

SECTION B: THE PORTRAYAL OF FUGARD'S WOMEN CHARACTERS: ANALYSIS OF SOME OF HIS PLAYS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Fugard's women characters

Athol Fugard's background plays a distinct role in his concept of life, and the character of women. He was born on 11 June 1932 on a farm near Middelburg in the Cape Province - a dry, dusty little village in the semi-desert Karoo region of South Africa. His parents ran a small general dealer's cash store. His father, a crippled former jazz pianist, was of British descent, while his mother, Elizabeth Magdalena, née Potgieter, was Afrikaans speaking. Fugard's parents came from different worlds, yet he admitted in an interview to Mary Benson (1967:24) that because of the strength of his mother's personality, the Afrikaner culture was more dominant in his upbringing and consequently his concept of life.

Being of "mixed descent" in white South African terms" (Walder, 1984:19), Fugard has inherited both the Afrikaans-speaking, narrowly Calvinist but independent attitudes of his mother's background, and the English-speaking, broadly Christian, more liberal-minded and outward-looking attitudes of his father's. But even though his mother's influence on the portrayal of his characters is felt to be ultimately the stronger, he was educated in English and chose to write in English. Many of his characters are typically Afrikaans, however, and he allows them to speak in his own unique South African idiom, mixing English, Afrikaans, and sometimes African speech.

In 1935 the family moved to Port Elizabeth, a city of which Fugard states: "I cannot conceive of myself as separate from it" (Walder, 1984:20). As his father's health deteriorated and self-pity over being a cripple drove him to alcohol, Fugard's mother assumed a correspondingly dominant position in the household. She became the breadwinner, running the Jubilee Boarding House (which later provided the setting for **People are Living There**) and subsequently the St.

George's tearoom (which appears in '**Master Harold'... and the Boys**). Thus Fugard witnessed his mother as the fighter who took on the world despite great odds, and his father as the loser who tried to escape from reality.

This period of his life has had a distinct influence on his concept of characters in especially his earlier plays. Vandenbroucke (1986:14) informs us that Fugard recalls this period of his childhood thus: "Circumstances were really dictated by what my mother was doing at this time to keep us going ... My mother is a remarkable woman. In fact that's got a lot to do with my plays; the woman is always the affirmative element".

Fugard's father also influenced him during this time of his life, albeit in a completely different way. His father was a musician who played mostly jazz to supplement his wife's income. His father's interest in music triggered Fugard's creativity. Although his father preferred jazz to classical music, Fugard is a devotee of both. Vandenbroucke (1986:15) claims that Fugard frequently acknowledged the influence of Bach's cello and harpsichord suites upon his writing (see **Hello and Goodbye**).

During Fugard's childhood in Port Elizabeth their family circumstances can be described as lower middle-class. Fugard himself admits that that put them at the bottom social rung, because there is no white labouring category in South Africa. Thus Fugard gained the background for his plays about "poor-whites".

After having written his **Port Elizabeth Plays** and while working on **Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act**, Fugard admits the strength of his women characters as opposed to the weakness of his male characters:

A sudden and clear realisation ... of how, almost exclusively, 'woman' - a woman - has been the vehicle for what I have tried to say about survival and defiance - Milly, Hester, Lena ... and even Frieda in a way; that, correspondingly, the man has played at best a

passive, most times impotent, male. Image occurred to me of the large female spider and shrivelled, almost useless, male - there only for his sexual function. Thus Johnnie, Don, Boesman, Errol - all unable to 'act' significantly - the image of the castrated male culminating of course in Errol Philander's nightmare in **Statements** (Fugard, 1983:198).

Fugard claims that he writes about people he knows from the time they had a boarding house. About **People are Living There** he says: "I knew Milly, Shorty and Sissy, and Ahlers was a man upstairs. Don is really a mixture of myself and the man I hitch hiked through Africa with, Perseus Adams" (Gray, 1982:43). Johnnie in **Hello and Goodbye** represents himself and what he might have been had he not been able to turn around and walk away. Fugard's father was also a cripple and therefore bedridden. As a child he had to wake up at night and rub his father's leg. The turning point came when he had to go to university, which he did without hesitation, and came under the influence of Sartre and Camus.

Hester, however, isn't based on any character he knows. Perhaps she is a younger Milly. It is almost as if Milly was an exercise, a little preparatory sketch, but there is more truth, more of a rock bottom statement in Hester than in Milly.

Although Lena (in **Boesman and Lena**) differs completely from both Milly and Hester, her strength as a woman comes through strongest. Athol Fugard himself admits to Barney Simon (Gray, 1982:50) that a woman relates to the world on a much more personal basis than a man does. For a woman the relationship with the man she loves, with her children, with her mother, with her father, is much more important than it is for a man. A man relates in a much broader sense to a much broader world around him.

Boesman and Lena is the only play that has a dedication. It is dedicated to Fugard's wife, Sheila. A decade after completing the play, Fugard states: "I've found, from my personal life and from watching other

relationships, how selfish and how gross the male dominance in a male-woman relationship can be" (Vanderbroucke, 1986:100). Boesman is the original male chauvinist, bullying Lena.

The Road to Mecca reflects on an intense personal problem; the end of creativity for an artist (in particular Fugard himself). By writing about Helen he writes about himself. He again chooses women to portray the main characters. Elsa appears to be stronger than Helen, rebelling against traditional Afrikaner norms, questioning the conventions which have played a vital role in the development and history of the Afrikaner. Politically she is broad-minded. Again Fugard admits that it is no accident that great statements are made by women. In an interview with Barry Hough (1985:16) Fugard claims that it is the Johnnies that dodge life and the Hesters that tackle it with vehemence. It is Lena who knows her destination and Helen who finds her Mecca.

When questioned about the relationship between Miss Helen and Elsa, Hough (1985:16) alleged that it was done so successfully that one gets the idea that only a woman could have written it. Fugard admits that he has been complemented on that by many women. He feels he succeeded because it was a matter of trust. Elsa and Helen existed before he started writing about them. They are not his creations. He simply portrayed what was already there. The play could easily have been turned into a documentary, but Fugard avoided that by making Helen a projection of himself - of any artist who faces her dilemma. A **Place with the Pigs** is another example of this ability to project himself. "All my characters are me, I am all the characters" (Fugard, 1983:73).

Fugard admits that the birth of his daughter, Lisa, also influenced his outlook on life. In the period between **The Blood Knot** and **Hello and Goodbye** he wrote about the idea of parents trying to live the child's life. He also sees in the birth of his daughter the continuity of life. She was born shortly after the death of his father.

It is perhaps interesting to note that few of Fugard's women characters bear children. Milly is too old, Hester and Elsa have abortions, Lena and Miss Helen are childless.

In his earlier plays like **People are Living There, Hello and Goodbye, Boesman and Lena** and even **Statements** Fugard created stereotypes in that the female characters are strong, courageous and dominating the male characters. Milly, Hester, Frieda and Lena all seem to be rebelling against traditional Afrikaner norms. They are questioning the conventions which have played a role in the development and history of the Afrikaner, i.e. religion, a uniform cultural identity and politics. This tradition is carried on by Helen and Elsa in **The Road to Mecca**. Helen, however, also becomes universal, representing the fear of any artist to lose his creativity. Gladys, Piet Bezuidenhout's wife in **A Lesson from Aloes**, is an enigma. She appears weak and subordinate to her husband yet she accepts her fate courageously in the end. Fugard's later plays like **My Children my Africa** no longer portray women characters as stereotypes.

1.2 The influence of existentialism on Fugard's women characters

One cannot discuss Fugard's earlier plays written during the 1960s and 1970s without giving due consideration to existentialism and subsequently the influence of writers like Sartre and Camus on his work.

The progress made by natural science after the formulation of Einstein's theory of relativity caused people to lose interest in reality. A movement started which concentrated on the subjective analysis of what goes on "inside" the individual - his experience of the existential "here and now" of his existence.

Existentialism is defined in the **Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English** (1985) as "the modern belief and teaching of Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, etc., that man is alone in a meaningless world, that he is completely free to choose his actions, and that his actions determine his nature rather than the other way round" (p. 381).

As it is not the aim of this dissertation to discuss the theory of existentialism in detail let it be sufficient to say that existentialism concerns itself with the "being" of the individual. It is unimportant what a person "is"; what is important is what he "becomes". Our time is probably the first in which man has become absolutely incomprehensible and problematic to himself. This explains the obsession of followers of the existential philosophy with the alienation and strangeness of man in his world. Existentialism reveals their obsession by means of contradiction and the description of human existence as feeble and contingent. Much attention is given to themes such as conscience and guilt, death and the end of things, anxiety and disgust, hope and despair, sense and senseless, while the problem of time is centre to it all.

Degenaar (1966:8-10) points out that three elements are present in the work of Camus: the *absurd*, *revolt* and *solidarity*. One should not, however, separate these elements and attribute only one to the work of Camus. He is not only an apostle of the absurd, or revolt. All three elements are present in his work.

Camus tries consciously to uphold the dignity of mankind. (Something which is present in Fugard's **Boesman and Lena** and **People are Living There**). He doesn't allow reason to be overruled by the irrational. Camus doesn't idolize the absurd above all else, although the absurd is one of the elements in his writing. His concept is that man tries to understand life and the world around him according to reason, but he does not succeed. Neither man nor the world is absurd - it is the relationship between a world (not understood by man) and a reasonable search for understanding which becomes absurd.

Camus writes about everyday life, the struggle against degradation of the self and of other people. He finds it necessary to intervene in affairs of the world in defence of the oppressed, exploited, killed or enslaved. Humiliation and man as a debased creature captivate Camus's attention. We find the same concept in Fugard's plays like **People are Living There**, **The Blood Knot**, **Hello and Goodbye**, **Boesman and Lena** and

even in **A Lesson from Aloes**. He, like Camus, explores the tragic in a community that allows racial differences and socio-economic differences to culminate in prejudice, exploitation, injustice and cruelty. Art becomes a revolution - not a political revolution, but a revolution against everything which makes life unworthy. One recalls Boesman's revolt in **Boesman and Lena** against the extent to which he and Lena, their lives and its potential, have been mutilated and frustrated by the world in which they live. The final hopelessness, absurdity of their existence, of life, an indictment of the society that has had a large share in making him what he is, a moral judgement of himself - all these things are found in the exclamation: "Sies Boesman ... Sies Lena ... Sies wêreld ... " (Fugard, 1974:212).

In his first novel, **L'Étranger** (1942), Camus feels that the universe is deprived of illusions and of light, and this makes man a stranger, who has no memories of the past and no hopes for a promising future. This separation between man and his life constitutes the feeling of absurdity. The world has disillusioned man and therefore it has ceased to make sense. In **People are Living There** Milly initially recalls the past and wants to recapture the happy times, but as she is disillusioned by Don who tells her there is no future, her life is over, she makes one final attempt to escape from the absurdity of life when she calls: "People are living there! I'll remind them. Tomorrow" (1970:71).

Brink (1967:131) points out that Camus distinguishes between things you cannot change, and things you can change. Nothing can change the fact that man is lonely, grows old and dies - one can merely revolt against that fact. If, however, someone is hungry, man can change that by giving him bread. "En dalk het die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing vandag meer as ooit tevore behoefte aan brood" (Brink, 1967:131).

Finally we look at Camus's concept of religion. He rejects the Christian belief in resurrection (that there is life after death). This life is all there is - it is irreplaceable. Death only serves to emphasize the importance of this life. According to Degenaar (1966:75), religion is philosophical suicide which disregards life. Whereas a Christian regards suffering and

evil as part of the Divine plan, Camus regards it as an injustice against which must be revolted. He regards religion as the ideological turning away from the suffering of the here and now. Mankind lives and suffers "here" and "now". Lena in **Boesman and Lena** states: "Pain...what's that mean to you? You weren't there. Nobody was. Why do you ask now. You're too late for that. This is what I feel now [the fire, the shelter, her 'here and now'] ... This! (1974:193).

Jean-Paul Sartre's most important contribution as far as it concerns Fugard's writing is that he advocated freedom. Sartre wrote **L'Etre et le Néant** as a manifestation of man's disillusionment after the world wars. He saw the final and futile possibility of man to say "no" to his situation as the only freedom, man's "raison d'être". Sartre described literature as a manner of behaving, as one can only find authentic existence in free fantasy. Free, creative fantasy is concerned with one's own projection in the world. It has nothing to do with oneself only. Fantasy precedes the essence of behaviour. It questions one's own possibilities and leads one to the limit of one's own existence, where one can experience one's own freedom anxiously. Boesman's "big word" is freedom: "Freedom! Ja, I've heard them talk about it" (1974:203). For him freedom exists in taking the road, looking for another place to stay. Lena is not fooled, however: "We're not people any more. Freedom's not for us" (p. 212).

Bruwer (1984:52-53) quotes David Caute who states that during the period in which Sartre wrote **What is Literature?** he emphasized the active role of freedom in society. Freedom does not only imply political freedom, but also social freedom. The individual's freedom now depends on the freedom of others, on the creation of a society freed from discrimination and oppression Sartre encourages writers to use their freedom in the service of social freedom: "The thesis is clear: literature, properly employed, can be a powerful means of liberating the reader from the kinds of alienation which develop in particular situations. By this process the writer also frees himself and overcomes his own alienation ... literature is alienated when it forgets or ignores its autonomy and places itself at the service of the temporal power, dogma and mystification. It is the writer's mission to dispel inertia, ignorance, prejudice and false

emotion". Literature must encourage the reader to become a complete and free person in and through history.

As early as 1962 Fugard himself could admit to the influence of especially Camus on his work. Not only did the writer influence Fugard's philosophical outlook, but on reading **The Outsider** he directly influenced Fugard in writing **People are Living There**. The entry in his **Notebooks** reads: "Camus's **The Outsider** - and the old woman in the home. The paradox of starting to live when life is over. 'The extreme viciousness of old age. An observation to Sheila!' When they are that age and the child is as old as us, or is at least adult, it's no longer love or respect, or the seeing of people as individuals, the clear contours of personality, that govern relationship. We fumble around in the debris of guilts, bad consciences and hunger for revenge that a lifetime of bad living has cluttered around us" (1983:44).

Fugard's search for the self which leads to social consciousness was also triggered by reading Camus. Fugard admits that the final statement in Camus's **The Rebel** portrays what he himself has been thinking and feeling all along: "all my characters are me. I am all my characters" (1983:73).

In 1963, while preparing to write **Hello and Goodbye**, Fugard admits that he still has to realize how far he yet has to go in understanding the implications of Hester "finding her own self" in the suitcases and boxes from her father's room. Fugard then makes the entry: "Sartre: Anguish = the fear of not making the time and place of the 'appointment with self'" (1983:102). He admits that those thoughts about Sartre came at a "most opportune moment and must undoubtedly add dimensions to Hester and Boetie" (1983: 102).

The final example from **Notebooks** as to the influence of Camus appears in connection with **Boesman and Lena**, their homelessness, ultimate suffering and loss of 'self': "Lena ... 'that day' ... starting with their eviction in the morning, the beating from Boesman, the long walk, her

exhaustion ... every detail ... and it's one day too many. The rebel (Camus); finally: "No! Too much. So far and no further" (1983: 156).

Fugard's themes - the social position of the poor and uneducated, and racial discrimination with its ultimate loss of dignity - can easily be despaired of. Fugard's view of the future is based on this awareness of the maltreatment of the socially inferior and their acquiescent acceptance of seemingly unbearable circumstances. He has been sensitive towards unfairness since childhood. "Like everyone else in this country, black and white, my horizons have shrunk, and will continue to do so. Today's future barely includes tomorrow. At times I see the situation deteriorating still further, to the point where even the thought of a tomorrow will be a luxury. I'm trying to live and work in preparation for that eventuality" (1973:xxv).

Boesman and Lena was in his own words a turning point which led him in new directions. In retrospect Fugard recollects the "problems" in relation to the 'well-structured plays on paper' of his past:

- to communicate what cannot be expressed
- an 'Existential' theatre in the sense that we confront the Nothingness of space and silence with our Being
- to take the desperation out of Silence, learn to live with it, let it happen if it must, and think of it as something real and positive (1983:189).

Even when Fugard's writing leads him in new directions, the influence of Camus is ever present. Towards the end of 1971 he writes: "Yet again from Camus's **Carnets** the story of Dimetos" (1983:195), and in 1975: "**Dimetos** - accepted a commission from the Edinburgh Festival to present a new work there and decided finally to take up the idea of Dimetos from the notebooks of Albert Camus" (1983:215).

Important for the understanding of Fugard's women characters and the way they act, Bruwer quotes Bootzen: "According to the existentialists, to live is to interact with the world; for better or for worse, human beings

are constantly impinging upon and being impinged upon by the environment, including the people around them. The existentialist argued that by virtue of being-in-the-world, people are constantly in danger of sacrificing their own principles in order to conform to the expectations of others. This is an easy route, but one that eventually produces a painfully divided personality: a false outer self covering an isolated and denied inner self. In order to avoid this loss of the true self, people must constantly strive to live according to their own vision of the truth. To do so is to risk conflict with others, but not to do so is to lapse into something akin to spiritual death" (1984:47).

CHAPTER II: PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE

2.1 Introduction

Fugard's first play being discussed, is very much influenced by existentialism and more particularly the writings of Camus. Walder (1984:53) claims that Fugard, overwhelmed by Camus's writings, follows him (Camus) to the "brink of despair, where, nevertheless, may be found finally the only certainty, the flesh: living without hope, without appeal, without the traditional certainties of religion or history, we may be able to continue after all, relying on (in a favourite phrase from Camus) 'truths the hand can touch'". Fugard himself admits in his **Notebooks** (1983:44) that **People are Living There** was influenced by Camus's **Outsider**: "... the old woman in the home. The paradox of starting to live when life is over".

The main character in **People are Living There**, Milly, does not want to be forgotten by humanity. Her life must have a purpose; she must be recognized as a human being, regarded with respect, possessing some form of dignity despite her circumstances. Fugard classifies this play, together with his three so-called Port Elizabeth plays (**The Blood Knot**, **Hello and Goodbye**, and **Boesman and Lena**) as "theatre of defiance" in that Milly, like Fugard himself, "is protesting against the conspiracy of silence about how the next man lives and what happens to groups other than our own" (Walder, 1984:55).

2.2 Dramatis Personae

This play is set in a kitchen in an old house in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. When Milly, the main character who dominates the action, fifty years old, appears in the kitchen, slovenly dressed in an old candlewick dressing gown, her hair disordered, her face swollen with sleep, it is expected that she will be portrayed in the traditional role of female housekeeper, sub-ordinate to the male, dispassionate, down-trodden by the burden of life. It is anticipated that Milly will be portrayed as a non-entity, starting to live when life is over.

