Apartheid's physical violence could be seen as South African Police regularly suppressed protests marches. The South African police killed approximately twenty thousand young people during the Soweto Uprising of 1976 when black students protested against the use of Afrikaans as language of instruction. Besides, the xenophobic attacks of 2008, 2009, 2015 and 2019 indicate that crime is extremely high in South Africa. Similarly, the United States of America continues to record high rate of violent crime, particularly, in African American neighbourhoods. Crime has recorded untold suffering on blacks in both communities and is still felt today. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the Politics of Criminology in the selected plays of Athol Fugard and August Wilson. Using the Postcolonial theory and Psychoanalysis, the paper argues that blacks are lured by whites to commit crimes that would prevent them from engaging in mainstream activities. Thus, crime in this context is observed as a political manoeuvre used by whites to exclude Africans and African Americans respectively. Consequently, the characters in the selected plays of both authors are deracinated from their patrimony and cultural identity. The paper further argues that crime like sin seems to have an indefinite path, but it can be reduced if many blacks study and practice law in racial communities. The way forward to the problem of crime lies in the comprehension, application and the mastery of black codes vis-à-vis white laws. Therefore, it is observed that Fugard and Wilson have contributed immensely to African and African American criminological thought.

**Key Words:** Criminology, Politics, Postcolonial, Psychoanalysis and Patrimony.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This study examines the politics of criminology in the selected plays of Athol Fugard and August Wilson. The plays in question include Fugard's *Statements: Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *The Island*, *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* (1986), *The Blood Knot* (1972), *Master Harold and the Boys* (1984), *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2002) and Wilson's *Fences* (1986), *The Piano Lesson* (1990), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1985), *Gem of the Ocean* (2003) and *The Seven Guitars* (1986). The study discusses how blacks are discriminated and lured by whites to commit crimes in order to prevent them from engaging in mainstream activities. Crime in this context is regarded as a political manoeuvre to exclude Africans and African-Americans respectively. The research paper is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the politics of criminology in the selected plays of

Fugard and the second section has to do with the politics of criminology in Wilson's selected plays.

## II. THE POLITICS OF CRIMINOLOGY IN FUGARD'S SELECTED PLAYS

Athol Fugard is highly concerned with crime in his plays. The criminal acts in the plays are caused by apartheid laws. The laws were drafted to favour whites and disfavour blacks. Consequently, most blacks found themselves wanted. *The Island* portrays a suppressed black opposition languishing in Robben Island prison. The characters are political offenders because they are engaged in criminal behaviour that violates apartheid laws. What takes place in this play symbolises what happens in prison camps. Thus, it is remarked that many black South Africans were condemned to life imprisonment during apartheid. The burning of the passbook in front of the police station is a sign of protest against unjust laws. The passbook was a strategy that was designed by the whites to exclude black South Africans from lucrative jobs that could empower black people. So anyone who protested against it was imprisoned without trial for life.

The notorious Robben Island Prison which is justified in the title of the play is where Nelson Mandela was held captive for eighteen years. As Hood (2008) maintains that every performance of the play was the national and international call for the immediate release of Nelson Mandela, political prisoners and detainees. It is also remarked that when the actors performed the play in England and returned to South Africa in 1976, they were taken into solitary confinement and detained for twenty-three days before they continued to use theatre to contest apartheid in South Africa. It is in this connection that in 1995, Nelson Mandela instructed Kani and Ntshona to perform *The Island* (Hood, 2008:1).

Besides, black men who belonged to the African National Congress in the play were imprisoned. John has been imprisoned for belonging to a banned organization. Later in the play, his sentence has been reduced, and he has barely three months to be set free. *The Island* has judicial undertones. The register reflects crime and punishment as Winston comments: "Jesus Christ! Learn to dig for Hodoshe, learn to run for Hodoshe, and what happens when I get back to cell? Learn to read Antigone" (Fugard, 1986:52). The above assertions represent the torture the prisoners go through in the cell. All what they do is for the pleasure of their master.

In addition, John and Winston decide to play Sophocle's *Antigone* for their fellow prisoners and guards. Antigone is the accused and is charged with political crime against the state. She is charged with burying her brother. In the first stage, the state lays its charges against the accused. Secondly, Antigone pleads guilty even though John and Winston are aware that Antigone is not guilty. Thirdly, Antigone pleads in Mitigation of sentence, and the fourth stage is the sentence (52-54).