This assumption turns out to be wrong. Although Milly stands at the crossroads of her mid-life crisis, and her rejection by Ahlers affects her deeply, she survives, although the going is tough. She is a fighter who views life positively, encouraged by a sense of humour. She uses the past as a means to face the future in a spirit of defiance. At times she becomes aggressive to the point of being militant. As the victim of alleged injustice, she asserts her rights as a woman and a human being. She is seriously concerned with the position of women, rejecting the notion that their prime function is that of mother and housewife in a male-dominated society. Don calls it the "neurosis of our time. The aggressive female and the submissive male. The loss of male virility and the woman's rebellion" (1970:14).

Milly denounces her role as housekeeper and subsequently submissive female by denying the kitchen its traditional function. She alternately turns it into a boxing ring, courtroom and banquet hall for a party.

First of all Milly rebels against being restricted to the house and being ignored when Ahlers goes out alone by trying to dress up and go out with Don. When that fails, she uses the kitchen as an arena for battle. Ironically she denies the fact at first when she orders Shorty out of the kitchen: "... take your togs out of here. I've told you before the kitchen's not a boxing ring" (p. 8). Later she contradicts herself when she encourages Shorty to hit Sissy when she humiliates him: "Why didn't you hit her? You're a boxer. Why didn't you give her one good wallop?" (p. 13). Milly herself then turns the kitchen into a boxing ring during the skirmish with Shorty when he allows her to knock him out:

SHORTY: [Moving across to Milly where he adopts a boxer's stance]. Put them up. I'll teach you to box. [Milly stares at him silently for a few seconds then lets loose a vicious swipe at his head. He dodges it easily.] That's it! Come on. [He is now feinting and weaving. Milly tries a second swipe with the full intension of hitting him.]

MILLY: I'll get you. Take that! And that! And that! Wait! Stand still, you little bugger ... [etc.] [Eventually Shorty deliberately lets Milly connect. He goes down.] You're down! I told you! (pp. 39-40).

Sarzin (1987:243) claims that it is not just Milly's sparring with Shorty, her clash with Ahlers or her contest with Don, it is life itself that is the battleground: "Some nights when I lie in bed and those ambulances go screaming past and I think: More casualties! ... I can just about smell the cannon smoke" (p. 69). Cast in a combatant role from the start, Milly's cutting words, biting observations and aggressive mood are the weaponry of a survivor. Her strength of mind enables her to declare war on life. Towards the end of the play when Milly is alone with Don she subsequently uses words such as "trenches", "ammo", "hostilities", and "armistice" (p. 69) to voice her aggression.

Her rebellion against life and her desire for positive action enables her to view life positively: "If you can't hit out once in a while, you might as well throw in the towel" (p. 11).

Milly's kitchen is not only turned into a boxing ring or a battleground, but it also becomes a podium for her monologues about death, loneliness, impending old age, her childhood, the concept of happiness and life as it should be lived: "I am going out and I am going to have a good time" (p. 23).

The kitchen is also turned into a courtroom where Don and Shorty stand accused of crimes against humanity: "Hidden in all this confusion is a Crime - a serious criminal offence. I demand Justice! [Pause.] I can't show you blood or bruises. The victim isn't dead. But that won't stop me now from looking at you, and you, and pronouncing you two bastards, Guilty!" (p. 55) .

Most important of all, the kitchen is used for the party - the party which is Milly's cure for the pain of rejection she feels. Ahlers is going out while she's "stuck in her kitchen with two good-for-nothing nitwits" (p. 24).

Don aggravates her hurt when he sneers: "He's having a good time and you're forgotten." (p. 40). When Sissy also deserts Shorty to go out with Billy, Milly plans her revenge: "I've got it! They're forgotten because we are having a good time. How's that? They walk in to find that we've forgotten all about them because we are laughing and singing and having a good time" (pp. 41-42)

Milly associates happiness with singing and laughter. This is stressed by the number of times she orders Don and Shorty to laugh and sing (pp. 21, 42, 48, 51, 54, 55, 64, 67, 68, 72) and her incessant references to having a good time (pp. 22, 23, 24, 40, 42, 64, 68). Vandenbroucke (1986:116) claims that Milly is convinced that the best way to get back at Ahlers is by appearing to enjoy herself, but the harder she tries to have a good time the more elusive her goal becomes. Ironically, one of the few times Milly does laugh freely, after boxing with Shorty, she considers it a trick to make her forget Ahlers. She wants Ahlers to think she has forgotten him, but she has no intention of actually doing so. In the end, however, when Milly faces her predicament, it is her sense of humour which saves her from becoming a non-entity. Her strength lies in the fact that she can laugh at herself: "... My God, you could do something with the lot of us in here if you had a sense of humour ... [Milly's amusement breaks into laughter ... her laughter grows enormous]" (p. 72).

Lack of laughter means defeat, therefore Milly panics at the party when not a word is spoken: "Milly now begins to realize something is going wrong. She eats slower and slower, eventually stopping altogether to watch the other two with growing frustration and disgust" (p. 50). When her attempt to get them singing fails, Don officially declares: "This is a fiasco!" (p. 53).

Milly's disgust at the way the party progresses reaches a climax when she verbally attacks both Don and Shorty. Although Milly likes Shorty she attacks him twice, proving that she has a cruel streak in her. When he tells her during the party that he is happy, she retaliates: "Well you've got no right to be. And if you're too stupid to see why, I'll tell you. And to

start off with let met tell you to your face that I don't like you. As true as God is my witness, looking at you now I can say I don't like the sight of you. You nauseate me. He teases you. He's teasing you all the time, and I'm disgusted" (pp. 55-56).

She also calls him "a simple-minded poor-white" (p. 57) and attacks his sex-life (or the lack of it). "He (Don) doesn't think you know how to do it. I think you do, but that Sissy doesn't want it from you, because we both think that Billy knows how" (p. 57).

Milly also attacks Don equally savagely when she remarks to Shorty: "... let's tell him if he wants to see a real psychological curiosity to have a good look in the mirror next time he squeezes his pimples. That's why no decent, clean-living girl will ever stomach the sight of you" (p. 57) and also: "Sometimes when I think of your hands I want to vomit" (p. 57).

Milly is self-centred in that she wants the moment for herself. Although she doesn't seem to care about her appearance she wants the admiration of not only her husband, but also Don. Ahlers is by no means her first affair. Men are important to her because of the flattery she gets from them. She is very active and wants things to happen. She forces Don and Shorty into the party to assist her plan for revenge. Their inactivity will not be tolerated, because they are inclined to let life slide by. At her age Milly cannot allow time to slide by too quickly, so she tries to hold it back

Milly's self-centredness doesn't allow her to submit passively to life. She has the capacity to free herself from despair, although she finds it difficult to come to terms with her world. She has given ten years of her life to Ahlers. When he rejects her she suddenly realizes that she is middle-aged and still a spinster. She admits to Don: "... as God is my witness, it hurts" (p. 30).

During the party Milly reflects on her childhood when she was happy. She remembers when she was eleven years old, living in Pringle Street, wearing a white dress singing, "When you Wish upon a star, makes no

matter what you are" (p. 59), she was happy. When she wished that night, it was for happiness: "... Happiness! ... I had it. That night I mean ... Happiness. It felt like I was holding it so tight it was forever and ever" (p. 60). The reverie of a happy moment in her youth inevitably leads Milly back to her unhappy present. She has lost and wasted ten years of her life with Ahlers - ten years of which she can only remember the beer and sausages they had every Saturday night at the Phoenix. When Don inadvertently hurts her by saying:

You've started to get old woman odours. You should use scent. It's unpleasant being near you at times. That's why I've got no appetite left. And maybe that's why Ahlers doesn't want to marry you. Yes! You're also not fooling anybody. I guessed it long ago. And quite frankly I don't blame him. Because the thought of living intimately with you for the rest of my life, in the same room ...! (p. 58),

Milly is no longer able to control herself and reveals the real reason Ahlers discarded her:

I'm not a woman any more ... he says. I never thought of it like that, but he says I'm not a woman any more. Last week it was, one night. He was eating liver sausage in bed and I just told him, you know, in case he started wondering. Then he said, matter-of-fact I'll admit, not meaning to hurt, that therefore strictly speaking I'm not a woman any more (p. 60).

The cry "I'm not a woman any more" is the pain, the one single punishment that has pushed her through that terrible evening. Yet, under normal circumstances she would never have admitted something like that, something which cuts to the core of her being, to anybody. That is why she feels so badly when she realizes that she has told Don and Shorty this terrible truth about herself.

Vandenbroucke (1986:110) claims that like Shorty's silkworms Milly has undergone a transformation: from little girl through puberty to adult, and more recently from fertility through menopause to barrenness. When

one becomes aware of the similarity between Milly and the silkworms the following dialogue reflects the depth of her despair:

- SHORTY: ... They're all in silk... Look! One is still spinning.
 MILLY: So that's how they do it! Congratulations, Shorty.
 Well done! What happens now?
 SHORTY: I don't know. Nothing.
 MILLY: But the moths. Moths are going to come out. Isn't
 that so, Don?
 SHORTY: I don't want moths.
 MILLY: ... Why have you been feeding them? ... Why Have You
 kept Them Alive?
 SHORTY: To see them spin. To see the silk.
 MILLY: And now that they've done it, they've had it. Is that it?
 ... You're going to chuck them away.
 SHORTY: Okay. I'll keep them and watch the moths.
 MILLY: [^]To starve! To die!
 DON: [unable to take any more]. For Christ's sake what do
 you want?
 MILLY: [with equal violence]. Some other way? Don't you?
 Must it always be the muckheap? Isn't there another
 solution? (pp. 63-64).

At the same time Milly realizes that she is "not a woman anymore", Ahlers, becoming prosperous in his business, now decides he needs an heir to carry on the business, as well as the family name. Because Milly can no longer supply the heir, he wants to put an end to their relationship: "And you see, suddenly he sat up and said he wanted a family! Because of the business and Ahlers being a good name to keep alive through the ages. We better stop now, he said. But we can still be friends" (p. 60).

Milly reacts violently to Ahlers' s Victorian view of women and his traditional chauvinistic belief which has "to do with function. The function of a thing, and being a woman, that meant babies" (p. 60).

Milly's self-revelation is a moment of high emotion that helps explain the vehemence of her earlier denial: "No! There was no baby. And I don't care, because I don't want babies. Understood? Finished. Settled" (p. 29).

Although Milly is a fighter, the purposelessness of life sometimes overwhelms her. She has given the best ten years of her life to Ahlers - to no avail. Their relationship has drained everything out of her - even her humanity. She is not altogether certain anymore whether she is a person or a meaningless object. Don defines her dilemma with great insight: "You saw yourself - an object called Milly in an object called chair - but knowing the names didn't help because everything went on being useless, including yourself" (p. 31).

In a rare moment of self-pity and self-indulgence, Milly cries: "I'd rather do away with myself than carry on like this" (p. 39), a fleeting pessimism echoed in her despairing observation: "This is a hell of an end to my year. I won't scream, but I think I'm losing my hold" (p. 46).

Milly wants to be recognised as a human being, like Lena in **Boesman and Lena** she wants her life to be witnessed: "There must be something we can do! Make a noise! ... lest they forget, as the monument says. I can still do that. I'll make it loud, make them stop in the street, make them say: People are living there!" (p. 71).

Her cry is an assertion of self. She cannot agree with Don:

You lose your place in the mind of man. With a bit of luck once or twice in you life you have it. That warm nest in another mind where 'You' is all wrapped up in their thinking and feeling and worrying about 'You'. But even if you are one of the lucky ones, sooner or later you end up in the cold again. Nothing is forever. They die, or you get divorced. One way or another they go, they forget, and you end up in your little room with your old age pension and a blind bitch for friendship. From then on it's just a matter of days. When they're good, the two of you crawl out to a bench in the sun where she can hate the pigeons and you can hate

the people. When it gets dark, you crawl back to the room. Until one day, one more sunny day with the pigeons flocking and the people passing, you're not there. But who misses you? Who's to know that inside a room, finally, forgotten by the world ... (pp. 33-34).

This outlook is too extreme for Milly and she rejects it: "Nobody gets forgotten like that. One thing I can assure you, it's not happening to me" (p. 34).

However, it is happening to her and when the realization strikes home that Ahlers has discarded and forgotten her, she schemes that both Sissy who has also gone out on a date, and Ahlers will return to find that "they're forgotten because we are having a good time" (pp. 41-42).

When they return, Sissy is not impressed and leaves with Shorty. Ahlers stamps upstairs to bed without even glancing at Milly and Don is not answering her questions or responding to her jibes. She becomes desperate: "There must be something we can do!" (p. 71).

Sarzin (1987:242) claims that this suppressed and silent scream gives a cutting edge to Milly's depression. It lends an urgency to her appeal for help to alleviate her suffering, to strengthen her wavering resolve, to eat, drink and be merry in order to celebrate life. Fortunately Milly possesses the capacity to free herself from despair. She opts for life and will not be defeated by unhappiness. Often in the play she is calling for help, crying out to be assisted, yet none is forthcoming. She remains alone among her boarders, deprived of human tenderness and love, yet when Don's pessimism threatens to overcome her, she cries out: "Mildred Jenkins you are still alive!" (p. 61). She will survive and rise above her circumstances.

This play, then, is about survival, and Milly becomes the symbol of people who rise above their circumstances. She also becomes a symbol of the survival of the "poor-whites" (a phenomenon of the time). Her surroundings are squalid, and her life is sordid, yet her sense of humour,

her resilience and her strong belief in people help her survive. The play is basically about people as indicated by the title. It is people that matter. Milly wants a good life, "laughing, singing and dancing" (p. 42).

Rae (1971:128) states that the intellectual content of Fugard's plays is something Camus defines as "courageous pessimism". When life is hopeless, the only thing man can do is to face the truth and have courage. Milly is the one in **People are Living There** with "courageous pessimism". She will not accept defeat. There has to be some hope. Even in her choice of songs she wants to prove that life is worth living: "... pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag and Smile, Smile, Smile" (p. 53).

This capacity of Milly's to free her life from despair and re-shape the remnant of her life is also found in the lives of Hester and Lena. Fugard's women, victims of love and life, find meaning in their suffering. In spite of the indignities they suffer they continue to grow. Sarzin quotes Nietzsche on this issue: "He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how" (1987:239). Milly, Hester and Lena, women characters from Fugard's **Port Elizabeth Plays**, rise above their outward fate and suffering. Through his women characters Fugard focuses on profound human problems and takes a hopeful view of the human capacity to transcend the human predicament.

Although this dissertation is about Fugard's women characters Milly's character cannot be regarded in proper perspective without briefly viewing Don and Shorty. Happiness to Milly is not merely song and laughter - it is song and laughter in the company of a man or men. It is impossible to picture Milly in the Phoenix drinking beer and eating sausages in the company of another woman. Moreover, Don fulfils a vital function in Milly's life - he bears witness. According to Anne Sarzin (1987:247) Don, the articulate scholar, just like the mute Outa in **Boesman and Lena** validates the existence of Milly and Lena respectively. Their affirmation enables Fugard's women to transcend the human predicament, the passage of time and the lack of fulfilment. Don as scribe/scholar like Fugard himself "must reduce the welter of chaotic

experiences to a nucleus of order through the process of selection" (p. 247). Don highlights certain events in Milly's life, bringing them into focus and defining their importance. Vandenbroucke calls Don a "pimpily-faced" pseudo-cynical student with a superficial command of Penguin-book psychoanalysis. He is an admixture of Fugard himself and Perseus Adams, his hitchhiking companion" (1986:111-112) described in Fugard's **Notebooks**. Don's obsession with his notes is comparable to Fugard's role as playwright, "refining the dross of existence into the gold of theatrical insights" (Sarzin, 1987:248). Milly tells Don: "Work it out and let me know" (p. 15), reinforcing his role as intellectual code-breaker whose superior intellect ensures intimate knowledge and understanding.

This statement is proved false by Don himself, however. Despite his intellect, life is defeating him. He has no hope for the future, but wants to become one of the living dead. Sarzin (1987:249) quotes Don MacLennan who calls Don "a terrified nihilist, a foil for Milly's desperate need to have the story of her life confirmed". Don admits that "purpose was dead in me" (p. 3). Where Milly is a survivor, Don is not. She is hopeful of the future, he is not.

DON: So what do you hope to win?

MILLY: Tomorrow.

[Pause]

DON: [helplessly]. I don't know (p. 69).

Don does not want to confront life like Milly. He wants to "sleep in peace", reminding us of the living dead: "All you need is four walls, and a lid" (p. 70). The image Athol Fugard conjures up is that of the castrated male. Don himself admits that he is passive and impotent, unable to reach out to people around him the way Milly does: "People are living there! I'll remind them. Tomorrow" (p. 71). Don admits his "emotional paralysis" (Vandenbroucke, 1986:113): "I'm dumb. When things happen, I watch ... The worst that can happen to me is that I'll be forgotten before my time" (p. 70).

Even his dream supports this idea of impotence, the inability to act, the fear of making human contact: "Two or three steps, in this silence, safely. Then things start to go wrong. I begin to wobble during that second on one leg, my arms start swinging wildly. There's a feeling that I've got five elbows and they're all sticking out. I'm knocking glasses into people's laps, falling over their legs ..." (p. 32).

Anne Sarzin (1987:249) notes that from the outset Don reveals characteristics of cynicism and pessimism. He himself admits that he is prey to Sartrean anguish: "Purpose was dead in me. When I lay down at four o'clock there were a hundred reasons why I should have got up. When you saw me not one was left. I had systematically abandoned the lot. Sartre calls it Anguish" (p. 3).

This trait is strongly opposed to Milly's earthy realism. Although well versed in contemporary philosophical jargon, Don offers a lifeless theorising, contrasted to Milly's need to communicate with others and to speak freely. It is only when Don abandons his pseudo-psychology that he forces Milly to make revealing disclosures about herself. He persistently searches for the particular cause of Milly's unhappiness but he fails to realize that her anguish at being forgotten before her time is all-embracing.

Don, as a character, then, serves as a foil to Milly. Whereas Don fears the future and claims that circumstances are outside his control, Milly, however, refuses to accept the immutability of her circumstances. She discovers that she is alive and by implication, will survive. Walder (1984:64) questions the quality of that survival, but Milly sees it as an assertion of self.

Sarzin (1987:238) claims that Milly's pain, defined by Don as anguish, is an existential despair and abandonment. She is alone; forsaken. She cannot count upon anyone other than herself. She describes this state graphically: "It's like a plug has been pulled out and something's drained away down a big, black hole, leaving everything stranded" (p. 31). For Sartre, Fugard, and his creation Don, hopes are abortive, dreams

deceptive and expectations unfulfilled. Reality alone is reliable. Consequently Milly is responsible for her actions and her life. Her destiny lies within herself and Sarzin (1987:238) claims that it is this sense of self that confers dignity on Milly as well as Hester (**Hello and Goodbye**) and Lena (**Boesman and Lena**). They are not the objects or playthings of man; they discover their true selves through the mediation of others. They experience nausea and anguish but they seek liberation to realize their humanity. It is significant that they reject suicide and resolve to accept and re-shape the remnant of their lives. Hunger, both physical and emotional, fear and anger are endured with the aid of humour. Fugard's women, victims of love and life, find meaning in their suffering. But it is always a man in their lives that serves as catalyst.

When Shorty first appears on the stage the impression that Milly despises him is very strong. It is through Shorty's appearance that we learn about the cruel streak in Milly's character. When Shorty greets her in a friendly manner Milly replies: "Go to hell, I'm busy" (p. 8). When he enquires about coffee (she virtually begged Don to join her for coffee earlier in the scene) she retorts: "Drop dead" (p. 8) and when he volunteers his rent she adds on to the price of his washing, because his socks "were very smelly" (p. 9). But it is actually when he mentions Sissy that the worst in Milly comes to the fore. She calls Sissy a "bitch" and Shorty a "little fool" (p. 10) and suggests that he beats his wife. When the couple have the altercation about the silkworms and Sissy writes the word "bad-boy" on his forehead in lipstick, Milly reprimands Shorty: "Why didn't you hit her? You're a boxer. Why didn't you give her one good wallop?" (p. 13).

It soon becomes clear that Milly does not really despise Shorty as a person - she actually despises his behaviour towards Sissy taking her insults "lying down" (p. 14). Gray (1982:43) reports that Fugard himself admits that Milly is actually fond of Shorty in a funny sort of way, but it is mixed up with despising him at the same time because he is so weak and stupid and under the thumb of Sissy.

Fugard (in Gray, 1982:43) actually suggests that Milly and Shorty could possibly be good friends, because of Shorty's kindness. He polishes Ahlers's shoes, runs errands for Milly, convinces Don to attend the party, buys the food for the party, sings when Milly commands, cares for the silkworms, works very hard at his job of postman and never has a harsh word for Sissy. Shorty is the only one who makes Milly laugh spontaneously during their mock fight. Fugard even suggests that Milly has a slight mother complex about Shorty, which is reciprocated by Shorty. This may be the reason why Milly despises Shorty for allowing Sissy to walk all over him. Milly's reaction to Shorty is character revealing: "... Shorty, I don't hate you. But you do get on my nerves sometimes, quite honestly. Try and behave yourself more. I'm not strict, but I hate fools. Really I do" (p. 49).

When Milly becomes agitated because the party is a failure, she attacks Shorty, accusing him of being unhappy: "Well you've got the right to be. And if you're too stupid to see why, I'll tell you. And to start off with let me tell you to your face that I don't like you. As true as God is my witness, looking at you now I can say I don't like the sight of you. You nauseate me. He teases you. He's teasing you all the time, and I am disgusted" (pp. 55-56).

She taunts him relentlessly and when Don interferes she tells him she wants both him and Shorty "rock bottom - where you belong" (p. 56).

The taunt leads Don to call Shorty "simple-minded" (p. 56), an insult picked up quickly by Milly and expanded upon: "He once called you a perfect specimen of a retarded poor white ... According to Darwin you should be dead" (pp. 56-57).

Milly's cruelty reaches a climax when she tells Shorty their suspicions about his love life with Sissy: "I don't think she's properly your wife.... He (Don) doesn't think you know how to do it. I think you do, but that Sissy doesn't want it from you, because we both think that Billy knows how" (p. 57).

This deliberate taunting causes Shorty's hackles to rise and he threatens them with violence. Action is what Milly desires of him, therefore she exults: "Now we're getting somewhere. The rock-bottom boxing match! Get out your gloves and hit!" (p. 57).

Later in the scene Shorty's inherent goodness comes to the fore again when he forgets Milly's harsh words and suggests they go to the zoo and watch the baboon with the blue bum in order to make Milly happy. She's not much impressed and doesn't want Shorty to laugh at it. Likewise she does not want Shorty to throw away the silkworms when they turn to moths. Shorty, of course, obliges every time. He even agrees meekly not to touch Sissy when they go to bed. The only time he really stands up and disagrees with Sissy is when she urges him to accept a job in Cape Town. His spirit for survival triumphs because he is able to face reality. Changing their surroundings would not change their circumstances or the quality of their lives. In the words of Hogge (1977:117) Shorty will survive, not because he is mentally equipped to do so, but because he has in abundance an enduring kindness and the ability to suffer without self-pity. Kindness illuminates his life: it is a rock against which waves of hate and discontent break and pass by.

Shorty's character, then, his inherent kindness, acts as foil for Milly's cruelty. It also emphasizes certain concepts about life that Milly has when she reacts to Shorty.

Anne Sarzin (1987:252) claims that Sissy's brief appearance widens the scope of the action, and the response she triggers off in Shorty, Don and Milly propels the play forward, providing an entertaining *divertissement* and, through character interaction, deepening the audience's understanding of all four personalities on stage. With her departure, the focus narrows. Sissy is very insecure, coming from a poor-white background: "I met her down by Booyens. Her Ma's place. Forty-nine Vereeniging Road" (p. 16). She focuses her search for security on Shorty whom she mistakenly thought could give her the material possessions she desires. Shorty indicates this when he says: "I spoke to Sissy and she said it was okay. She wanted to get married for a change. Her Ma

asked me if I was making enough money and I said yes. So she said it was certainly okay by her and may God help me" (p. 17).

When Shorty fails to offer her security she reproaches him for everything, constantly referring to his inferiority, and highlighting socio-political issues, but mainly for his failure to be a good provider. She characterises him as a dim-witted postman, "a husband that don't even bring home the living what he's supposed to earn" (p. 12).

Fugard himself (in Gray, 1982:42) informs us that Sissy is very self-centred and selfish. She dislikes Don and Milly very much because they have each other while she has nobody. Shorty, for all his goodness, has not managed to get into that frightened centre of Sissy's being and help her. Their relationship, as indicated by her name "Sissy" is that of brother/sister rather than man/wife. Anne Sarzin (1987:252) explains that Sissy, although teasing and tantalising, remains untouched by Shorty, a technical virgin despite her marriage and her "friendship" with Billy. Sissy is terrified of Don, because he appears to be a well-educated, bookish type who talks about things she knows absolutely nothing about.

Sissy also fears Milly because she is such a powerful, aggressive, solid person. Sissy has never won an argument with Milly, making her feel even more insecure. Yet Sissy has no redeeming features of character. Her understanding is so limited, her view of the world so cramped by ignorance and circumscribing convention, her makeup so unilluminated by any spark of kindness that there is very little hope for her as a human being.

2.3 The psychological approach to character: reflections

Van Laan (1970:79-90) defined four techniques according to which a dramatic character may be created. (See section A, chapter III). As these techniques are relevant in Fugard's plays, especially in the earlier ones, they are discussed here.

Van Laan explains that a reader/spectator of a play may have foreknowledge of the fictional character if it is a mythological or historical character. As it is, if the reader of a play sees the list of characters or the spectator reads the list of characters on the programme, they may gather some information on the fictional characters beforehand, e.g. Piet in **A Lesson from Aloes** is described as an Afrikaner, forty years old. The reader of the dramatic text may also gather information at the beginning of the play from the didascalies.

In **People are Living There** neither the reader nor the audience has much foreknowledge of the characters as the list of characters is very unforthcoming. Milly is merely described as a Johannesburg landlady, Don and Shorty as lodgers and Sissy as Shorty's wife. No indication of age, social background, or financial status is given. It can be deducted, however, that it is a play about poor people or poor-whites because it was only poorer people who took lodgers to make ends meet during the times when the dramatic text was written.

Van Laan (1970:79-90) informs us that extratextual signs can be either verbal or visual. The verbal device used here by Fugard is found in two of the character names: Shorty and Sissy. Anne Sarzin (1987:252) informs us that Shorty has a derisive sound, the appellation given by a taller world to one who fails to measure up to standards approved by society. This attitude may well have spurred him towards boxing, a superficial compensation for inner inadequacies of passivity and compliance. "Sissy" sums up their relationship, that of sister/brother rather than man/wife.

The visual signs used by Fugard in **People are Living There** will be discussed in more detail under the didascalies. Just briefly: Milly's appearance is that of a downtrodden, neglected, tired, unkempt housewife living in a poor suburb. Although Don is supposed to be educated and knowledgeable, his pimples and Milly's frequent references to his dirty hands spoil the effect and the audience realizes he is not what he seems to be. Shorty is portrayed visually as a postman carrying boxing gloves. Sissy is described as being dressed with cheap extravagance and when she puts on her stockings in full view of all the

fictional characters as well as the audience, the concept of a "bitch" as she is called by Milly, is strengthened. On the other hand, she is a nondescript character who thinks appearance gained by material wealth is the solution to all problems. She is no fighter as already indicated, and she has an inferiority complex. This is illustrated visually by the fact that she is white-faced with straight, mouse-coloured hair.

Van Laan considers the relationship between characters as being of great importance, as already indicated in section 2.2. Milly's character cannot develop in a vacuum, therefore we learn more about her character traits from her interaction with Don, Shorty and Sissy. Sissy's background is discussed in detail by Shorty whereas Milly supplies much information about Don. One character is therefore evaluated by another, giving the audience insight into the character's immediate involvement in a particular set of circumstances.

The characters' activity and speech are also regarded as important, because the reader/audience gains insight into each dramatic character by self-revelations, i.e. the things he/she does, says and the way in which they are said. In Milly's case her reaction is very vehement when Don mentions babies: "No! There was no baby. And I don't care, because I don't want babies. Understood?" (p. 29). This proves not only that she dislikes babies, but it also indicates that a baby is a sore point. Her role of mother and subsequently wife has remained unfulfilled, causing much pain.

Being rejected by Ahlers because she is old and unable to produce babies inflicts much pain. This pain she blames on the passage of time:

Yes, it's coming now. It hurts. There's pain. Sometimes ... sometimes it's in the colour of things. They go grey. Yes. I'm on to it! Things go grey. Know what I mean? Dull. Dreary. For days on end. And the days too. Sunday, Monday even Someday ... all grey. Faces, and calendars and the right time when I look at the kitchen clock and then the taste of the next cigarette - all of them seem to lose their colour. It's enough to make me sick. If you're looking for

symptoms, there's one. I get sick. In the afternoons, when I look at the clock and I see it's some old time again, I could vomit. And the way things can suddenly ... [looking for words] ... Be! You know, there It Is. Let's just say things get me down (pp. 30-31).

Another revelation by Milly is that inanimate objects reflect the emptiness of her life:

Well, I walk into a room - I'm by myself because he's at work and you're somewhere else and it's all quiet so I'm alone - then I walk into a room and I stand still and think about something to do. I look around, you see, for a little task to while away the time. And then it comes. I begin to notice. It's like a plug has been pulled out and something's drained away down a big, black hole, leaving everything stranded. Things stand too still. Chairs and tables. All empty and still... and stupid. That's the word! Stupid. Like that chair. I know what it is. I look at it and I say Chair. But it doesn't help. It goes on being empty and useless. Once it got so bad I said: Well I'll prove it. So I sat down. But that made it even worse (p. 31).

Milly reveals her fighting spirit in such a way that the reader/audience realizes that she will survive: There must be something we can do! Make a noise! ... lest they forget, as the monument says. I can still do that. I'll make it loud, make them stop in the street, make them say: People are living there! I'll remind them. Tomorrow (p. 71).

Many more examples of self-revelation by Milly, Don and Shorty may be quoted, but due to the extent of this dissertation these examples must suffice.

2.4 Actant, dramatis persona and dramatic model

In section A three actantial models are presented: those of Souriau, Greimas and Anne Ubersfeld. With Milly as main character in mind only the model of Souriau will be applied.

If Souriau's model (section A, 3.3) is applied to **People are Living There** the six functions will appear like this:

Milly herself embodies the thematic force "happiness". This force may also be equated to fulfilment, coming to terms with the self.

- * Ahlers represents the value sought by Milly.
- * The potential receiver of happiness is Milly herself.
- * Milly's path to obtain acceptance and consequently happiness is blocked by Ahlers. His rejection of her makes him the antagonist who obstructs her goal. During the birthday party, however, Don also appears to obstruct her goal.
- * The arbitrator of the situation in which Milly finds herself is fate or destiny.
- * Shorty assists Milly unconditionally in her attempt to obtain happiness. He makes her laugh, he buys the goods for the party, he sings, tells a joke - in general he sides with Milly even when she abuses him. Sometimes he switches from his role as antagonist to the role of helper when he tries to analyse Milly's psyche.

2.5 Didascalies

The title of a dramatic text highlights the most important aspect of the fictional world depicted by the playwright. In the case of **People are Living There** the emphasis is on "people" and "living". In this play Fugard wants to emphasize that it is people that matter. In the words of Hogge (1977:115) we must not let the appearance of the squalid house and surroundings blind us to the fact that people live there and that they are important. The people concerned here are Europeans, English and

Afrikaans speaking, and this is significant for it is the first occasion on which Fugard has made Europeans the subject of a play, other than the ineffectual priest in **No-Good Friday**. Europeans can also be poor and suffer as a consequence: it is not only the culturally and materially deprived African and Coloured whose humanity must be recognised.

More important, Fugard is showing us how people react to their surroundings, and how some can rise above their circumstances. This leads to several ironies, and also explains the emphasis on the word "living" in the title. Don who is educated and not culturally deprived like Shorty, Sissy, and to a lesser extent Milly, finds that life is defeating him. He has the ability to rationalise and therefore to understand what is happening in the world. Ironically this does not save him, for he is withdrawing from life, and consequently people: "If I were to sit down somewhere, unseen, and was quiet for a very long time, and the instinct to return to the herd petered out ... " (p. 70). There is further irony in the fact that he uses his rational faculty to justify his becoming one of the living dead: "All you need is four walls, and a lid" (p. 70). Milly, however, wants to live. She will not be defeated by unhappiness, or disappointment, or poverty, therefore she reminds herself: "Mildred Jenkins you are still alive! " (p. 61).

Milly's dilemma is that she wants a good life like in the Coke advertisement. Therefore she reaches out to the outside world by looking through the window at the people driving past on their way to have a good time. She tells Shorty to go outside and ask them where the good time is: "She's stuck in her kitchen with two good-for-nothing nitwits, so can she come?" (p. 24). When this attempt at communication fails, Milly, instead of accepting her loneliness and giving in to despair, becoming like an inanimate object "chair", prefers action: "Make a noise! ... lest they forget, as the monument says. I can still do that. I'll make it loud, make them stop in the street, make them say. People are living there! I'll remind them. Tomorrow" (p. 71). This is an assertion of self.

Stage directions also play an important role in the didascalies. An interesting feature about **People are Living There** is that Ahlers never

appears on the stage, yet he becomes part of the fictional world portrayed by the fictional characters through the didascalies and verbal information supplied mainly by Milly.

The first time the reader/audience becomes aware of Ahlers is when Milly says: "Saturday. I forgot. And him? [She indicates the ceiling.] You see him go out?" (p. 4).

On p. 5 Milly looks up at the ceiling twice while talking about Ahlers's guilty conscience. Each time Milly looks up at the ceiling she becomes more agitated, thereby indicating that something has upset her. Her agitation about Ahlers is highlighted by the didascalies which indicate the way in which she smokes: "[Stubs out her cigarette viciously and lights another ...]" (p. 5).

On p. 6 Milly follows Ahlers's every movement in the bedroom above:

Must have been in the bathroom. So! Toggling himself up. Ever known him to have a bath on a Saturday? It's to spite me. God, I wish I knew where he was going! [She follows his movements in the room overhead.] Bed. Wardrobe. Dressing table. Putting on his hair oil. Ever seen that? If you want to lose your breakfast one morning go up and have a look. It's enough to make any decent person sick. He sort of washes those big paws of his in the stuff, smooths down the few hairs left on his nut and then smiles at the result. It's revolting. Greenish. Looks like peppermint liqueur (p. 6).

The ceiling, and consequently the room upstairs and the person of Ahlers becomes such an important prop at the beginning of the play that it virtually dominates the scene. It is interesting to observe that Fugard uses the ceiling to indicate an upstairs room, thereby indicating that Milly is looking up at Ahlers in the traditional role of the submissive female. At the end of the play when Ahlers returns home Milly confronts him in the passage. [Now speaking directly to Ahlers in the passage] (p. 68). They are now on equal footing because Milly has faced up to reality

and makes a stand as a person. When he goes upstairs she is not submissive or nervous any more. She has asserted herself as a person, and she is determined to survive, that's why she has the confidence to claim: "If it's the last thing I do, I'll make you hear me!" (p. 68). When Milly looks up at the ceiling for the last time, she has forgiven Ahlers and gained tomorrow. "Tomorrow" indicates hope of the future stating that Milly will survive. She states: "It's always easier when he's asleep, even when I was up there with him. I think calmly" (p. 71). Her movements are not longer agitated as indicated by the didascalies [Takes out another cigarette] (p. 71).

When the playwright includes visual information in the didascalies about the fictional characters or the fictional world in which they find themselves, this information often enhances certain character traits or it can acquire special meaning in the development or conclusion of events.

As already stated earlier, the physical information about Milly may be deceptive in a way, because her appearance creates the impression that she is defeated by life. There is no question that her circumstances (rejection by Ahlers and the poor area) depress her. She seems to lack energy or the effort to change her circumstances, for although it is evening she has not even changed out of her "old candlewick dressing gown, her hair [is] disordered, her face swollen with sleep" (p. 2).

Yet the didascalies reveal that Milly exudes a latent energy, even nervous tension, which indicates an energy field which Don, for example, lacks. "She waits expectantly, ... moves to the backdoor and opens it ... She waves ... " (p. 2). Even when she is depressed and hurt, she acts, indicating her will to fight and to survive.

Don, on the other hand, is visualized thus in the didascalies: "Plain, almost featureless face with a sallow complexion. Body and movements without virility" (p. 2). This description complements the statement: "Purpose was dead in me" (p. 3). When Don talks, virtually no didascalies are used to indicate changes of mood, agitation, excitement etc. He just sits passively and talks almost without feeling or inflection. When he

does move, it is either to write on the back of an empty cigarette box (which is of no use, because he discards it later), or to "try" and smoke a pipe. The only occasion when Don shows a little emotion is when he states that people are easily forgotten:

You. Him. Me. [With sudden violence.] Are you blind? It Happens! Who remembers us? At this moment? Ahlers? Is he thinking about you? With his old friend from Germany? [Turning to Shorty. who has been following the argument for several minutes.] Or Sissy? Billy-boy has just made her laugh. She's enjoying herself. She's forgotten she's got a husband, who he is, where he is. And you're waiting. You are waiting for her to remember you, to come back. And when they do, when they walk in and find us again, it will be the way you find something old and forgotten and almost useless. Something in a corner, put away a long time ago, and now there it is again, too broken to mend but too much trouble to throw away. So back it goes, because maybe one day ... That's us! We're hanging on by a maybe in somebody else's mind (p. 34).