The play is based on bad laws that must be defied as John puts it:

John: ... The law! Yes. The law. A three letter word, and how many times have you glibly used it, never bothering to ask yourselves, what then is the law? Or if you have, then making recourse to such clichés as 'the law states this...or the law states that'. The law states or maintains nothing, good people. The law defends! The law is no more than a shield in your faithful servant's hand to protect YOU!...so too the law has its edge. The penalty!...(Fugard,1986:74).

From the above quote, we understand that the law is biased because it is drafted to favour a particular group of people. Consequently, innocent and poor people suffer from the long arm of the law because it is used to exclude the underprivileged class, notably the blacks. Fugard as a political playwright exposes the atrocities of the apartheid regime and its impact on blacks. Hence, the *Island* is a theatre of defiance as Fugard notes that in the eight years of their existence as Serpent Players they had to cope with the imprisonment of some members on political charges and with police harassment and isolation ((Fugard ,1986:ii).From the above discussion, it is evident that *the Island* symbolizes Fugard's notion of criminology.

Similarly, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* presents the problem of the passbook. Bantu explains to Sizwe the consequences of not possessing a passbook. According to the pass laws, all blacks, sixteen years of age and over were required to carry a reference book. It indicated an individual's identity number, his employment history, where he was permitted to be, and what taxes he had to pay. An employer had to sign the book monthly, and no black could leave one job for another without a discharge signature. Anyone who did not abide by these rules was imperilled to arrest, since failure to do so was a criminal offence (Ashcroft, 2000:14).

Furthermore, Buntu accompanies Sizwe to a rubbish pile where they come across a man lying. Buntu skilfully removes his identity card and changes it with that of a dead man whose name is Robert Zwelinzima. This implies that blacks can only succeed in South Africa through fraudulent acts. The pass law was unjust. So blacks can only seek justice by defying the law. As a consequence most blacks end up in prisons. Some of the characters in the play are afraid to report cases about death to the police because of what may befall them. Buntu's passbook is not in order (32).

Man : I'm afraid. How do I get used to Robert ? How do I live as another man's ghost ?

Buntu: Wasn't Sizwe Bansi a ghost?

Man : No

Buntu: When the white man looked at you in the Labour Bureau what did he see? A man with dignity or a bloody passbook with an N.I number? Isn't that a ghost? When the white man sees you walk down the street and calls out, 'hey, John! Come here'...to you,...Sizwe Bansi...isn't that a ghost? Or when his little child calls you 'Boy'...you are a man, circumcised with a wife and children... isn't that a ghost? Stop fooling yourself. All I'm saying is to be a real ghost...! (Fugard, 1986:38).

From the foregoing dialogue, the word ghost has been repeated several times to show that black men are living shadows. Sizwe Bansi cannot be free by merely abandoning the passbook and adopting another name because what the white man has written in the passbook is part of his identity. Now that he has changed his name he has to live like another man's ghost. Bantu argues that Sizwe Bansi must not worry about being a ghost because in the mind of the white man he is already a ghost. This implies that Bansi has to vehemently deny his patrimony in order to survive. Sizwe Bansi has committed a felony in order to make ends meet. In this vein, it is evident that blacks in South Africa could only succeed through illegal means irrespective of the fact that sanctions await them.

Also, *Statement after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* deals with a couple who has gone against apartheid laws and are awaiting trial. The Immorality Act prohibited mixed marriages. Hawkins and Amanda Soden are charged with a criminal offence under the prohibition of mixed marriages between whites and non whites. The statements of the crime are read out by a white policeman in a flat, while the two lovers are covered like trapped animals in the beam of a torch. They are Frieda Joubert the white Librarian and a black school principal who has come to borrow books for his correspondence course. At this juncture, it is realised that the characters are affected by Sigmund Freud's concept of the Id, the ego and superego. They are unable to control their sexual drives.

The play opens with a man and a woman on a blanket on the floor. Both of them are naked and we find the man caressing the woman's hair. According to the stage directions:

A sequence of camera flashes in the darkness exposes the man and the woman tearing apart from their embrace; the man then scrambling for his trousers, finding them and trying to put them on; the woman naked, crawling around on the floor, looking for the man. As she finds him and tries to hide behind his back, the flashes stop and torches are

shone on them. The woman scrambles away, finds the blanket, and covers herself...(Fugard, 1986: 96).