Or when he claims Milly's party to be a fiasco: "[Don. who has sat tensed through the foregoing. making no attempt to help the other two! now jumps to his feet ...]" (p. 53).

Or when he and Shorty argues over the silly singing: "[Don and Shorty erupt simultaneously into protestations and accusations. Milly is still singing her song...]" (p. 54).

The last time Don is agitated is when he tells Milly time has run out for her: "[with sudden vehemence]. Yes! It's all you get. And what's more you've had it. It's nearly twelve o'clock and then you're a year older. And there's not many more left where that one came from. You're in the home stretch, Milly!" (p. 58).

The didascalies describing Shorty emphasize his inherent goodness and will to please others. His physical description is straightforward: [Shorty Langeveld appears in the passage doorway. He is short but stockily built.

about twenty-five years old. He is wearing the tunic and trousers of a postman's uniform and carries a small bag and a pair of boxing gloves (p. 8).

He obediently complies with all Sissy's orders. When she tells him to turn around so that she can put on her stockings "Shorty turns his back" (p. 12); when she orders him to turn around he does so meekly (p. 13). When she writes "Bad-boy" on his forehead with lipstick, "Shorty stands hanging his head" (p. 13). It is this passivity which rankles Milly.

On the other hand, Shorty tries to please. He cleans Ahlers's shoes (p. 15), returns them to Ahlers (p. 20), carries messages from Milly to Ahlers (p. 21), slams the clock when Milly instructs him to (pp. 35, 61), looks after the silkworms and even spars with Milly in order to make her laugh (pp. 39-40). He buys the cake for the party (p. 44) and supports Milly in her singing during the party (pp. 53, 68): "Shorty is again the only one who tries to help" (p. 68).

Sissy is described only a few times, but her lack of breeding and deprived cultural background are emphasized each time, either by her appearance or her actions. When we encounter her for the first time she is "dressed with cheap extravagance ... barefoot, carrying her shoes and handbag" (p. 11). She doesn't put on her stockings in the privacy of her bedroom, but in the kitchen, the most public area of the boarding house. Shorty, her husband, is not allowed to watch, but Don gets permission. The act of putting on stockings in front of an audience degrades Sissy to the level of a cheap stripteaser performing to an audience. This cheap image is emphasized when she "puts on her shoes! then takes out lipstick, mirror! and powder compact" (p. 13). Her actions degrade Shorty: "Sissy leans forward suddenly and writes on his forehead with her lipstick" (p. 13). When she returns from her outing with Billy, however, she is "disconsolate" (p. 64) and wants to force Shorty to leave for Cape Town.

Auditory information about the fictional characters describes aspects of the character's voice which indicate mood. Milly "yawns" (p. 4) to indicate her boredom. She often speaks "with intensity" (p. 7), "impotent with

anger and resentment beginning to break through" (p. 22), "highly indignant" (p. 26), "indignant" (p. 27), "with sudden vehemence" (p. 29), "irritably" (p. 29), "in growing agitation" (p. 36), "outraged" (p. 38, 40), "in indignation" (p. 62), and "with growing indignation" (p. 63). This range of emotions portrays her depression, her indignation at being cheated out of the best ten years of her life and her search for the meaning of her existence. When the play ends and Milly triumphs, she chuckles (p. 27) and laughs. Visual is combined with auditory in the final climax: "[Milly's amusement breaks into laughter. Repeating random images from the picture just drawn - kangaroo. boxing gloves. blue bums, etc., etc. . - her laughter grows enormous. At its height. and with Don watching her ...]" (p. 72).

The most important auditory information supplied by the didascallies is the passage of time as indicated by the chiming of the clock. As early as in the introductory passage the reader/audience becomes aware of the fact that not only is time passing; it is completely out of joint for Milly: "Silence ... seven o'clock" (p. 1). This fact is emphasized throughout the dramatic text when the clock strikes the wrong hour. Milly's rebellion against this is illustrated by the information that the clock is hit (or physically attacked) at certain intervals.

The striking of the clock emphasizes the passage of time - not just physical time, but time symbolizing Milly's life and impending fiftieth birthday, as well as the ten wasted years spent with Ahlers. After Milly's vicious speech about the time wasted with Ahlers, "After all it was only ten years. Why worry about them! [Her anger and resentment beginning to break through.] Well, you'd better, because they were mine. Those were ten years of my life and you had them cheap" (p. 22), the clock strikes eight: "The clock chimes, then one stroke. The sound of a vicious blow. The clock strikes seven more times. It is eight o'clock" (p. 22), reminding Milly that she wants a good time. During the next hour we learn about Milly's childhood and Don's attempts to analyze her life. Don stresses that one gets easily forgotten, no one misses a life that is of no consequence.

When the clock strikes again, it is supposed to be nine o'clock, but Milly's feelings are so out of hand by now that her emotional state is reflected by the clock. "The clock strikes three ... Exit Shorty. A timid blow ... A second blow. The clock continues its striking. Milly is obviously counting. After the sixth stroke she relaxes. But the clock strikes one more" (p. 35). Milly has lost track of one hour. This upsets her tremendously. Don torments her further when he states: "It's ten o'clock, which, when you work it out, means that there are two hours left of today" (p. 36). He goes even further to calculate the days, hours lost with Ahlers. He supports the noise made by the clock by tapping on the table with his pipe: "The passing seconds. Stop them. [He taps.] Go on! The sound of doom, Milly. Seconds becoming minutes, minutes becoming hours, days, months, years ..." (p. 36).

After Milly's confession of the real reason why Ahlers rejects her ("I'm not a woman any more", p. 60) the clock strikes again:

[Inside the house the clock begins to chime. They listen in silence for a few seconds! then...] Ignore that! Where were we? Today! What was I saying? Today...today...Hold on! This one I won't let go! Today, today...All right! You win, damn you. Yesterday! [The clock mechanism is again at fault. It chimes on and on and on. Exit Shorty. A blow off-stage stops the chiming] (p. 61).

This time Milly does not count. Time ceases to be important, because she has made the discovery: "Mildred Jenkins you are still alive!" (p. 61). She has hope for the future. The passage of time is not important any more - what is important is that she'll survive, facing the future. Don wants to bust her confidence a final time, but Milly is not frightened of time any more.

DON: It can't last forever, Milly.

MILLY: What?

DON: You and him.

MILLY: Forever! Who said anything about that. I'm halfway there anyway.

DON: So what do you hope to win?

MILLY: Tomorrow (p. 69).

In **People are Living There**, Athol Fugard uses both mimetic and diegetic space. Mimetic space (visual description) is created in the introduction of both acts with the description of the kitchen:

The kitchen of an old, double-storeyed house in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. Two doors - one leading to the backyard and an outside room where Don lives the other to a passageway and so to the rest of the house. There is also a window looking out onto a street. Centre stage is a kitchen table and chairs with an electric light hanging above them. For the rest we see but not too clearly because the light is bad. the walls, a kitchen dresser, shelves and in one corner an old-fashioned gas stove (p. 1) .

At the beginning of Act Two certain changes in the kitchen are indicated: [The room is 'decorated', the table has a cloth, plates, glasses, etc. In the centre of the table is a candle stuck into a bottle.]

Diegetic space (space which is referred to by the characters) is created when Milly repeatedly looks up at the ceiling and talks about Ahlers e.g. "And Him? [She indicates the ceiling.] You see him go out?" (p. 4). There are more such references e.g. "[Returns her attention to the ceiling.] There's no sound of life" (p. 5).

Diegetic space is also created when Milly constantly refers to the people and events outside the house:

[Turns to the window.] Look out there. Go on, look! Thousands of them. Millions. Where are they going? They're going to have a good time. Every Saturday night they drive past on their way to have a good time. And don't try to tell me they're going to the movies! (p. 24).

The window looking onto the street is an opening to the world outside from which Milly is separated in her angst, her anguish at the lost years of her youth, and her desire for revenge. When Don finally admits that life has defeated him, Milly cries: "But there's a street outside there, Don! All the people! Rush hour traffic. Right outside that front door!" (p. 70).

She will grab the link with the outside world and have her life witnessed: "I'll make it loud, make them stop in the street, make them say: People are living there! I'll remind them. Tomorrow" (p. 71).

Another interesting fact about diegetic space is that the fictional world created in the dramatic/performance text reflects both the physical and emotional relationships of the fictional characters. Sarzin (1987:255) informs us that one door leads to the backyard and an outside room where Don lives. The other door connects with the rest of the house. Don is therefore both physically and metaphorically outside the main arena of action, a position that reinforces his role as observer and catalyst. The door leading to the rest of the house is an opening to Milly's past with Ahlers which constitutes all her bitterness and resentment.

CHAPTER III: HELLO AND GOODBYE

3.1 Introduction

Fugard's **Three Port Elizabeth Plays** were published in 1974. According to Walder (1984:52) it would be hard to imagine a less propitious place for the production of works of art or literature than Port Elizabeth. The city itself is very representative of South Africa in that one-third of the population is white and two-thirds non-white. The poorer whites reside in northern suburbs such as Algoa Park (later the background to **A Lesson from Aloes**), which adjoin the factories and 'non-white' areas. These people are mostly Afrikaans-speaking. The wealthy whites, both Afrikaans and English-speaking, live luxuriously in tree-lined southern suburbs near the beach. Apart from their servants, the whites have virtually no personal contact with blacks. The blacks, on the other hand, have no political rights, very little personal freedom, and poverty and lack of proper housing contribute to a low standard of living. No wonder then that Walder quotes Camus: "Can one be moved by a city where nothing attracts the mind, where the very ugliness is anonymous, where the past is reduced to nothing? Emptiness, boredom, an indifferent sky, what are the charms of such places?" (1984:53). Fugard's answer to Camus's question is succinct: "Doubtless solitude and perhaps, the human creature" (Walder, 1984:53).

It is against this background of the bleakness, poverty and degradation of life in and around Port Elizabeth that two of Fugard's most powerful women characters emerge: Hester (**Hello and Goodbye**) and Lena (**Boesman and Lena**). They are not overcome by their circumstances - they survive. It is suggested that **The Blood Knot** is comprised of only male characters because the issues in the play are mainly political. Fugard himself states that it is no coincidence that all the important manifestations in his work reside in women. It is the Johnnies that dodge life and the Hesters who tackle it with vehemence. It is the Lenas who want to know their destination in life. They do not give up, but rise above their circumstances (translated freely from **Beeld**, 1985:15).

3.2 *Dramatis Personae*

The relationships between characters in this play are very revealing. Athol Fugard juxtaposes two personalities, Hester and Johnnie, to explore the results of their coming together. The characters talk to themselves and to each other, and then at the end they choose to separate, to live their lives apart. In Gray (1982:163) we are told that between the "hello" of their meeting and the "goodbye" of their parting Hester and Johnnie, two lonely and at first uncommunicative people, are forced into revealing themselves to each other. Fugard has compared this play with Bach's unaccompanied violin sonatas: "one voice counterpointing itself". Therefore the plot is remarkably free from complexities: mutual disguises and pretences are gradually broken down until the couple are confronted at the climax with their real, naked selves. It is this new knowledge, achieved through debate and cross examination that reveals Hester's real character and ability to cope with reality. Walder (1984:69) emphasizes Hester's strength when he says that her desire to know the past and her childhood is ultimately an expression of her desire to be - she accepts herself in her unhappy existence as a prostitute. Her strength lies in her honesty to face the worst and still come through. Johnnie does not accept reality; he is evasive and resigned, therefore he becomes no more than a living ghost.

Rae (1971:110) quotes Athol Fugard on the relationship between Hester and Johnnie:

I like to think of Johnnie and Hester as representing two possibilities of action in a certain situation. There was this little deprived family, the Smits of Valley Road in P.E. - poor whites. Hester, for me, is somebody who turned her back on it and left it. On the face of it life was not too good to her, but she nevertheless had enough strength and enough aggression to turn her back on the house, pack her suitcase, close the door one day, walk out, get on a train and come to Johannesburg.

Johnnie, on the other hand, is unable to make that sort of decision. That speech of his where he says he got as far as

Kroonstad, etc. He did not have enough guts to say 'Well goodbye, I have got to live my own life and I am going'.

Rae (1971:110) claims that this point of view is Johnnie's. It is Johnnie's world that Hester comes into, that Hester threatens, that he has to reorganise, that he has to defend, and that he is finally left with.

Hester pretends that she has returned to claim her share of the compensation her father received after losing his leg in a blasting accident. It soon becomes apparent, however, that this is not the most important reason for her return. When Johnnie asks her what she will do if she doesn't find "it" (meaning the compensation) Hester gives herself away:

HESTER: I don't know. I don't even know what it is yet. Just one thing that's got a good memory. I think and think. I try to remember. There must have been something that made me happy. All those years. Just once. Happy.

JOHNNIE: No, I mean the money. The compensation. What will you do if you don't ... [Pause.] Have you ... ? Yes, you have, haven't you? You've forgotten what you're looking for! (pp. 146-147).

Coleen Angove (1986:35) informs us that Vandenbroucke makes a very significant observation about Hester's reasons for returning to her home where she had only experienced frustration and bitterness. According to him Hester returned not so much for her "inheritance" as her "heritage". She seeks the negation of her sense of inferiority - the result of the feeling that she, as well as her family, is second-hand: "Nothing but rubbish ... second-hand poor-white junk!" (p. 155).

Hester's search for the compensation becomes a search for her childhood, of memories long suppressed. As the family mementoes and discarded clothes multiply and spill out confusedly upon the stage it confirms one thing: the emotional as well as material poverty of her past and the family's crippling spiritual inheritance. Hester was disapproved of and rejected by her father, turning her into a rebel who is

prepared to suffer. She disregarded her mother's love, throwing it aside as easily as she did her mother's dress. She and her brother were never close. Now she is lonely and needs to come to terms with the past in order to face the future. She pretends she's only after money: "Money, brother. Money! You can do anything with money. And my turn is coming. Bring the boxes. I've wasted enough time" (p. 142).

Hester becomes more frustrated as her search continues, not because she cannot find the money, but because everything she touches serves only to confirm the emotional poverty of her childhood. In desperation she asks Johnnie: "Wasn't there one thing worth saving from all those years? ... Just one thing that's got a good memory" (pp. 146-147).

Hester hated her childhood but now in retrospect, she sees that at least it was a period when she belonged to someone, somewhere. She had her mother's love, but she lost that too through hating too much: "She got lost, among the rubbish. I forgot she was here - in here, alive, to touch, to talk to, to love. She was a chance in here to love something. I wanted to. The hating was hard. Hate! Hate! So much to hate I forgot she was here" (p. 156).

Hester's break with the past is most effectively dramatised when she unwittingly hurls her mother's dress onto the floor where it joins the rest of the family inheritance and cries: "THERE IS NO GOD! THERE NEVER WAS! We've unpacked our life, Johannes Cornelius Smit, the years in Valley Road, and there is no God. Nothing but rubbish. In this house there was nothing but useless ... second-hand poor-white junk!" (p. 155).

Hester's stature as a person lies in the fact that she is not a stereotype. On the surface she may seem to be a typically lower class uneducated Afrikaner brought up in a strict Calvinistic home. There the stereotyped characteristics end. According to Coleen Angove (1986:37) Hester is hardly conservative, yet her permissive life as a prostitute in Johannesburg brings no fulfilment. Her return to Port Elizabeth is undertaken in the hope that she will find the security she needs in established if despised values. Her rebellion is not against tradition as such, but against the hypocrisy of clinging to empty values. Everything

that is traditionally the foundation of Afrikaner life, that is, the sanctity of the home, marriage and religion, she lays open to the bone to reveal all imperfections. Hester is determined and ruthless in her quest for truth. She is selfish and demanding, but also painfully honest, sparing neither the sacred cows of her community, nor herself. Johnnie quotes their father as having said of her: "We won't speak about her any more. You weren't a real Afrikaner by nature ... Must be some English blood somewhere, on Mommie's side" (p. 125).

Barney Simon (in Rae, 1971:102) supports this view of her character trait: "She moves directly always. She goes for what she wants. She smashes boxes. She deals directly with all things but avoids their meanings, she concerns herself only with facts".

It is highly ironical that Johnnie says of her return (in his usual mode of hackneyed Biblical allusion): "You've come home. The prodigal daughter has returned ... " (p. 157). Vandenbroucke interprets Johnnie's words as laden with ambiguity: "Hester is both a prodigal daughter and a prodigal Afrikaner" (1986:73). Like the prodigal son, Hester has left home to experience the good times in the city, but unlike her Biblical counterpart her return is certainly not prompted by the coming to insight. Hester is once more disappointed by home and everything it stands for - and she leaves for a second time.

The religious overtones in the play are central to the understanding of Hester's character, and in contrast to that of Johnnie. Hester's hatred of her past stems from her father's stifling autocracy in laying down rigid rules, demanding unquestioning loyalty and obedience and setting strict religious and moral standards all based on Calvinism, yet he showed Hester no love and condemned his wife to an early death. He enslaved his weak-willed son to such an extent that Johnnie returns compulsively to his father's faith to justify his weakness and suffering.

God is absent from Hester's world, yet Johnnie claims that He exists, although his life would seem to deny such a claim. Hester states quite categorically that there is no God, and that there never was: "God help you. God help us. No chance of that, my boy. He never gave a damn about what happened in this house" (p. 146). Yet some aspects of her

life suggest that she is wrong in her assessment. Although her words deny God, her actions do not. She is responding to situations in a way that makes life meaningful. She chooses life rather than death, she possesses honesty and courage and shows a great deal of compassion when she invites Johnnie to accompany her to Johannesburg. Although she has no hope, she offers him life. Hogge (1977:135-136) quotes Frankl in this respect indicating that it is the nature of Hester's response that gives significance to her life:

If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete. The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity - even under the most difficult circumstances - to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for selfpreservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not (p. 1).

When we analyse this quotation and applies it to the lives of Hester and Johnnie it is easy to see that it is the woman character that emerges more favourably than the man from the mill of life. As in **People are Living There**, Rae (1971:128) draws a parallel between Milly and Hester in **Hello and Goodbye**, stating that both have what Camus defines as "courageous pessimism". He feels it is pointless having any hope because life is all one bad joke to begin with. But the one virtue, the one thing that man can do in this context is to face the truth and have courage. Hester has the chance to stay home and be caged in a room, but she opens that door a second time and walks out into the world which has so little to offer. At least there is still a little hope that gives her enough courage to try and live her life, rather than just exist: "Back like I said. There's always jobs. And I got my room. That's me - a woman in a room. I'm used to it now. It's strange you know. I can see it - see it happening. All of this. I'll walk out of that door, through the

streets to the station, sit in the waiting room. Then the train at ten and all the way back. It's hard. Things are too clear. This, there, Jo'burg tomorrow when I get there. The rooms - the dark rooms, the many faces - and one of them me, Hester Smit. I'm too far away from my life. I want to get back to it, in it, be it, be myself again the way it was when I walked in. It will come I suppose. But at this moment - there she is waiting, here she is going and somebody's watching all of it. But it isn't God. It's me" (p. 162).

Hogge (1977:137) claims that memory is a life-giving thing, although it is no guarantee that its possessor will be lead to enlightenment. Johnnie, even with memory, is in a state of darkness. He mainly remembers his father, but now that he is dead there is no purpose in Johnnie's life. Hester's memories or illumination leads to no revelation or transformation of her life, as a matter of fact her life remains empty, but that only renders her honesty and courage more beautiful.

Hester was driven away from home as a reaction against her father's religious demands (to have a "good time" in Johannesburg): ... and all our life it was groaning and moaning and what the Bible says and what God's going to do and I hate it! ... I wanted to scream. I got so sick of it I went away (p. 109-110).

When Hester returns to Port Elizabeth it is ironic that she is not frightened of finding things different, but of finding them the same: "Please let it be different, and strange, even if I get lost and got to ask my way. I won't mind. But to think of it all still the same, the way it was, and me coming back to find it like that ... ! Sick! It made me sick on the stomach" (p. 112).

Some of the memories during the slow journey back almost cause her to return to Johannesburg. She is enabled to go on only by the approach of night because in the dark there is not so much certainty. In daylight it is different: "I never have doubts in daylight" (p. 113). She also tells Johnnie she'll tell him why she came back the next day: "Let me look at it in the light" (p. 110).

Hester's extreme resentment of religious hypocrisy is reinforced by her travel companions who has the same moral self-rigtheousness and lack of love as Hester's father:

I hate them when they're like that - fat and dressed in black like Bibles because somebody's dead, and calling me Ou Suster ... and it was non-stop all the time about the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand and swimming on Sunday and all that rubbish ... And every time just when I'm ready to be brave Ou Suster starts again on the Kingdom and Jesus doesn't like lipstick. By then I had her in a big way. So when she asks me if I seen the light I said no because I preferred the dark! (pp. 111-112).

Coleen Angove (1986:34) states that this quotation reveals a lot about Hester's character. She admits to trying to be brave and one realizes that many of her actions are the result of a feigned bravado - as are her repeated and fervent irreverent attacks on God. Her defiance is only the superficial layer under which there is a heart-felt desire to be proved wrong. Her flippant response: "I preferred the dark" (p. 112) is a confession that she is experiencing life "in the dark".

When Hester reminisces about her childhood she points out to Johnnie how he, as a child, used to tell his father what Hester had been doing, thus getting her into trouble. Hogge (1977:138) claims that father and son enjoyed Hester's wrongdoings, because it made them feel righteous, but after she left the game ceased, for there was no one else for them to disapprove of, nor could her father spy on her to see what she was doing: "Soon as I did something ... Hester! I'm watching you! And there he was peeping behind the curtains" (p.141). He calls it the hypocritical side of Calvinism, the side which enjoys disapproving of other people's behaviour. This aspect of Calvinism has no charity in it.

Hester's mother was another victim of Calvinism. She is portrayed as the stereotyped docile, unemancipated wife and mother. Her insignificance is embodied in her slight build. It is ironic that Johnnie inherits his mother's character traits being weak-willed and manipulated by his father while Hester is more like her father: stubborn and with a determination with which he had survived the

crisis years of the thirties, and eventually the bitterness with which he had faced his injury although she hates him especially after what he has done to her mother. Mrs. Smit was driven to an early grave by the unhappiness, hard work and grinding poverty of their life. Hogge (1977:139) claims that she was a poor, frightened little woman hurried to death by a husband who professed to be religious yet in whose behaviour there was no spark of kindness, nor any glimmer of heavenly light. According to Hester this type of Calvinism leads to death, not life: "Always working - working, working, working ... [Pause] ... Frightened. She worked harder than anybody I ever seen in my life, because she was frightened. He frightened her. She said I frightened her. Our fights frightened her. She died frightened of being dead" (pp. 148-149).

Hester defies the Calvinist notion of what it means to enact the natural role of a woman - that of submissive wife and mother. That is why she herself probably never married but became a prostitute:

Marriage! One man's slave all your life, slog away until you're in your grave. For what? Happiness in Heaven? I see them - Ma and the others like her, with more kids than they can count, and no money; bruises every payday because he comes home drunk or another one in the belly because he was so drunk he didn't know it was his old wife and got into bed! (p. 150).

She rebels against the submissiveness of women in a Calvinist society and the passive acceptance of their plight: "They live in hell, but they're too frightened to do anything about it because there's always somebody around shouting God and Judgement" (p. 150).

Hogge (1977:151) claims that for all its hideousness and sordidness, Hester's way of existence is more life-affirming than her father's and brother's brand of piety, which is life-denying. It is the supreme irony of the play that the prostitute turns out to be more on the side of life than those who are always talking of God and Judgement; that she who denies there is a God affirms Him more by her courage and honesty and generosity than those who claim He exists, yet whose actions are a most powerful denial of Him. Hester is totally rejected by her brother in this play: her father rejected her with equal conviction during his life. One is

surely being asked to remember the story of Christ and the prostitute. When the crowd asked His permission to stone to death the woman who had committed adultery, He replied that the person who was without sin should cast the first stone. This dispersed the mob, for they were shamed into a recognition that they were not without guilt. In this play, however, father and son - and society - do cast their stones, and the result is a kind of death: "I've done it and I don't care a damn. Two months old and I got rid of it" (p. 150).

This is the most important insight or revelation of **Hello and Goodbye**. Johnnie is shocked, and starts to suggest she will regret all this when the time comes for her to face her maker. Hester replies: "THIS is my time. Now! And no man is going to bugger it up for me the way he did for Mommie" (p. 151).

Hester is filled with a terrible disillusion of such profound proportions that she'd be happy to see the whole world destroyed: all life is a mistake: "We're all somebody else's mistake. You. Him too. This. The whole damned thing is a mistake. The sooner they blow it up with their atom bombs the better" (p. 151).

Another important aspect of this play is Hester's search for her identity. When she arrives home she is shocked to discover that Johnnie doesn't know her: "You don't know who I am," and "Don't you recognize me at all? ... I'm Hester. Your sister, Hester Smit" (p. 108). She points out a birthmark and a scar made by a bullet to prove her identity to Johnnie and then tells him about their father's accident. As the conversation progresses and she becomes frustrated and angry. Only then does Johnnie admit he recognizes her - not as a person, but through her hatred: "... your hate! It hasn't changed. The sound of it. Always so sudden, so loud, so late at night. Nobody else could hate it the way you did" (p. 110).

Hester hates everything: Johnnie, her childhood and her life as a prostitute - everything except her dead mother - and that love is tainted with guilt because she had not loved her enough. Her hatred drove her away from home. She ran away from her past in an attempt to come to terms with herself. Yet the attempt failed and she returns home

subconsciously realizing she is growing old and tired and she is terrified of the prospect of growing old alone. Although she lives in a busy city surrounded by a million people, her life is empty and friendless:

There's no address! No names, no numbers. A room somewhere ... Rent in advance and one week's notice - one week to notice it's walls again and a door with nobody knocking, a table, a bed, a window for your face when there's nothing to do (p. 128).

Coleen Angove (1986:30) claims that Hester's hatred is an attempt at asserting her identity in a new way: "Don't make yourself another piece of junk! Hate him! It's clean and new" (p. 154). It is ironical that in her rebellion against her mother's life of subordination, Hester's life of prostitution in Johannesburg epitomizes the "second-hand" woman". She has reacted against hackneyed religion, hackneyed paternal authority, and hackneyed moral principles. She has rejected them because they have become empty, meaningless traditions. But in rejecting everything that tradition is built upon, and against which the individual measures his identity, she is in danger of losing her own identity. Consequently Hester is involved in an agonized quest for her distinctiveness.

When she unpacks her suitcase she takes out a mirror and looks in it. Although it reflects her image she asks Johnnie: "What do I look like?" (p. 118). When he answers that she looks older, we realize it is not her physical image she is concerned about. She states: "I can't see myself. Mirrors don't work. I can't watch ... Me. When I look, I look back" (p. 119).

A little later she tells Johnnie the purpose of her visit: "I'm passing through and my name is Hester Smit" (p. 125). She often repeats her surname as if that will establish her roots - what she really is. She soon realizes, however, that neither Johnnie nor her memories of her father will help her determine her identity: "None of you know me" (p. 125). She will have to establish that for herself. All these years Hester has tried to live an existence cut off from any family ties, hoping that by doing so, she will obliterate her past. Her continual emphasis on her individuality, as distinct from family ties, reveals the implied wish to

break the barriers of a predetermined identity, the result of inescapable social and genetic ties: "Here we go again ... I'm his daughter and you're his son and I'm your sister and where's our mother? Well, I'm, also ME! Just ME! Hester" (p. 123).

Coleen Angove (1986:35) claims that this existential wish so utterly at odds with traditional Afrikaans utterances is one often found in Fugard's characters, and one that brings only frustration to its originators. Paradoxically, however, Hester also fears a clean break with the past. We discover that from her constant references to herself, even when irrelevant. Despite the fact that she hates her father, she wants him to remember her so that she has some identity left:

HESTER: Does he ask about me?

JOHNNIE: No.

HESTER: But he remembers me (p. 125).

Hester's isolated life in Johannesburg has led to this crumbling away of her sense of identity:

I started waking in the middle of the night wondering which one it was, which room ... lie there in the dark no knowing. And later still, who it was. Just like that. Who was it lying there wondering where she was? Who was where? Me. And I'm Hester. But what's that mean? What does Hester Smit mean? (p. 128).

What disturbs her even more is the fact that her clients do not call out her name in their sleep, but dream about other women. "You don't know the room, you're not in his dream. Where do you belong?" (p. 128). Then when she lies beside him unable to sleep, questions about herself and her identity bother her: "... no danger or pain or anything like that, just something missing, the meaning of your name" (p. 128).

This apparent absence of finding a reflection of her existence in the lives of those around her, forces Hester back to her home. She will rather face her father's hatred than have her memory erased.

Although Hester pretends to be oblivious of criticism of her behaviour and has frequent bouts of venomous anger, she reveals a sensitivity of spirit. She longs to be treated like a lady; to have pride in herself. On the surface she sees money as the method to make this possible: "But when I walked in (to the lounge of a hotel) they all started staring and then this coolie waiter comes to me and says they don't serve "ladies" by themselves. Well this time they will. Because I'll be a boarder. I'll pay in advance" (p. 142).

Hester is not alone in her quest for identification. Johnnie also struggles with this problem but his way of dealing with it is exactly the opposite of Hester's method. Hester cannot accept what she finds: the hypocrisy, lack of love, and uninteresting people that she finds make up her immediate cultural surroundings. Johnnie does not have the strength of character to reject as she does, or to accept conditionally - which would be the ideal. Instead, he accepts unconditionally and totally. And because he has embraced a life-style which is empty of any meaning, and is totally uninspiring, he slowly recedes as a component from his own life. That is why he tries to keep his father alive: "I'm ashamed. Of me. Of being alone. Just me in my whole life ... It was so different with him. He was ... something else, somewhere else" (pp. 160-161).

Johnnie is an embodiment of passivity: "I don't love, I don't hate. I play it safe. I come when called, I go when chased. I laugh when laughed at ..." (p. 154). In a traditionally paternalistic society, Johnnie takes loyalty to his father to an extreme, thereby shifting the responsibility of decisions away from himself. In an echo of the docility of his mother, Johnnie is a study in unquestioning servitude. His father and God become synonymous: "What he wants, or God wants, I can do. I fetch, I cook, I sweep, I wash, I wait ..." (p. 154). Johnnie willingly sacrifices himself as an individual with a life to live. Rather than rebel against what he finds unacceptable, he chooses the undemanding comfort of acceptance. Subconsciously he is protecting himself against the agony of experiencing life in its painful limitations - as Hester does.

When Johnnie finds that life is challenging him with the unavoidable necessity of having to make a decision concerning a career, he finds a

way to get out of it with the least activity on his part. And the unavoidable truth he bends and changes in his mind to become an acceptable reality for himself.

For example, when Johnnie "chooses" not to be trained as a stoker, he returns and tells his father that he has missed the train. And then he dismisses responsibility with the words: "We agreed it was God's will being done" (p. 153). One gets the impression that Johnnie has distorted reality on purpose so many times that reality and make-believe have fused. Whatever he wants to be real, he imposes reality on by believing it to be so. Hence his pretence that his father is alive, first by consciously training his mind to avoid the issue completely and later on by pretending to Hester. Johnnie is continually reverting to trivialities to occupy his thoughts; he consciously trains himself to avert reality thereby softening the blows of life.

For Johnnie to acknowledge the full implications of his father's death would mean to have to stand on his own feet as a responsible individual - something he has long since relinquished. We find that the pressure to tell the truth becomes increasingly greater in Hester's presence which demands honesty. Rather than face the reality of his own bleak existence - and acting on it - he averts reality by taking on his father's identity, physically as well as spiritually. In so doing, he totally relinquishes his own identity, once and for all.

Hester, however, is not afraid to face reality. As she unpacks the boxes in search for something meaningful in her past, Johnnie finds something valid to carry him through the future - his father's crutches. As he makes this discovery, he refers to it as "our inheritance" (p. 140). As he gets onto his father's crutches, his physical dependence becomes greater by the moment. When Hester's unnerving enquiries into what had happened in her absence make him squirm and finally drop the crutches, his grudging retort as he is forced to stand on his own feet is: "Look what you've make me do!" (p. 153). He does not even accept the responsibility for this trivial action.

When Hester discovers that her father is dead, Johnnie has to acknowledge for the first time that the entire purpose of his life has

disappeared. He has no identity of his own left. In a last effort to help her brother face reality and accept life, Hester invites him to accompany her to Johannesburg: "Anything's better than this, Boetie. Get a job, a girl, have some good times" (p. 161).

Johnnie does not have the strength of character Hester possesses, therefore he merges into his father's identity completely: both physically and emotionally. The play ends with his portrayal of his new character: "The shadow on the wall, different ... but me ... a different me! What's the word? Birth. Death. Both. Jesus did it in the Bible...Resurrection (pp. 162-163).

Ironically it is this transformation of Johnnie that finally leads Hester to the discovery of her true self and helps her to face the disappointing reality: "That's me - a woman in a room" (p. 162). Hester knows what she must go back to. Without self-pity and with an astonishingly robust honesty she examines her own life and, with true existential courage, decides to face it. She is the master of her own destiny:

It's hard. Things are too clear. This, there, Jo'burg tomorrow when I get there. The rooms - the dark rooms, the many faces - and one of them me, Hester Smit. I'm too far away from my life. I want to get back to it, in it, be it, be me again the way it was when I walked in. It will come, I suppose. But as this moment - there she is waiting, here she is going, and somebody's watching all of it. But it isn't God. It's me (p. 162).

3.3 Didascalies

As in **People are Living There** the title of **Hello and Goodbye** enhances the fictional world of the dramatic characters. The title appears fairly simple and without complexities, and points, on the surface, at least, to Hester's arrival at her home and her subsequent departure in the end. But as I have already mentioned, between the "hello" of Hester's meeting with Johnnie and the "goodbye" of their parting, two lonely and at first uncommunicative people are forced into revealing themselves to each other. Mutual disguises and pretences are gradually broken down until the couple are confronted at the climax with their real, naked selves.

This new knowledge, achieved through debate and cross examination, is the basis for the play's resolution.

There is an interaction between "hello" and "goodbye" throughout the play. Sometimes the sequence is even reversed. At the beginning of the play Johnnie pretends that he plans an outing into the real world. On the surface it seems he is taking farewell of his father ("goodbye") and preparing himself to face life ("hello"). We know that this never materializes. In the end he admits that his father is dead and he accepts the fact, but he embraces a new identity which will result in a living death.

Hester on the other hand, pays her childhood home a visit in order to come to grips with her past. When she greets Johnnie, she expects a word of welcome ("All I wanted was a word of welcome" p. 107), even though she pretends to be only passing through. As the play progresses and Hester searches for her true identity, we see that she actually discovers and recognizes ("hello") herself in the process. When she looks in the mirror she is greeted by her own reflection; when she opens a box of junk she is confronted with different memories: her scaffolding, her mother, their second-hand clothes reflecting their poverty, papers, seeds and her father's crutches. Every new box she opens is a new "hello". Consequently everything she throws aside is a "goodbye" - a coming to grips with her past. When Hester eventually bids her brother goodbye she is probably seeing him for the last time, but not so herself or her old life. She has failed to build herself a new identity and she has no choice but to return to her dreary life in the city as a prostitute.

The climax of the play as far as Hester is concerned is when she finally breaks with the past and bids it farewell. This incident occurs when she is going through the boxes and eventually realizes that they contain nothing but rubbish. At this point she runs amok, hurling the rubbish of their lives about the room. In a grimly ironic moment she picks up her mother's dress (the one that has moved her so deeply when she unpacked it and that she wishes to take away with her) and hurls it to the floor. This is ironic because it mirrors what happened to their relationship earlier. She retrieves it, but now the smell has gone and it has become an empty rag: "She's gone. The smell ... I can't ... It's gone

... She was clean. I stink, Mommie. I'm dirty and I stink. All the hardships, the hating. I couldn't stop hating and it hurts, it hurts" (p. 156).

Hogge (1977:157) calls this incident symbolic, in that Hester is discarding her identity almost like a skin. It is a painful business, but it leaves her with no illusions. She is dirty. She is a prostitute. That is her life. So with true existential courage she returns to Johannesburg and faces her future with spirit. When she finally leaves, ("goodbye") however, she leaves Johnnie among the debris of the past. He refuses to get up onto his own two legs and face reality.

As in Fugard's previous play under discussion, **People are Living There, Hello and Goodbye** reflects no audience foreknowledge whatsoever. The character list starkly introduces Johnnie Smit and Hester Smit, his sister. As "Smit" is often a generic name for the intentionally faceless, and it is concomitantly an indication that these two characters lack identity, or self-knowledge. They want to hide behind a facade, not revealing their true selves. As soon as we watch/read the drama, however, it becomes clear that this may be true of Johnnie, but not of his sister, Hester. She returns home in order to find the compensation her father received, but she is actually trying to discover her true self. Johnnie, however, hides behind the (effaced) image of his father.