Later, a plain-clothes policeman, Detective Sergeant J. du Preez dictates his statement to the audience:

Policeman: Frieda Jourbert. Ten, Conradie Street. European.

Errol Philander. Bontrug Location. Coloured.

Policeman: Charge: Immorality Act. Jorbert runs the library in the town.

Being living here for six years. Unmarried. No previous convictions. My suspicious were first aroused by a report from Mrs. Tienie Buys...(Fugard, 1986:94).

From the above quotation, it is realised that the culprits are guilty of sexual immorality. The 1950 Immorality Amendment Act No. 21 which is an Amendment of the Immorality Act of 1927 forbade extramarital sexual relations between whites and non whites in South Africa. It is clear that the crime committed by the culprits is adultery and sexual immorality respectively (Ashcroft, 2000:14).

It is noted that the principal characters are guilty of crime. Frieda and Errol are prey and are the victims of the system. They are arrested and questioned separately. The lovers ponder how their discovery is connected to their relationship of only a few hours before. The policeman in the play provides his statements to the South white South African court as follows:

Policeman: Exhibit A. We gained entry to the room by forcing the door, and put on the light. By this time Joubert had covered herself with a blanket. Exhibit B. I immediately arrested them, and asked them whether they wished to make a statement warning them at the same time, that anything they said would be taken down in writing and could be used in evidence against them. Full stop. Joubert's response to this was: quote:

'I'm not ashamed of myself' unquote. I asked her if she was prepared to repeat the statement in front of a magistrate...(Fugard, 1986:104).

From the above quotation, we realise that Joubert, the white lady and the black Principal break the rules deliberately because the lady in question is not ashamed of herself after being caught. They do not bother about the Immorality Act. So it is a strategy to rebel against the system of Apartheid.

Fugard had been influenced by reality in many occasions. For instance, he states that *Oretes* was influenced by an idea in an incident in South African History when a young man took a bomb into the Johannesburg station square as an act of protest. The bomb exploded and killed an old woman. The young man was eventually caught and hanged

(Fugard, 1986:iv). From the above discussion, it is evident that Fugard is a criminologist.

In Fugard's *The Blood Knot*, Zachariah illegally struck up a pen-pal relationship with a white girl. The girl too has fallen in love with him. Moris, Zachariah's brother can pass for a white because he is a hybrid. He warns his brother that in segregated South Africa, the relationship can lead to dangerous love since the girl has indicated in her letters that her brother is a police officer. By implication Zachariah may only end up in prison. See dialogue below:

Morris: And then to make a run for it. Yes. They don't like these games with their whiteness. You have heard them.' How would you like your daughter to correspond with a black man? Ethel's got a policeman brother...

Zachariah: What have I done, hey? I done nothing.

Morris: What have you thought? That's the question. That's the crime. I seem to remember somebody saying: 'I like the thought of this little white girl. And what about your dreams? They have kept me awake these past few nights, Zach. I've heard them, mumbling and moaning away in darkness. ... When they get their hands on a dark-born boy playing with a white idea, you think they don't find out what he's been dreaming at night? They have ways and means my friend. Mean ways. Like confinement, in a cell, on bread and water, for days without end. ... It's his dreams that they drag off to judgment, shouting: 'Silence! He's been caught! With convictions? He's pleading! He's guilty! Take him away... Where? You ask where with your eyes, I see. You know where, Zach...(Fugard, 1974:58-59).

From the above quotation, it is noted that white people do not want blacks to tamper with their whiteness. The white idea in Morris discussion refers to white privilege or the wages of whiteness. Ashcroft(2000) maintains that the category of white has a special force and it is used as social discriminator. However, this view varies greatly in different places and times, though all seek to construct a unified grouping to oppose people who the 'whites' seek to exclude and control.( Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, 2000:220).

In addition, the concept of whiteness simply represents white people as the superior human beings over inferior people of other races. Thus, in the United States of America and South Africa, this privilege allows whites to obtain legal advantages over other people of different colours because, advocates of whiteness claim that whites are more intelligent than smart blacks(Bennett, 2012:4) Morris in the above conversation paints a vivid picture of crime and imprisonment in Fugard's the *Blood knot*. A black man should not dream of marrying a white man. Here, the black man will be charged with Immorality Act (1950) and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act. So if he is caught in a relationship with

a white girl, he will end up in the gallows. Zach symbolizes all blacks who are guilty of breaking racial laws.