The surname Smit, being devoid of all grandeur, may also reflect their social and economic status as so-called 'poor-whites': a problem which is explored throughout the play. The early thirties were bad years in South Africa, especially economically. The country suffered from severe drought and experienced an economic recession which reigned world wide. What jobs there were, were reserved for whites: "The kaffirs sit and watch them work. The white men are hungry. Everybody is greedy. Specially about work - more greedy even than with food" (p. 145).

Hester, especially, detests being a 'poor-white'. She reminisces about her childhood: "There wasn't enough of anything except hard times", and refers to "the second-hand Smits of Valley Road" (p. 139).

Fugard skilfully uses visual information to indicate stage directions. When the play starts Johnnie sits in the kitchen. Only bare essentials are presented: "A kitchen table and four chairs, lit by a solitary electric light hanging from above. On the table is a bottle of squash, a jug of water, and a glass" (p. 101).

In this space we meet Johnnie, "slumped forward in one of the chairs ... his head resting face down on his arms on the table" (p. 101). This is a complete contrast to Hester who fills the space for the first time, standing upright and facing life - not face down, shirking reality. "[A woman appears up stage and walks slowly into the light. She is wearing a coat and carrying a large and battered suitcase ...]" (pp. 105-106).

The contrast between the two characters is stressed subtly by the way in which they fill the space created for the dramatic action. Although the kitchen is sparsely finished the reader/spectator gets the impression that it is untidy and disorganised. Johnnie walks in and out restlessly and cannot settle. Later in the play Hester scolds him for being untidy: "Hell, man, why don't you get the broom in here? It's inches thick. I'm not fussy but this is the bloody limit" (p. 116).

The kitchen seems to resemble Johnnie's life: uninteresting, dull. When Hester enters she brings her entire world packed in her suitcase into this dramatic space. She upsets not only the order around her when she fills the kitchen with junk, but also Johnnie's life: "Amok among the contents of the boxes - picking up and throwing about whatever she can get her hands on" (p. 155). This action of Hester's is symbolic of her treatment of Johnnie.

[Hester goes down on her knees to beat Johnnie with clenched fists - stopping eventually from sheer exhaustion. She gets up and staggers to a chair. Johnnie remains on the floor - he will not move until after Hester's final exit] (p. 158).

Another interesting feature of the play is that diegetic space is created in **Hello and Goodbye** in very much the same way as in **People are Living There** in that the presence of a third person is implied. In the latter Milly often looks up at the ceiling where Ahlers's room is or refers to it in

her dialogue. In **Hello and Goodbye** the reader/spectator remains constantly aware of the father's presence because the didascalies frequently refer to his room or Johnnie going into the room or even Hester attempting to go inside. The room next to the kitchen actually dominates the play: When the didascalies indicate Hester "moves right and stares off in that direction" asking "Sleeping?" (p. 106) her father and his room become stark reality. Reference to the room and Johnnie's reaction create tension.

[As soon as he is satisfied that Hester has closed her door, Johnnie moves quickly to the table and looks wildly around the room. Hurried exit into father's room, returning immediately but stopping just inside the light to stare at Hester's room. Another impulsive move this time to the table to collect two chairs which he stacks up at the entrance to the father's room, blocking it. But he almost immediately changes his mind and takes them back to the table] (pp. 116-117).

Johnnie walks in and out of the room to collect Hester's letter, administer medicine to his father and collecting boxes. He becomes so engrossed in his make-believe that we are informed: "Johnnie goes into father's room, returning in a few seconds very nervous and agitated" (p. 126). He scolds Hester for upsetting his father. Tension rises because the reader/spectator waits for the climax when Johnnie's deception is discovered: "Exit Hester into fathers's room" and "Hester returns slowly" (p. 158).

The didascalies supply the reader with information about the characters themselves and their actions. When Milly unpacks her suitcase she takes out a present for Johnnie, revealing her attempt to come to grips with the past. It is much like a peace offering. Next she wants to change, but soon returns to the kitchen clad only in her petticoat (p. 116). This prepares the reader for her revelation to Johnnie about being a prostitute. When she walks around with a mirror in her hand (pp. 117, 119) we learn about her quest to discover her identity. She shows signs of nervousness by repeatedly smoking, and in the second act, when she starts rummaging through the boxes, the didascalies often refer to her "greedy hands" (p. 139) and "greedy scrabble through the

box" (p. 141). On the surface it may appear that she is greedy for money, but it is more than that. It indicates her frantic search for an identity. The moment she realizes what and who she is, she calms down completely: "Without any of the panic of a few seconds previously she opens it and starts to work methodically through its contents" (p. 147).

Even more revealing is the information about Johnnie and his discovery of the crutches. Except for the last few lines of the play where Johnnie conducts a monologue about his new identity, the entire event of the crutches is portrayed by the didascalies:

A pair of crutches are leaning against a chair (p. 135).

[Johnnie is back on the crutches, examining them, tentatively trying one and then the other. He takes two crutch-rubbers out of his pocket and starts to put them on] (p. 140).

[During Hester's next speech he moves behind her back and there tries out the crutches - a few steps, different positions, opening an imaginary door, etc., etc.] (pp. 141, 142).

[Johnnie leans the crutches against a chair and exits into father's room] (p. 142).

[... Johnnie sees the crutches and goes on to them] (p. 148).

[He is squirming - then a clumsy move and the crutches fall - he stands on his feet] (p. 153).

[Johnnie reacts with terror to this tirade. He picks up the crutches but Hester tries to stop him from going on to them] (p. 154).

By this time Johnnie's new identity is almost achieved. He tells Hester: "I NEED SOMETHING! LOOK AT ME!" (p. 155). She becomes desperate and tells him: "That's right. Lick his arse, crawl right up it until your feet hang out. Be HIM" (p. 155). Hester has more insight into human character than Johnnie and realizes what is happening to her brother.

She wants to force him to face reality so she pulls the crutches from underneath his arm. When he falls on the ground she kicks him. When she realizes that he is not going to respond she walks out of his life. As in the beginning of the play, Johnnie, the weakling, is on the floor amongst the rubble of the past, while Hester walks out, accepting what she is; a prostitute, second-hand, but herself.

Johnnie's defeat as an individual is complete. He sees the crutches and "very laboriously drags himself along the floor to them. With equal effort he holds them upright and goes on to them. He stands still, on one leg for a few seconds, then realizes he is standing on the wrong leg and changes over" (p. 162). Johnnie's transformation is complete. His weakness only serves to underscore Hester's strength.

CHAPTER IV: THE ROAD TO MECCA

4.1 Introduction

A new theme surfaces in **The Road to Mecca** - that of female bonding. In his introduction to the play, Fugard (1985) tells us that it was actually an actress performing in **A Lesson from Aloes** who triggered his imagination by wanting to know why he never had two women together in the same play: "And I suddenly registered for the first time that although I had created an interesting gallery of women's portraits over the years, I'd never put two women together on a stage as the focus of the whole event". When Fugard then discovered that Helen Niemand, the sculptress of New Bethesda, had a friend from Cape Town, he knew he had to portray their friendship in his new play. Fugard was struck by the friend, because she was a very strong, very remarkable person with a strong social conscience, a strong sense of what South Africa was about and a strong courage at what was wrong with it.

Anne Sarzin (1987:287) states that in Elsa's relationship with Miss Helen, the play's central figure, Fugard encapsulates a contemporary phenomenon, yet as archetypal as the biblical saga of Ruth and Naomi. It has come into focus with the twentieth century feminist liberation movement, the supporting networking of women, an alliance that strengthens their position in an otherwise antagonistic environment. The two women are united in a common purpose and it is their friendship which is the basis on which Fugard constructs the play. It is the coming together of two separate and lonely persons who combine to withstand adversity in its many guises. As in the previous plays under discussion Fugard once more reflects on the role of women in society, their submission and rebellion, their assertiveness and affirmation of life and their triumph in the face of adversity.

The Road to Mecca is not only about the relationship between the two women. Fugard also investigates the themes of creativity and Calvinism (a more tempered version than in **Hello and Goodbye**). There are repeated references to the Afrikaner, and more particularly in the person of Marius Byleveld, the love-affair between the Afrikaner and his land. Then there is also a character which dominates this play as in so many

of Fugard's other plays, referred to, but never seen: Patience, an African woman given a lift by Elsa. She reminds us of Lena in **Boesman and Lena**. Although she is never seen, her presence and influence resonates powerfully through the play.

4.2 **Dramatis Personae**

Coleen Angove (1986:78) informs us that Miss Helen is possibly Fugard's most profoundly realized representation of the maverick in the Afrikaans community. Elsa calls her a "bit of a renegade" (p. 22). Although Helen never denounces her heritage or lashes out in anger as Elsa frequently does, her whole life exudes an almost tangible awareness of a self-imposed isolation:

The road to my Mecca was one I had to travel alone. It was a journey on which no one could keep me company, and because of that, now that it is over, there is only me there at the end of it. It couldn't have been any other way" (p.78).

Miss Helen has never consciously embarked on a quest for truth and meaning. She confesses to Marius that she has resigned herself to experiencing a void in her life where there should have been a sense of purpose. Tradition, religion, even marriage, has never brought fulfilment: "I'd accepted it. Nothing more was going to happen to me except time and the emptiness inside and I had got used to that ..." (p. 70). She explains that after her husband's death, the realization that she cannot mourn him, because she had never loved him enough to feel any great sense of loss, brings the even more devastating apprehension that she has never experienced any emotion of significance in her life. "My black widowhood was really for my own life ... While Stefanus was alive there had at least been some pretence at it ... of a life I hadn't lived" (p. 71).

Helen's first encounter with an overpowering creative urge, and the fulfilment it brings when she gives vent to it in her creation of statues and mosaics, bring renewal into her life. Her authentic ecstasy is so great that she has no doubts about turning her back on the church and community to embark on a venture which becomes for her a holy

pilgrimage - her road to Mecca. She does not actively reject the culture, religion and tradition that she has evolved from; she merely resolutely chooses the way of highly personal fulfilment.

When Miss Helen sits alone in her house after her husband's funeral, she is terrified of the dark - both physically and spiritually, because at that moment she realises that her life has no purpose; it never had, "it was all a terrible, terrible lie" (p. 70). Marius took her home after the funeral and drew the curtains close to protect her from her curious neighbours, but she felt as if he "were putting away [her] life as surely as the undertaker had done to Stefanus a little earlier when he closed the coffin lid" (p. 71). But then Miss Helen discovered an answer to her fears. She withdraws into a world filled with a magical light that literally and metaphorically dispels the darkness. The candle which Marius lit opens a new spiritual world:

... that small, uncertain little light seemed to find its courage again. It started to get brighter and brighter. I didn't know whether I was awake any longer or dreaming because a strange feeling came over me ... that it was leading me ... leading me far away to a place I had never been to before (pp. 71-72).

A small candle has showed Miss Helen the way to mirrors that glitter and candles that glow and a means to illuminate an otherwise dreary existence. Anne Sarzin (1987:301) claims that in her way Miss Helen is playing at being God. Just as her sculptures are the artist's act of creation, so her passion for light suggests the divine element in her artistic ability. She tells Elsa: "Light is a miracle ... which even the most ordinary human being can make happen" and also, "Never light a candle carelessly, and be sure you know what you're doing when you blow one out!" (p. 32). The way Miss Helen creates a new world for herself with light reminds of Genesis and God's creation of light.

In her acts of creation, Miss Helen separates herself from the night of the spirit and from the unenlightened villagers, including Marius. Anne Sarzin (1987:301) claims that they are at the same time acts of creation and acts of alienation. In moving towards Mecca, Miss Helen inevitably leaves the villagers behind. Even Marius cannot undertake this journey

which is incompatible with his Christian faith. It is almost inevitable that Helen should break with conventional religion. She follows a mystical vision which leads to her own personal Mecca. One can never quite determine what Mecca is, but neither can Helen, for "My Mecca has got a logic of its own, Elsa. Even I don't properly understand it" (p. 36). She only knows that if she fails to reach it, it will be "the darkest night of my soul" (p. 38). In the end Helen has to admit, "The journey is over now. This is as far as I can go" (p. 73), and "My Mecca is finished and with it ... the only real purpose my life has ever had" (p. 78).

The only person who is equal to Miss Helen and the challenge she offers, is Elsa. When they meet for the first time, Miss Helen also experiences a spiritual low, an inability to create. Elsa's delighted acceptance of all Helen stands for seals their friendship and because Helen can trust Elsa their friendship leads to renewed creativity. Elsa supports Helen, bolsters her belief in her work and endorses her journey towards Mecca. Miss Helen tells Elsa:

The only reason I've got for being alive is my Mecca. Without that I'm ... nothing ... a useless old woman getting on everybody's nerves ... and that is exactly what I had started to feel like. You revived my life (p.35).

Anne Sarzin (1987:302) sees the friendship between the two women as a union of kindred spirits, a marriage of true minds not unlike the consummation of groom and bride. When Elsa enters Miss Helen's home for the first time, she enters her private world, the essence of Helen, filled with signals that Elsa is able to decode. Miss Helen describes the episode thus: "I was beginning to feel shy, more shy than I had ever been with Stefanus on my wedding night" (p. 34).

Miss Helen's Mecca is a statement of religious and psychological truth (Sarzin, 1987:303) and entirely universal. Her art incorporates religions, ritualistic artifacts and mythologies of the world. She creates owls and mermaids, camels and pyramids, Wise Men and mosques, peacocks and a stern Buddha. All her sculptures face east, testifying it to be a source of harmony, love and redemption. No wonder her conformist neighbours could not understand these ideas that represent

the conscience and imagination of the artist. Anne Sarzin claims that Fugard is not trying to advocate a new religion but, as a student of Zen Buddhism himself, he incorporates in Miss Helen "a dynamic bursting of restrictive bonds, part of a spontaneous desire to be rid of lifeless religious dogma, to discard empty ritualized formulas and, instead, to be carried by the storm of the spirit. The eye of truth opens and the mind is relieved of ignorance" (1987:303).

The uncertainty of the artistic process, the debilitating wait for inspiration, mirror the experience of not only every artist, but Fugard himself. Miss Helen's inner agitation mirrors Fugard's periods of barrenness; his inability to write:

I have to see them very clearly first. They've got to come to me inside like pictures. And if they don't, well, all I can do is wait ... and hope that they will. I wish I knew how to make it happen, but I don't. I don't know where the pictures come from. I can't force myself to see something that isn't there (p. 36).

The torment of any artist unable to produce is incorporated in the cry: "Please no. Anything but that" (p. 37).

Miss Helen's letter to Elsa expresses her physical deterioration, isolation and desolation best. "I am alone in the dark. There is no light left" (p. 39). She is terrified that the forces of darkness will overpower her and destroy her life's work. Because she has no communication with the people of the village, Elsa is her lifeline in times of despair. Her whole world is threatened, so she reaches out to Elsa. "I can't fight them alone, little Elsie. I need you ... It is only through your eyes that I now see my Mecca " (p. 39).

Helen's threat of suicide is completely unlike Fugard's women characters who never give up hope. "I would rather do away with myself than carry on like this" (p. 39). Milly, Hester and Lena assert themselves in a bid to control their lives. Helen needs Elsa. Suicide would be a betrayal of what Mecca represents. We are aware of Helen's depression and personal deterioration from the beginning of the play. She disregards her own welfare, wears shabby clothes, does not have

enough food in the kitchen for a decent supper and cannot recall when she last bathed. This physical neglect merely emphasizes her emotional turmoil and desperation. She has no identity in terms of anyone, not even herself, except Elsa whose recognition of her worth re-affirms her self image.

As Helen's emotional state deteriorates she appears to succumb to Marius's forceful arguments to retire to the old age home, a place where "there's plenty of space for personal possessions and a few of your ... ornaments" (p. 58), but not to vent her creativity as an artist. Marius and the villagers want to confine her to a living death, but like so many of Fugard's women, she has a choice. Lena (in **Boesman and Lena**) is never given that choice - neither is Patience. But Miss Helen can still assert herself and direct her destiny. Her only mistake is that at the crucial moment when she must make the choice, she wavers. Her agonised cry is a lifeline thrown to Elsa to assist her in her moment of weakness: "Why don't you stop me, Elsa! I'm going to sign it! (p. 61). Elsa shows little sympathy at this point, however. Her respect for Miss Helen is based on the fact that she expressed and maintained her individuality for so many years despite the fierce criticism and pressure from the village people. To falter now would be, according to Sarzin (1987:307), a breach of faith, a submission to paternalistic forces rather than adopting a stance of independence and fortitude, therefore Elsa exclaims: "Sorry, Helen. I've had more woman-battering today than I can cope with. You can at least say no. That woman on the road couldn't. But if you haven't got the guts to do that, then too bad. I'm not going to do it for you" (p. 61).

Elsa feels that Miss Helen's incapacity to react positively is a betrayal of the feminist partnership that exists between the two women and of their mutual thrust towards future goals and fulfilment. Therefore a disillusioned Elsa cries:

Why were you 'crying out to me in the dark'? To be an audience when you signed away your life? Is that why I'm here? Twelve hours of driving like a lunatic for that? God. What a farce! I might just as well have stayed in Cape Town" (pp. 61-62).

Although Elsa is upset and appears pitiless, it is not a dereliction of duty. When Miss Helen calls upon her to light the candles she complies enthusiastically. As soon as the candles start reflecting in the mirrors and crushed glass surfaces, Miss Helen becomes radiantly alive. She sheds her confusion, all weakness to give in to Marius. This is her world, her Mecca, her artistic heaven: "This is my world and I have banished darkness from it" (p. 73). She informs Marius that she will not be using the application forms, because she cannot reduce her world "to a few ornaments in a small room in an old-age home" (p. 73). Miss Helen has pushed forward the frontiers of artistic expression, incorporating non-western cultural ideas which she has translated into her own symbolism. Her vision cannot be contained in an old-age home. She has this irresistible compulsion to create: "I had as little choice over all that has happened as I did over the day I was born" (p. 73).

Elsa applauds what she calls Miss Helen's "performance" (p. 75), affirming their feminist stance in a male-dominated world: "You affirmed your right, as a woman ..." (p. 75). The two women stand united on a power base apart from the men who have failed them either spiritually (Marius) and emotionally (David and Stefanus). Helen and Elsa (who will be discussed in the next section) move further along the road of emancipation than any other of Fugard's women. It may be because they stand together. Elsa regards Miss Helen as the only free spirit she knows:

One dusty afternoon five years ago, when I came walking down that road hoping for nothing more than to get away from the flies that were driving me mad, I met the first truly free spirit I have ever known" (p. 67).

In this freedom lies Helen's strength. That is why Elsa is so upset when Miss Helen seems to give up this freedom by signing the forms to go to the old age home. It is this freedom of spirit that challenges Elsa "into an awareness of myself and my life" (p. 66). Helen has enough courage to be grateful for the light of artistic revelation when it shines, but her true courage as an artist and a human being is revealed at the end of

the play when she accepts the sterility of her non-creative period - and she faces that period of her life alone with true existential courage:

It is as much as 'we' could do, Elsa. The rest is up to myself and, who knows, maybe it will be a little easier after tonight. I won't lie to you. I can't say that I'm not frightened any more ...

I was wrong to think I could banish darkness, Elsa. Just as I taught myself how to light candles, and what that means, I must teach myself now how to blow them out ... and what that means (p. 78).

When Fugard introduces Elsa she is described as "a strong young woman in her late twenties" (p. 15). We soon realize that her physical strength corresponds with an innerly aggressive, tough-minded attitude to life. She hungers for a challenge therefore she can identify with Miss Helen. Whereas Helen is timid and evasive when involved in an argument, Elsa scythes her way through all opposition. Miss Helen calls her "history's first reactionary-revolutionary" (p. 28).

Anne Sarzin (1987:294) informs us that when Fugard met the young Englishwoman on whom he based Elsa, he was struck by her strength, social conscience and sense of outrage at what was wrong with South Africa. She quotes Fugard himself who explains, "I couldn't help thinking of the anomaly of this sort of stern decency encountering the almost feudal world of New Bethesda - a South Africa which disappeared from the rest of the country a hundred years ago". Elsa not only bolsters Miss Helen in the play; she also questions village paternalism towards the coloured people and the cultural heritage of the Afrikaner. She seems to be emphasizing the cultural identity towards which Miss Helen has become indifferent.

Elsa denounces the Afrikaner as being staid (p. 23); calls them bigots (p. 26); comments on the hypocrisy of the Afrikaner (p. 39); and accuses them of hiding their true feelings (p. 75). Her concern not only spills into a social context, but also a political one. Fugard himself was amazed at the extent of the play's political resonance after its

performance in the Yale Repertory Theatre. He explains that **The Road to Mecca** is political in that it deals with South African reality:

Our situation in South Africa is so political. What story hasn't got political consequences? If you are going to try and tell a South African story honestly and truthfully you will end up saying something about the situation in the country. Politics get into every corner of our lives (Sarzin, 1987:295).

Elsa repeatedly queries the political situation in the country. It is she who asks both Miss Helen and Marius whether anybody has bothered to ask the Coloured people whether old Gertruida should open a liquor store in New Bethesda: "...it does seem to me right and proper that if you're going to make decisions which affect other people, you should find out what those people think" (p. 25).

Elsa believes in making people think for themselves and stand up for what they believe in: "Rebellion starts, Miss Helen, with just one man or woman standing up and saying, 'No. Enough!' Albert Camus" (p. 28). Elsa sees events with clarity and objectivity and attempts to confront others with her perceptions and judgements. She is not afraid to face the censure of a school board of enquiry into allegations that she asked students to write a letter to the State President on the subject of racial inequality. She realises that if she is contrite and apologetic she will only be reprimanded, but if she behaves the way she really feels, she will lose her job. She exclaims, "God I'd give anything to be able to walk in and tell that School Board exactly what I think of them and their educational system" (p. 28).

Elsa makes one serious mistake, though, when she falls in love with David. "It was like discovering the reason for being the person, the woman, I am for the first time in my life. And a little bit scary ... realizing that another person could do so much to your life, to your sense of yourself" (p. 29). David makes Elsa vulnerable, because he breaks down her defences and he clouds her ability to be objective. Just like Milly, Hester and Lena, Elsa becomes the victim of her situation. Her trust in mankind suffers severely and it "hurts like hell" (p. 31). Her depression is aggravated by the loss of her baby. When she says,

"Ding-dong, wrong-wrong, tolls Elsa's bell at the close of the day" (p. 30), it represents the emotional darkness that engulfs her. The abortion of her child symbolizes that the light of her life is extinguished.

For all her cynicism, Elsa has a romantic belief in words such as "love" and "trust" (p. 31). The betrayal of these ideals leads to painful growth for her. She states that when a person falls in love and trusts that person "that's when you drop your defences, lay yourself wide open, and if you've made a mistake, you're in big, big trouble" (p. 31). Sarzin (1987:296) points out that David's rejection of Elsa emphasizes the male/female polarisation in Fugard's world; his women suffer at the hands of menfolk. The emotional darkness which engulfs his women induces existential nausea and Elsa, whose literary and political consciousness has been shaped by amongst others Camus, is not exempt from this sickness, therefore she cries, "I felt like vomiting" (p. 30).

Anne Sarzin (1987:298) claims that from a feminist viewpoint, Elsa stands in the forefront of a long line of Fugardian women who debate the female condition. Milly, Hester and Lena all agonize over constraints, limitations, social and political checks that keep them within restricted boundaries, but it is Elsa who practises what she preaches. In her, Milly, Hester and Lena come of age. Elsa hectors, badgers and prods her sisters to stand up and be counted. When she says about Katrina, "She has got a few rights, Miss Helen, and I just want to make sure she knows what they are" (p. 23), and when she instructs Miss Helen "... talk back" (p. 42), she speaks on behalf of all women.

Although the audience never sees Patience, Elsa's identification with her is a powerful one. Giving her a lift is a gesture of complicity with the plight of the African people and a personal commitment to another woman and mother. She talks about Patience with apparent indifference, but there is a compulsion to dwell on her destiny, her expulsion from the farm, and her trek to the Cradock district where she hopes to find relatives and a place to live. It is significant that the woman is about Elsa's age and the baby probably the age her aborted child might have been. The identification is both intellectual and emotional. Patience, who is Lena in a different guise, is a powerful

figure embodying symbolically Elsa's resentment of racial inequality and her consciousness of the coloured people's raw deal in the land of apartheid.

She also identifies with Patience as the mother who gives birth and endures the rigors of life while fulfilling the maternal role which Elsa has abdicated with her abortion. There is a similarity between Patience and Lena. Patience, like Lena, carries her possessions with her. Barefoot, with nothing between their feet and the earth, she and Lena are human entities rooted in the desolate African landscape. But unlike Lena whose babies were stillborn, Patience is fruitful, "the suffering earthmother" (Sarzin, 1987:298). Neither she nor Lena has anything to look forward to: "There's no Mecca waiting for her at the end of that road, Helen. Just the rest of her life, and there won't be any glitter on that" (p. 76).

Elsa's emotional alliance with Patience is echoed in her concern for Katrina, Miss Helen's maid, battered by a bullying husband. Katrina is the focus for Elsa's sense of outrage at women's meek acceptance of painful situations. Again we find a trace of existential nausea when Elsa exclaims, "God, it makes me sick! Why doesn't she leave him?" (p. 23). Elsa attacks the institution of marriage held sacred by Miss Helen and the Afrikaner: "There is nothing sacred in a marriage that abuses women!" (p. 23). Anne Sarzin summarizes Elsa's attitude most effectively when she states: "Elsa's creed, forged through the sorrow of rejection and abortion, repudiates the traditional formula adhered to by women such as Lena, Katrina and, on a higher plane, even Miss Helen" (1987:298). Elsa seeks equality of commitment, somebody for Katrina and herself "who will value her as a human being and take care of her and the child" (p. 23).

Elsa's friendship with Miss Helen is on a different plane. It offers a new perspective, hope and redemption. Elsa reinforces Helen's belief in herself and her work. It is only with Elsa that Miss Helen's "little girl can come out and play" (p. 32). Elsa is not subordinate to Miss Helen's creative ability but her equal. Miss Helen claims, "I've always tried to understand what made you, and being with you, so different from anything else in my life ... I trust you" (p. 32). Although Elsa is

portrayed as the stronger of the two women from the beginning, we soon realize that she brought with her, not only her strength and a small overnight bag, but also an "enormous amount of emotional baggage" (Sarzin, 1987:299). This contributes to her stature as a dramatic character in her own right. She is not just a foil or catalyst for Miss Helen. Their equality lies in the fact that both women have evaded societal pressures and bonds in their different ways - Helen through her Mecca and Elsa through her love affair with a married man and her unconventional abortion. Her revolt is an intellectual one which takes its toll of her emotional resources. Yet she gains a sense of self which creates an inner strength on which Miss Helen can rely. Whereas Elsa flounders spiritually, Miss Helen withdraws into a world filled with a magical light, but in a moment of crisis she craves communication with Elsa.

Elsa is sometimes harsh and even cruel in her treatment of Miss Helen because she abhors all weakness: "Don't bully me, Elsa! You know I don't know how to fight back" (p. 38). When Miss Helen experiences "the darkest night of her soul" (p. 38) her dependence upon Elsa is almost pathetic: "I need you. Don't you care about me any more? It is only through your eyes that I now see My Mecca. I need you, Elsie" (p. 39). Elsa loses patience with Miss Helen for not being assertive. She wants her to stand up to Marius and the Church Council and be counted as a human being with the right to live her life as she chooses:

I won't argue with him on your behalf because there is nothing to argue about. This is not his house, and it most certainly is not his life that is being discussed at Church Council meetings. Who the hell do they think they are? Sitting around a table deciding what is going to happen to you! (p. 42).

Elsa avoids speaking about her own life and the mess she made of it for a large part of the play. She tells Helen: "I'm concerned with your life, Helen" (p. 45). But Elsa's emotions gain the upper hand over her intellect when faced not only with Miss Helen's dilemma, but also her own and that of Patience and Katrina. She exclaims: "I think I've had it. It's too much for one day ... I honestly don't know how to handle it ... I'm lost" (p. 47). Her emotional darkness, the inability to come to terms

with the suffering of other women makes Elsa brutal. She swears repeatedly at Miss Helen and Marius before she faces reality and her own emotional breakdown. She is desperate and for a short while she is emotionally dependent on Miss Helen: "Very near total mental and emotional exhaustion, to the point where I want to scream" (p. 61).

This lapse lasts only for a short while. Elsa regains her strength to support Miss Helen. She tells Marius: "I've been trying to tell her she's neither confused nor helpless" (p. 62). When Elsa hears about Miss Helen's near accident, disappointment makes her pitiless. The focus of the conflict shifts from the central issue of Miss Helen's exit to the old-age home to the shortcomings and inconsistencies in the relationship between the two women: "Who are you?" (p. 65), Helen asks Elsa. It is a devastating question that undermines their carefully constructed friendship, revealing in that brief phrase Helen's failure to find support, and her estrangement.

Sarzin (1987:308) claims that Elsa's behaviour, however, is not a dereliction of duty. She views Helen's weakness as a betrayal of freedom, a betrayal of all she stood for, a reversal of what she achieved over fifteen years: "It is her betrayal of all of that tonight that has made me behave the way I have" (p. 67). She is very proud of Miss Helen when she refuses to allow Marius to dominate her: "I told you that you never needed me. And you did more than just say no to him. You affirmed your right, as a woman ... " (p.75). Her action is affirming their stance in a male-dominated world.

At the end of the play Elsa admits that she is also isolated, albeit emotionally, just like Miss Helen. She wants to punish the world, her whole existence, all her sisters "For being old, for being black, for being born ... for being twenty-eight years old and trusting enough to jump. For our stupid helplessness" (p. 77). Although all women are united through the universality of birth, maternity and nurturing that gives women everywhere a common identity, Elsa is still overwhelmed by existential isolation: "Patience is my sister, you are our mother ... and I still feel fucking lonely" (p. 77), she tells Helen. Anne Sarzin (1987:312) points out that it is the dilemma of Lena, Milly and Hester, associating

with people, yet cut off and attempting to redress their inequitable situations, to achieve recognition of their humanity and existence.

Elsa represents progression in Fugard's evolution of the female. She recognises the helplessness of women; the threat age represents (reminding us of Milly); the inferiority of being a black woman (Patience); the rootlessness of those cut off from their background (Hester); and the vulnerability of those who trust (Elsa). She surveys the human spectrum and perceives the dilemma of women, their helplessness and stupidity. In the tradition of Fugard's women, however, she never submits to fate but protests articulately. In the words of Anne Sarzin (1987:313) Elsa and Helen move further along the road of emancipation than any other Fugardian women. They not only recognise the death of love and hope within their lives but through acceptance, grieving and mourning they achieve a new emotional balance and peace. The tears Elsa finally sheds are not those of a self-pitying woman but a means to emotional release.

Helen, Elsa and Patience have travelled different roads to different goals. Patience walks painfully towards a mirage of shelter and comfort; Elsa travels to New Bethesda to fortify Miss Helen, yet she is in need of consolation herself; Miss Helen travels alone along her road to Mecca and comes to terms with the fact that she is losing her creative ability as an artist. All endure suffering and darkness but come to enlightened acceptance of the human condition.

Just like Milly, who laughs at the thought of monkeys with blue bums, Miss Helen and Elsa maintain their ability to laugh. First Miss Helen's naive description of Valiums as artificial sweeteners changes Elsa's chuckle to a good laugh. When Elsa suggests that Miss Helen should make an angel, Miss Helen's tongue-in-cheek humour gains the upperhand: "I'd have it pointing to the East. Where else? I'd misdirect all the good Christian souls around here and put them on the road to Mecca" (p. 79). Their laughter is an affirmative sound, almost a triumphant note of normality after intensive introspection, interrogation, crises and traumas. Their laughter comes from an inner equilibrium which they gain from the acceptance of self.

Another big word in the play is "freedom", echoed by Boesman in **Boesman and Lena**. Marius hates the word (p. 69), but Elsa savours it: "Those statues out there are monsters. And they are that for the simple reason that they express Helen's freedom. Yes, I never thought it was a word you would like" (p. 66). There comes a time, however, when words lose their meaning and they become barren just like Marius's sermons: "... your sermons, the prayers, the hymns, they had all become just words" (p. 70). Anne Sarzin (1987:315) feels that when words finally fail, when they are stripped of all meaning when trust has been abused, love negated and freedom denied, Fugard uses a visual medium to highlight moral and intellectual issues:

Do you know what the word 'God' looks like when you've lost your faith? It looks like a little stone, a cold, round, little stone. 'Heaven' is another one, but its got an awkward, useless shape, while 'Hell' is flat and smooth. All of them - damnation, grace, salvation - a handful of stones (p. 70).

The play ends with an endorsement of love and trust, two words crucial to Elsa's emotional security. She found in her relationship with David (the symbol of male dominance) that although she loves him, he has lost her trust. In her friendship with Miss Helen, however, the two words merge. Elsa calls them "big words": "Do you know what the really big word is, Helen? ... I used to think it was 'love' ... But there's an even bigger one. Trust" (p. 31). Fugard makes use of these "big words" whenever he wants to highlight consciously emotional and intellectual issues. Helen says of Elsa's eyes: "I knew I could trust them. There's our big word again, Elsie" (p. 34). The significance of the bond between the two women is emphasized by Fugard in the last few lines of the play - there is no barrier between them, no doubt about each other:

ELSA: God, I love you! I love you so much it hurts.
HELEN: What about trust?
ELSA: Open your arms and catch me! I'm going to jump! (p. 79).

As in **People are Living There** one cannot analyse the women characters without discussing the male counterpart because he

highlights certain characteristics or issues of vital importance in the female.

A significant factor and result of Helen's break with her cultural heritage is her break with conventional religion as embodied by Marius Byleveld. Fugard incorporates criticism against the conventional church and the Afrikaner's stultified concept of God in Miss Helen's relationship with Marius and the church he represents. The attack against the hypocrisy of the church is not as fierce as in **Hello and Goodbye**. It has been tempered to a "subtle accusation against the church's ignorance of the deep-rooted needs of the non-conformist individual" (Angove, 1986:79). This is illustrated in Marius's acknowledgment concerning Helen's new "hobby": "I only began to feel uneasy about it all that first Sunday you weren't in church" (p. 68), and Miss Helen's response:

You were much too late if you only started worrying about that on the first Sunday I wasn't there in my place. The worst had happened long, long before that. Yes. All those years when, as Elsa said, I sat there so obediently next to Stefanus, it was all a terrible, terrible lie (p. 70).

There is a ridiculous emphasis on insignificances in Marius's well-meaning efforts to get details of Helen's father-in-law's middle name and her confirmation date to be filled in on the application form for the Old Aged Home. This causes one to understand why a soul like Miss Helen, with all its potential for experiencing heights of ecstasy, and capable of such intense emotion that it can result in her leaving fifty years of her life behind her, is beyond filling her life with trivialities like these.

Marius originally does not quite understand what he is up against: "In another age and time it might have been called idolatry" (p. 67). Helen's Mecca represents an anti-Christian phenomenon which frightens Marius. He does not understand the creative drive of the artist: "Helen, Helen! I grieve for you! You turned your back on your church, on your faith and then on us for that?" (p. 68). When Elsa accuses him and the other villagers of being jealous of Helen's "beautiful, light-filled, glittering life (p. 69), Marius admits that Miss Helen's preference of strange idols to the church "bewilders" him and makes him "jealous" (p. 69). He

regards her home as a trap, a nightmare from which he wants to rescue her: "It's unnatural, Helen. Your life has become as grotesque as those creations of yours out there ... What possessed you to abandon the life you had, your faith?" (p. 70). Marius's first words to Miss Helen when he enters her house, "Alone in the dark?" (p. 47), indicates his belief that she is enveloped in moral darkness because of her severed ties with the church. He feels it is time for her to seek the light of the Church. What a shock it must have been to him when Miss Helen informed him:

What life, Marius? What faith? The one that brought me to church every Sunday? ... No. You were much too late if you only started worrying about that on the first Sunday I wasn't there in my place. The worst had happened long, long before that. All those years when, as Elsa said, I sat there so obediently next to Stefanus, it was all a terrible, terrible lie. I tried hard, Marius, but your sermons, the prayers, the hymns, they had all become just words. And there came a time when even they lost their meaning (p. 70).

As Helen's arguments gain momentum she gains more and more confidence in Marius's presence. When Elsa lights her candles and she is surrounded by a fantasy of lights, glasses and mirrors that she has created in her living room, Marius is confronted with an inspired Helen, made brave and beautiful by her highly individualized vision of perfection. One feels pity for Marius as one witnesses a reversal in roles. Marius now becomes insecure, humbled by the full revelation of a Miss Helen completely fulfilled - not by the religion that he believes in, but by an awesome vision of Mecca. "I've never seen you as happy as this! There is more light in you than in all your candles put together!" (p. 74).

Marius is defeated by the realization that although Helen's vision of Mecca is illogical and sporadic, it gives her a satisfaction which can never be equalled by the stability and security he can offer her with his conventionalism: "Mecca! So that's where you went ... That's a long way away, Helen! I didn't realize you had travelled that far from me" (p. 73).