The above criminal cases in the *Blood Knot* and *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* are reminiscent of what we find in Richard Wright's "the Man who Killed a Shadow" which notes that if a black man is alone with a white woman and she screams, it is like hearing his death sentence. Saul is used to hearing the siren of police cars in black neighbourhoods. He is used to seeing white corps dragging Negroes to jail (Wright, 1968:229).

Fugard's *Master Harold... the Boys* deals with police brutality. Hally and Sam recount the cruel treatment of prisoners during Apartheid. Sam stresses that the magistrate strikes a light and before he sentences criminals, the accused is asked to lie down on a bench. Then one Police Officer pulls down the trousers of the prisoner and holds his ankles, another one pulls his shirt and holds his arms (9). The prisoners are not exempted from torture while in detention. They are beaten and are given electric shocks. Some are made to sit in imaginary chairs, half drowned in buckets of water and so on. Hundreds of young children have been imprisoned for taking part in peaceful demonstrations. It is obvious that most of the people in jail during Apartheid were blacks. Some remained in jail because they were too poor to buy their way out. Hally thinks that everywhere in the world prisoners are often given cruel treatment (Fugard, 1984:9). In this light, it is evident that the treatment given to prisoners in apartheid South Africa can be likened to what was given to Joan of Arc. Joan of Arc was burnt by the English and their French collaborators as a heretic. She became the greatest national heroine of her compatriots. Her achievement was a decisive factor in the later awakening of French national consciousness. Hally further thinks that things will never be the same again even though he oscillates between hope and despair. One day a social reformer will get up and change the world, because his History book is full of people like Joan of Arc. Sam maintains that Napoleon regarded all people as equal before the law, and wanted them to possess equal opportunities (11). Sam also talks about international crime:

Sam : ...The whole world is doing all the time. Open a newspaper and what do you read ? America has bumped into Russia. England is bumping into India, rich man bumps into poor man. Those are big collisions Hally. They make for a lot of bruises. People get hurt in all that bumping, and we're sick and tired now. It's been going for too long. Are we never going to get it right ?...That sounds good ! A world without collisions ( Fugard, 1984:29-30).

In Hally and Sam's discussion about social reformers, Sam visualises someone who can be remembered for social change. During this time Nelson Mandela was already admired by some of his followers and would have been mentioned by Hally. Notwithstanding, Hally is able to identify the manner in which other societies have developed.

He foresees the accomplishment of main international social and political reformers and believes that his people need someone who can reduce the rate of criminality.

Crime is also imminent in Fugard's *Sorrows and Rejoicings*. Fugard examines crime in the old and the new South Africa where blacks and people of mixed races are banned and silenced by the old government. The only option that is left is exile. Dawid in *Sorrows and Rejoicings* is a victim of circumstance. Half of Dawid's friends are on exile. So he thinks that he will expose the atrocities of the Apartheid regime on exile. Dawid is not allowed to read, nor can he publish because he is not permitted to do so. He has been excluded by the system that was put in place by the whites in his own country. As earlier stated; when a man is banned he becomes useless. There is a story of a man who became useless because he was banned. He removed his testicles, put them in a box and post them to the prime minister with a note: "You took my manhood, so why not take these as well" (21). In the play we find people who have been taken several times for questioning. It is in this connection that Alison recalls the period of crime and imprisonment in South Africa: "For the first time I realized just how much fear we had lived with in South Africa... fear of the informer, fear of that knock on your door in the middle of the night, fear of being taken in for one hundred and eighty days of interrogation and solitary confinements..." (Fugard, 2002:23-26).

It is also noted that it was a crime to see a black man and a white woman and vice versa as lovers in South Africa (28). As indicated in the above quote, the people of South Africa live in perpetual fear because of crime and insecurity.

From the above illustrations, it is obvious that most of the characters in Fugard's plays are involved in crime, and they use crime as a means of survival. Thus, we can assert that Fugard is a criminologist. The above mentioned plays serve as an indictment against the Apartheid laws.

Some South African playwrights also dwell on crime. Purkey (2001) also portrays the issue of crime in the New South Africa. Here, we realise that South African playwrights during the Apartheid era made theatre to reflect the ruthless conditions of Apartheid's brutality. Thus, Apartheid provided their subject matter. With the end of Apartheid, the playwrights thought that theatre making in South Africa was in crisis. It was not possible to write new plays. The only means was to think about crime, corruption, democracy and reconciliation in the New South Africa (vii-xiv). Crime remains an unsolved dilemma in South Africa today.

Having analysed the politics of criminology in Fugard's plays we are now going to look at Wilson's plays with the same lenses.



### III. THE POLITICS OF CRIMINOLOGY IN WILSON'S SELECTED PLAYS

In Wilson's *Fences* Troy is the first African American driver. He is promoted from the rank of a garbage collector to the position of a truck driver. Yet he is regarded as a criminal because he does not possess a driving licence. Wilson notes:

Bono: Do Mr. Rand know you ain't got no driver's license? That's what I am talking about. I ain't asked if driving was easy. I asked if Mr. Rand know you ain't got no driver license.

Troy: He ain't got to know. The man ain't got to know my business. Time he find out, I have two or three driver's licenses...All them rogues down there on the avenue...the ones that ain't in jail...( Wilson, 1994:2268).

African Americans like Troy are ignorant of the law. Troy is happy to become the first African American driver, but he does not bother about getting a driving licence. He claims that he has a hidden business and he forgets to note that obscure business is illegal. Thus, anybody caught driving without a driving licence is charged with a criminal offence as Jeneen Jones in "The Truth about Black Crime" has pointed out: "many non-blacks agreed that black men are generally violent and aggressive law breakers"(2). It is in this connection that Mohammed(2011) affirms that since the late nineteenth century northern-born blacks and southern migrants in northern cities had to contend that blacks possess a dangerous criminal population(227). Mohammed further affirms that from the 1890s through the first four decades of the twentieth century, black criminality has become one of the commonly mentioned and lasting justifications for black inequality and mortality in modern urban world (Mohammad, 2011: 21).

In addition, African Americans are also fun of stealing. Troy recalls in a flashback how he started stealing. He started with food, then some shoes. One thing led to another. He kept on stealing until the day he was caught. He killed the person who attempted shooting him with a gun. Consequently, he was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment:

Troy: ... Started stealing. First it was food. Then I figured, hell, if I steal money I can buy me some food. Buy me some shoes too! One thing led to another, Met your Mama. I was young and mama had you. What for? Anxious to be a man. Got to steal three times as much...I am ashamed of it today.... Pulled out my knife... and he pulled truth. Went to rob the chest. It fell just like somebody had taken a hot at a gun. Shot it on me. When he shot it I jumped at him with branding iron. Me I killed him and they put me in the penitentiary and my knife... Fifteen

years cured me of that robbing stuff( Wilson,1994:2272).

From Troy's discussion, three issues can be retained: Blacks steal because they lack shelter, food and clothes. Blacks commit crimes in order to survive and blacks commit homicide unintentionally. So they turn to defend themselves. Troy is hardworking but he is guilty of crime he committed fifteen years ago. He is conscious because the situation of blacks was deplorable. A black man could be self-employed only if he managed into stealing as a means of survival.

Furthermore, we are informed that Uncle Gabre has been arrested for disturbing in public(Wilson,1994:2273).The above discussion is a reflection of blacks in America. Unemployed blacks cannot loiter at random without being arrested for public disorder. Most states in the United States have laws against vagrancy which are based on the idea that a vagrant has no visible means of livelihood and may become a public charge. A person arrested for vagrancy like Uncle Gabre is sentenced to a term in jail. As a result, they are gradually being excluded from mainstream activities.( Inbau,1997:203)

Also, in *The Piano Lesson* Boy Willie and Lymon are accused of stealing a truck with a load of watermelon. Doaker thinks that they might have stolen watermelons and not a truck but Boy Willie denies these allegations. Hence, it is realised that the characters are *accused* falsely. Similarly, Willing Boy reports that Becky's boy was shot by Robert Smith and it is alleged that Becky was stealing peaches. Besides, Boy Willie and Lymon were put in the penitentiary because they were fetching wood to sell. Consequently, Crawley attempted fighting on their behalf but was killed. It is observed that blacks are caught, imprisoned and killed because they lack food and shelter. These criminal acts do not merit death. The whiteman simply incriminates blacks in order to exclude them from political and social life(Wilson, 1990:6-10).

In addition, Boy Willie also recounts that the men in uniform have been looking for Lymond. He adds that Lymond was finally rounded up and put in jail for refusing to do his job. Then the white man simply tells the Sheriff that the nigger should be put in jail as a warning to other niggers. For this reason, the black man cannot hire a lawyer because the law is not in his favour:"...John, you own the land. It's all yours now. But them is my berries..." And he go and fix it with the law that them is his berries. Now that's the difference between the colored man and the white man. The colored man can't fix nothing with the law"( Wilson,1990:37-38).

From the above quotation, the white man sells land to the black man and owns the crops in it. He gives with the right hand and takes it back with his left hand because he is always backed by the law.The law may be technically neutral (although at this point in time, in the 1930s, the law still had a long way to go before even being almost-neutral), but the key issue is that even the simplest law can be manipulated and

controlled by a white man. This power is not available to people of colour. It is palpable that the black man cannot be backed by the law. Most blacks in the United States today still believe that the law is on the side of the whites. This explains why when an armed police officer shot an unarmed black boy, thousands of black people marched and protested in Florida and New York City.

In *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Slow Drag narrates the story of a man who killed somebody and went free. The sheriff arrested the killer, then he faced trial but was set free later. In the play there is an anecdote of a black man who has decided to sell himself to the white man's devil. He thinks that since blacks have been excluded from acquiring wealth like whites, he has to use unorthodox means to become rich. He has successfully signed a pact with the devil and has become one of the richest African-Americans. White girls envy him because he gives them a lot of money. Unfortunately, he kills a black man who came round to chat with one of his white girls. Consequently, he is arrested and set free without good judgment (Wilson 2000:572-574). Thus, we realise that the criminal justice system does not pass fair judgment on its citizens. This happens in most of the plays we have discussed.

In *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, a policeman charges Ma Rainey with assault and battery and threatens to take her to jail. Ma on her part in a repetitive tone tells Ivrin to remind the police officer about her personality. So Ivrin introduces Ma Rainey as one of their recording artist. Therefore, we understand that Ma Rainey symbolises rich African-American women who suffer from false accusation by white police officers. It is obvious that after such accusations, the victims end up in jail or pay huge sums of fines that can lead to the collapse of their business (Wilson, 2000:576-579). As Chandler (2015) points out that a new registry compiled by two major universities reveals that more than two thousand prisoners were incorrectly imprisoned for serious crimes since 1989. After perusing the court's registry, it was uncovered that more than half of the exonerated prisoners were African – Americans.

In addition, Levee recounts how a man was murdered by a girl. Lula White in New Orleans is a night Club. The issue here is that the place is not secured for blacks. This explains why nothing is done to the murderer. For instance, when a white man murders a black man there may be no further police investigations. Levee thinks that the only solution for blacks is to fight back.

Levee also narrates how he fought with a white man and was wounded on the chest (588-589). He admits that he is known as Levee and has nothing to do with the white man because he has a special kind of blood that flows in him and the type of heart that he possesses. He pounds his chest and recounts that he was eight years old when he saw a gang of white men entering their house to rape his mother. By then they were living in Jefferson town about eight miles away from Natchez. His father's name was Memphis Lee Green and

he had nearly fifty eight acres of fertile farming land which was bought from Mr. Hallie's widow. It was during planting time and his father had gone to Natchez to buy some seed and fertilizer. He told him before leaving "Levee you are the man of the house now. Take care of mama while I'm gone." He pauses and continues in a flashback that his mother was frying some chicken when some white men visited the house and "took hold of her just like you take hold of a mule and make him do what you want". Levee did not know what the men were doing to his mother but he thought that they would do the same thing to him. His father had kept a knife that was used for hunting and working. Levee got it and cut the throat of one of the white men and hit him on the shoulder (Wilson, 2000:589).

From Levee's explanation, we understand that he believes in the idea of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. He thinks that blacks have to fight back in order to succeed in America. In brief, he symbolises those who think that violence is the best method in which disputes can be solved in terms of political, social and economic exclusion.

The characters in the *Two Trains Running* are directly affected by the White people's ability to make and interpret rules to the disadvantage of blacks. Memphis laments that blacks have no rights for protests because the law does not favour them. (Wilson, 2008:140). It is evident that blacks have no rights to protest against white police officers who take the laws into their hands. The characters here are pessimistic about legal issues. Similarly, Wolf complains about the judicial process and declares that blacks are always under attack by whites. For instance, every black man on the street has been to prison once or twice. The white man is not always comfortable with himself until he has sent one or two blacks on a criminal record (Wilson, 2008, 147). Thus, we learn that blacks should look before they leap, because if they do not watch where they are going to, they may be caught and sentenced to prison for the obstruction of justice. Wolf believes that the machinery of justice as many blacks have long observed is entirely in the hands of whitemen because racism in the criminal justice system in America has become a central problem in the judgment and treatment of blacks. Blackness stands as a singular mark of a criminal (Mohammad, 2008: 270, 271).

Holloway on his part argues that blacks cannot defend themselves with weapons because a black man carrying a gun is bad news for the white man. It is impossible to use the gun and a black man in the same sentence because the white man used the gun during slavery to capture runaway slaves. He also used the gun during the colonial period to forcefully colonise some black people. When one mentions that the black man can use a gun he/she is in trouble. According to the whiteman, when a black man uses a gun he may not use it well, but when someone says that the white man used the gun there is no problem. As a result, any black man who is caught with a gun is falsely accused and arrested. For instance, he can be accused of sabotage, disturbing public

peace, inciting riot and even planning to overthrow the government

The above view ties in with Mary White Ovington's argument that black people are not really looking for trouble, but they believe that if they have a fight it would not be a fair one to the justice department. Consequently, if a police officer arrives on any fighting scene between a black man and white man, he will arrest the black man (Ovington qtd in Mohammad, 2011: 115). Moreover, in many cities across the US, violent confrontations with police officers would continue to show black children and adults alike that justice was in Du Bois words, "For White People Only..." wrote Ovington, there is no safety for any Negro in this part of the city at any time" (Ovington qtd in Mohammad, 2011: 116).

The foregone view symbolises the ideas of the Black Panther Party<sup>1</sup> in the United States. The party's original purpose was to patrol black quarters to protect inhabitants from acts of police brutality. The Panthers eventually developed into a Marxist revolutionary group that called for the arming of all blacks, the exemption of blacks from the draft and from all sanctions of so-called white America, the release of all blacks from jail, and the payment of compensation to blacks for centuries of exploitation by white Americans. Hence, it is very difficult for blacks to arm themselves and succeed in Wilson's *Two Trains Running*.

In Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* a black man is accused of stealing a bucket of nails. Rather than confessing to a crime he did not commit, he jumps into the river and drowns. This makes him a martyr to his co-workers, who go on strike and riot. Caesar, the local law enforcement officer, is in the middle of it. His role is to arrest several black people and shoot some of them. The symbol of the white legal system is the black constable, Caesar, who lords his authority over the black mill workers and chastises them for their ignorance: 'People don't understand the law is everything. What is it not? People think the law is supposed to serve them. But anybody can see you serve it. There ain't nothing above the law. You got to respect the law.' (36). Caesar's claim that nothing functions above the law stands in stark contrast to the figure of Aunt Ester and the portrait of black struggle throughout Wilson's plays.

From the aforementioned discussion, it can be argued that the situation of blacks in *Gem of the Ocean* is worse than the situation of some blacks during slavery because some blacks were better treated by the slave masters. Wilson paints a gloomy picture of the criminal justice system so that change can take place. For instance, Caesar takes his alienation from Aunt Ester, the ancestor, a step further. He comes to arrest her and removes her from the house by calling the law and the penal code his Bible. Aunt Ester asks Caesar how the law can always be right if the law made her a slave. It is in this connection that Mohammad declares that any personal

observation must convince every serious person that "the negro is constitutionally indolent, voluptuous, prone to vice, that his mind is heavy, dull, and unambitious; that the doom that has made African in all ages and countries, a slave ..." (217). So the effects of slavery are still felt on black crime.

*Jitney* deals with a group of independent taxi drivers in a taxi-station in the mid-1970s. Booster who has just returned from prison was imprisoned for twenty years because he was charged with the rape of a white girl. Becker further explains that some people die because of wrong judgment (Wilson, 2003: 4). At this juncture, we realize that Booster had an affair with a white girl. When the girl learnt that Booster was to be imprisoned she committed suicide. As a result, he is sentenced to twenty-five years without trial. Booster symbolises any African-American who has been imprisoned without fair trial. This is because the law is in favour of white people. Therefore, it is realized that crime is rampant in Wilson's plays. Crime in the plays is a glaring reflection of African American life. Crime in the African American Community can be traced back during slavery. However, when slavery was abolished, crime was still perpetrated by whites on blacks. As Green and Gabbidon have pointed out that one of the crimes that was perpetrated on African Americans by whites was lynching. They explicate that fifteen years after the emancipation, Negroes were lynched for trying to vote. Lynchings were vindicated by whites because they used to prevent race riots, to prevent Negroes from voting and to punish those who attempted assaulting white women. Also, there was an on-going reason to eliminate blacks who were becoming too prosperous (Green and Gabbidon, 2000: 13). Nowadays some critics believe that lynching has simply evolved.

Dubois (2009) also noted that discrimination against the Negro was much greater because he was arrested for less cause and given longer sentences than whites. Great numbers of those arrested and committed for trial were never brought to trial so that their guilt could be proven or disproven. He also pointed out the length of sentences for whites were shorter than those of African Americans and he stated that blacks spent more years in prisons than whites.

Moreover, Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) postulate on prison drama that if the derogated body is maimed, degraded, infiltrated with disease, or figured as grotesque, it is also frequently denied freedom. When the victim is imprisoned, the colonised subject often appears to have a very limited scope for movement, self-expression, and liberation. However, as suggested by a number of post-colonial plays which dramatise prison life, performance offers one means by which some kind of agency might be recovered (203-228).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Following a critical examination of the selected plays by Fugard and Wilson, we realised that most of the issues addressed are related to the causes and effects of crime.



In Fugard's *the Island*, the characters are involved in a criminal behaviour that violates apartheid laws. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* present blacks who can only seek justice by defying the apartheid laws. Here we notice the dehumanising effects on the pass laws on black South Africans. Blacks in South Africa can only succeed through falsified means. We found out that the culprits are influenced by Sigmund Freud's concept of the Id in psychosexual development. The criminals are guilty of adultery and are judged by Apartheid laws.

In *The Blood Knot*, Zachariah is illegally involved in a penpal relationship with a white girl whose brother is a police officer. This implies that Zachariah will end up in prison because the law forbids any canal relationship between a black man and a white woman. Fugard's post- apartheid plays also concern criminal issues. *Coming Home* dwells on xenophobia. Manfred is killed by South African thugs because he is a foreigner. In *Sorrows and Rejoicings* people of mixed races are banned and silenced by the old regime. In a flash back we find instances of the Soweto Uprising. The characters in the play live in perpetual fear and insecurity. *Valley Song* presents Veronica Jonker's parents as thieves.

In Wilson's *Fences*, Troy is regarded as a criminal because he does not have a driver's licence. He is ignorant about the law. In *the Piano Lesson*, Willie and Lymond are accused of stealing. Lymond is imprisoned because he refused doing his job. In *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, whites use false accusation tactics to exclude blacks from benefitting certain rights such as the right to freedom and equality that was propagated by the founding fathers. The laws in the play favour whites and disfavour blacks. In *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Ma Rainey is falsely charged with assault and battery. She symbolises rich African women who suffer from false accusation by white police officers. The characters in *Two Trains Running* are affected by white people's ability to make and interpret laws to the disadvantage of blacks. Memphis and Wolf complain about the judicial system in America and decry that blacks are constantly under attacks by whites because every black man on the street has been to prison once or twice. Holloway on his part thinks that blacks cannot defend themselves because carrying a gun is bad news for the white man. So the black man cannot use a gun with the white man in the same sentence. This symbolises the idea of the Black Panther Party for self defence. Similarly, Hedley in *King Hedley II* complains about the law. He argues that if a burglar breaks into a white man's house to steal his television set and a white man shoots him, whites do not say that the white man is wrong. On the contrary, that is not the same case with the black man because the black man cannot be right for using a gun. In the same vein, In *Gem of the Ocean*, Aunt Ester tells Caesar that the law can always be right because it made her a slave. On a similar note, Becker explains in *The Seven Guitars* that most blacks die because of wrong judgment. We found out that crime in the play is a reflection of African-American life. It can be traced from slavery to the present.

At this juncture, we found out that crime like sin will never end. It can only be reduced because criminals are born and made as Mohammed has pointed out in the *Condemnation of Blackness* that "...crime will continue" (102). Crime remains an unsolved predicament in South Africa and the United States of America.

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