Whereas Miss Helen cuts herself off from earth and place and creates her own inner world, Marius rejoices in the outer world. He is rooted firmly in the soil. He becomes excited about a "genuine Sneeuberg potato" (p. 49) and a basket of vegetables from his own backyard. He does not like the way Elsa refers to the Karoo as "God, without mankind" (p. 50). He tells her: "As you can see, it feeds us. Can any man or woman ask for more than that from the little bit of earth he lives on?" (p. 51). He is very set in his ways and has specific beliefs and responsibilities. He really cares for Miss Helen and her welfare. His reassuring way of conversation establishes a rapport between him and Miss Helen, excluding Elsa. This causes tension which eventually leads to the clash of two conflicting worlds.

Being a man of the earth Marius approaches Miss Helen carefully and sincerely on the issue of leaving her home: "You seemed to understand that the only motive on our side is to try and do what is best for you" (p. 60). Marius plays havoc with Miss Helen's soft heart when he suggests diplomatically: "We can't tell you what to do. But if you want us to stop caring about what happens to you, we can try ... though I don't know how our Christian consciences would allow us to do that" (p. 60). An astute man, unlike the villagers, Marius knows that Miss Helen has not crossed the line from sanity to madness, but he mistrusts her work. Furthermore, the complexity of his relationship with her is compounded by his love for her as a woman. Although unstated, this is a potent factor in his concern for her, and is easily discerned by Elsa: "It's a very moving story. Twenty years of loving you in the disguise of friendship and professional concern for your soul" (p. 75). In electing to follow the road to Mecca, Miss Helen has severed her relationship with Marius - her light is his darkness. His fundamentalist Calvinist faith can never accommodate her Eastern philosophy.

Sarzin (1987:293) tells us that Fugard portrays Marius as a go-between, a diplomat/dominee who tries to negotiate a solution to satisfy all parties. In Marius, Fugard strikes a balance between ideas and emotions. When he talks about the Karoo or his vegetables he does them poetic justice. He is charming and sincere when he puts forward his ideas to Miss Helen, but his tactics are shrewd and subtle - he aligns himself against the outsider, Elsa. He attributes the change in Miss

Helen's perspective to Elsa's malevolent influence. He tells Elsa: "I think I understand now why Helen is so agitated tonight ... She needs help, not to be confused and terrified even more" (p. 62). Marius reveals not only chauvinistic suspicion of independent and liberated women seeking fulfilment, but profound jealousy of Elsa, a stranger from a different world, with whom Miss Helen has formed an alliance that excludes him. He is desperate: "... you wouldn't be asking me to defend myself against the accusations of someone who knows nothing, nothing, about my true feelings for you ... I feel as if I were on trial, Helen. For what? For caring about you?" (p. 69). Sarzin (1987:293) claims that Elsa denies Marius not only his role as Miss Helen's spiritual guide and mentor, but negates the bonds of affection that might otherwise have linked them "for what time was left to us in the same world" (p. 74).

It is ironic that it is actually Marius who points the way to Miss Helen's Mecca. Representing Calvinist theology and doctrine, Marius reacts negatively to Miss Helen's sculptures. To him they are not the expression of freedom Elsa claims they are, nor the idle whim of a lonely woman, but a relapse into heathen ways and the worship of pagan gods, excluding the Christian God. When Stefanus died, it was Marius who closed the curtains and shutters and lit a single candle of compassion to ward off the dark. It was this light, and not the light of Marius's Calvinist doctrines that set off a sequence of events that led Miss Helen to a new life and the estrangement of the villagers: "I didn't know whether I was awake any longer or dreaming because a strange feeling came over me ... that it was leading me far away to a place I had never been to before" (p. 72).

The light pointed Miss Helen to Mecca, the city of celestial light. When Elsa lights all the candles and the light reflects in all the mirrors and crushed glass, Miss Helen comes radiantly alive. In contrast to Marius, the conventional Calvinist dominee, Helen becomes a high priestess exalted by her release from darkness. She is transfigured into a "joyous and ecstatic celebrant of her divine truth" (Sarzin, 1987:310). She exclaims: "Light just one little candle in here, let in the light from just one little star, and the dancing starts" (pp. 72-73). It is her prescription for happiness, and in giving form to her vision she leaves the spheres of

philosophy and theology behind to become an artist, an apprentice studying "the celestial geometry of light and colour" (p. 72). So it is indirectly Marius who sets free the artist in Miss Helen, attempting to convey the beauty and power of her vision in works of wire and cement.

4.3 Didascalies

In section A of this dissertation it has been established that the dramatic text can be divided into two sections: the dialogue of the characters and the stage directions (didascalies). In the modern drama stage directions are not only written to assist the director, they are also written to be read. Stage properties are of great importance to implement meaning and transitions in a play (e.g. the crutches in **Hello and Goodbye**).

It has also been established that the main function of the title of a dramatic text is to name the fictional world of the drama. By naming it the most important aspects of the fictional world is highlighted.

The Road to Mecca investigates the theme of creativity and the ideologies of the artist. The play is a thrust towards a mystical truth, a journey of the spirit towards a supremely sacred place to which one aspires all one's life. The journey is not specifically linked with the religious system of the Moslem world, or with Mecca's importance as the birthplace of Mohammed. It is, in the words of Anne Sarzin (1987:288-289), the pilgrimage of the artist, just as John Bunyan's Christian undertakes a religious journey in **Pilgrim's Progress**, leaving the city of destruction for the celestial palace, where he finds eternal life and peace. Significantly, Christian's journey just as Elsa's in **The Road to Mecca**, was borne with Patience, through the Valley of Humiliation (children throwing stones at Helen) and a darker valley still, the Valley of the Shadow of Death (Helen's suicidal thoughts). Miss Helen finds in Elsa a staunch friend, just as Christian found Faithful, his friend and neighbour. The pilgrims, both Fugard's and Bunyan's, meet Despair in different guises. Turning away from Despair, they continue their journey until they come to the dazzling walls of the golden city.

Viewed in this light, **The Road to Mecca** becomes a modern parable of a writer demonstrating that the conscience and imagination of an artist threatens any society based on conformity and oppression, and revealing the dark night of the artist's soul en route to the celestial city, the light of revelations and visions. For above all, Miss Helen is a visionary. In 1983 Fugard wrote in his **Notebooks**:

I realise now there is no avoiding it - which will make Miss Helen the first exceptionally gifted (artistic, creative) character I've ever tried to deal with. No question though about my reluctance and hesitancy in coming to terms with her as an artist. I think that reluctance is now a thing of the past ... possibly because I think I've found a way to deal with her creativity without destroying its mystery.

As in Fugard's other plays discussed in this dissertation, the list of characters supplies little or no information about the characters themselves. The only foreknowledge of the characters is found in the introduction to this play. Fugard wrote some notes on Miss Helen and Elsa. The only clues he gives us as to Helen are that she was a recluse, eccentric and during a period of eighteen months or two years, during which she made nothing, she became very paranoid and depressed. In the end she committed suicide.

Fugard discovered that in the last years of Miss Helen's life she had a friend from Cape Town; a young social worker whose friendship with Miss Helen was very meaningful. It has already been mentioned in this dissertation that Fugard thought this woman a very remarkable person, with a strong social conscience, a strong sense of what South Africa was about and a strong outrage at what was wrong with it.

No additional information about Marius is supplied.

Fugard's visual information about his characters is not detailed. His cryptic remarks about their physical appearance emphasize that their appearance has little to do with the moral and intellectual issues at stake. The little information we receive enhances their mental frailty (Miss Helen) or strength (Elsa). Miss Helen is described as a "frail, bird-

like little woman in her late sixties" whereas Elsa is a "strong woman in her late twenties dressed in a tracksuit" (p. 15). Marius is presented as neutral, well-mannered and kind: "He is about the same age as MISS HELEN and is neatly but casually dressed" (p. 49).

At the beginning of Act One there is also an indication of Miss Helen's physical decay as a result of impending age as well as mental agony: "A suggestion of personal neglect, particularly in her clothes which are shabby and were put on with obvious indifference to the final effect" (p. 15). Her distraught state of mind is reflected by the fact that she is "nervously fussing" (p. 15). "A little later she tries to hide her unease" (p. 26). Fugard subtly informs us that she has a physical handicap - that the years have taken their toll, gradually preparing the audience for Marius's attempt to remove her to an Old Age Home. She handles the kettle with difficulty (p. 17), there is a burn mark on one wall of the house (p. 26), her handwriting in the letter is very bad (p. 38) and when Elsa finally studies her hands (p. 41) she is shocked to see scars from a fire. Miss Helen is uncertain of herself - her physical frailty seems to echo her mental distress. She is "getting nervous" and "tenses" when Elsa mentions the letter (p. 26).

Elsa's reference to her absence of creativity causes Miss Helen to reveal "a lot of inner agitation" (p. 37). When Elsa confronts her about her decision to leave, there is a "sense of increasing emotional confusion and uncertainty" (p. 42) which reaches a climax when Marius puts the pen in her hand to sign the application form (p. 61). It is only when Elsa lights the candles that Miss Helen's frailty succumbs to her inner strength: "She looks around the room and speaks with authority" and "She is radiantly alive, with her vision" (p. 72). Her strength as a character triumphs, however, when she "goes around the room putting out the candles, a quiet but deliberate and grave punctuation to what follows" (p. 74).

Although auditory information is more readily associated with the performance itself, it is nevertheless supplied in the dramatic text as well, especially if it emphasizes a characteristic of the dramatic action.

In **The Road to Mecca** the tone of voice of the characters indicates their state of mind. When the tension in the play is at its highest the two women often find something to laugh about. The didascalies reveal that Miss Helen speaks with "sly, tongue-in-cheek humour we will come to recognise as characteristic of a relaxed MISS HELEN" (p. 17). The two women have a good laugh when they play the "arrival game" (p. 18). When Elsa fantasizes about old Gertruida at the pulpit, Miss Helen is very amused (p. 24). The first meeting between Elsa and Miss Helen causes a fair amount of mirth when Elsa remembers Miss Helen: "Standing next to a mosque made out of beer bottles and staring back at me like one of your owls!" She walks around Miss Helen in a mock attitude of wary and suspicious examination saying: "Doesn't look dangerous, though. Wait ... she's smiling! Be careful, Barlow! Could be a trick. They didn't say she was violent, though. Just mad. Mad as a hatter" (p. 33). Both of them laugh heartily at this exaggeration.

When the play reaches its climax Miss Helen asks Elsa to light the candles. Everyone is agitated: Marius, because Miss Helen does not want to sign the form and he blames Elsa for interfering; Miss Helen because she does not want to leave her Mecca and Elsa has been brutal when Miss Helen was vulnerable; and Elsa because of Marius's manipulation of Miss Helen and her apparent betrayal of her freedom - of everything Mecca represents. When the candles are lit and the room transformed into a glittering spectacle, Miss Helen's uncertainty and anger dissipates and she "laughs ecstatically" (p. 72). The sound of that laughter symbolizing her happiness and fulfilment in her Mecca, is what defeats Marius. At last he understands what makes her happy.

The friction between the two women dissolves after Elsa opens up and tells Miss Helen about her abortion. She has a good cry, symbolically cleansing her soul and then the play ends with more laughter when Miss Helen mistakes Valiums for artificial sweeteners and wants to make an angel pointing to Mecca, misdirecting all good Christian souls. Their laughter symbolizes hope and the ability to overcome their circumstances. In their laughter lies their strength.

The tone of voice of the characters also indicates nervousness or anger. It is especially Elsa's agitation over her meeting with Patience and Miss

Helen's behaviour that is emphasized by the didascalies. When we first meets Elsa she is obviously upset about something because she "has an edge to her voice" (p. 16). When Miss Helen inadvertently uses the saying : "Patience is a virtue ..." (p. 17) Elsa reacts very sharply. When David is mentioned, she is "bitter" (p. 29) and "cruel" when Patience is discussed (p. 76). We soon learn why: "I may as well vomit it all out tonight. Two weeks after David left me I discovered I was pregnant. I had an abortion ... I put an abrupt and violent end to the first real consequence my life has ever had" (p. 76). Elsa admits that she has been so upset by Patience and the baby that she actually screamed. She screamed out her hatred for Patience's helplessness, her hatred for the baby because it could have been hers and most of all her hatred for herself. Elsa is still full of aggression until she breaks down and cries. Her words: "I'll be all right" (p. 77) indicates her inner strength despite the few moments of weakness. Miss Helen emphasizes that this weakness is only a momentary lapse when she answers: "I never doubted that for a moment" (p. 77). When Elsa laughs at Miss Helen's mistake over the Valiums, Miss Helen remarks: "I don't know how I did it, but that laugh makes me as proud of myself as any one of those statues out there" (p. 79). The relationship of love and trust between the two women is resolved again. The play ends:

ELSA: God, I love you! I love you so much it hurts.

HELEN: What about trust?

ELSA: Open your arms and catch me! I'm going to jump! (p. 79).

4.4 Space in the dramatic text and performance text

In the **Road to Mecca** we find that Fugard uses not only the didascalies to describe or indicate space, but also the dialogue of the characters. The didascalies focus on the interior of Miss Helen's house i.e. mimetic space, while the dialogue of the characters focuses on the space outside her home, i.e. the garden with all her sculptures and the greater space of the Karoo (diegetic space).

When we study the stage directions at the beginning of **The Road to Mecca** we can only agree with Levitt (1971:47) that "conspicuousness

commands attention and excites curiosity". Fugard describes the interior of Miss Helen's home thus: "An extraordinary room by virtue of the attempt to use as much light and colour as is humanly possible" (p. 15).

Even if the reader/spectator has some foreknowledge of Miss Helen and her extraordinary house and sculptures in the town of New Bethesda in the desolate Karoo (Fugard bases his play on a historical character), the room is still a surprise:

The walls - mirrors on all of them - are all of different colours, while on the ceiling and floor are solid, multi-coloured geometric patterns. Yet the final effect is not bizarre but rather one of light and extravagant fantasy ... The late afternoon light does, however, give some hint of the magic to come (p. 15).

At the beginning of Act Two it seems almost incongruous that the stage properties indicate "the centre of attraction being a basket of vegetables which Marius has brought with him" (p. 49). Nothing can emphasize the contrast between Marius and Miss Helen more strongly. Their worlds are so different: his the love of the soil, the mundane everyday requirements for a meal to satisfy physical hunger; Miss Helen's the flamboyant, unpractical world of colour and light, satisfying the mental hunger of the artist.

The difference between Miss Helen's world and that of Marius is also emphasized by the dialogue. Miss Helen's world extends from the interior of her house to her garden. These are the only places where she is happy - where she establishes her Mecca. Elsa tells Miss Helen that inside her house "You make magic with your mirrors and glitter" (p. 32), whereas outside in her garden she lives out her inner fantasies. Elsa says of the garden: "... when I saw your 'Mecca' for the first time, I just stood there and gaped" (p. 33). All those statues, camels and pyramids, wise men, owls with old motorcar headlights for eyes, peacocks, mosques, mermaids and even a man pulling up his trousers, must have seem such a contrast to the "dusty, deserted little street in a God-forsaken village in the middle of the Karoo" (p. 33). Although the

characters often refer to the village Miss Helen has no emotional ties binding her to it.

This same detachment is revealed about the Karoo itself. Although Elsa likes its "vast space and emptiness, its awesome stillness and silence" (p. 21), she criticizes its desolation and the hardship it causes people. She compares it with conventional religion: "It is obvious where you Afrikaners get your ideas of God from" and "... it's as merciless as the religion they preach around here" (p. 21). Although Miss Helen stays in the Karoo - "I was born here, Elsa" and praises it - "It grows on you, Elsa" (p. 21) she is still detached. She never speaks about the area of her own accord. She admits a sense of belonging, but has a far stronger sense of affinity towards her sculptures and other handwork which compose her self-created environment. Her world is not rooted in the earth or the soil as that of Marius. Her world is spiritual; it is part of her creativity as an artist.

Even Elsa relates more to the Karoo than Miss Helen, albeit negatively. To her the Karoo represents the hardship of the people around her and the South African situation. The story of Patience is linked to the space in which she lives - that is why she walks barefoot with no barrier between herself and the earth. Her story is a "good old South African story" (p. 20). Her husband, a farm labourer, died recently and no sooner had they buried him than the white owner of the farm told her to pack up and leave the farm. With her baby on her back and only a plastic bag with her possessions she has to walk eighty miles - as Elsa puts it: "There's eighty miles of the Karoo ahead of her" (p. 21). It is Elsa's outcry against all the suffering and hardship ahead of Patience. Katrina, the battered wife, and the Coloureds who may not make their own decisions are trapped by their environment and even though Katrina, and also Patience, move to a different town, they do not escape their environment or circumstances: they stay in the Karoo.

It is interesting to note that it is the male character, Marius Byleveld, who loves the Karoo. In him Fugard incorporates his own love for the area, his celebratory relationship with the South African environment. It was Fugard's love for the Karoo which led him to New Bethesda to buy a house there. In the introduction to **The Road to Mecca** he remarks:

"Driving to my friend's farm I was struck by its isolation and thought to myself, hell, this would be quite a nice place to have a house, and escape from the city, if ever I felt like getting away from the world". In an interview with **Vaderland** (1984:8) Fugard says: "Die Karoo is 'n wêreld wat vir my meer beteken soos ek ouer word. Dit is 'n landskap wat gestroop is van alle pretensie". Translated freely it means the older he gets the more affinity he has for the Karoo because it is without any pretensions. This description easily befits Marius. In another interview with Barrie Hough in **Beeld** (1984:2) Fugard claims that he received his inspiration for **The Road to Mecca** from the Karoo. He regards it as South Africa's spiritual landscape. He tried to capture this spirit in the play, that is why the whole texture of the play differs from all his previous plays. He also claims that if he dies one day and is cut open, a part of the Karoo will be found inside him.

Anne Sarzin (1987:291) claims that Marius emerges as a regional figure, a spokesman for the land and its people. Coleen Angove (1986:80) calls Marius's relationship with the Karoo "the love-affair between the Afrikaner and his land". This puts Marius in a different sphere from Miss Helen's spiritual world. Whereas she praises light and the sanctity of Mecca, he sings the praises of the Sneeuberg potato. He cannot comprehend that "the humble potato has been crowded out by other things" (p. 50) in Miss Helen's garden. He thinks Miss Helen's world is unnatural, therefore he accuses her: "Your life has become as grotesque as those creations of yours out there" (p. 70).

Marius understands concrete things. His conversation is peppered with references rooted in the Karoo: Sneeuberg, Gamtoos Valley, Spitskop and Aasvoelkrans. He is a man who knows his country with a certainty that permeates all aspects of his existence. Whereas Miss Helen relies on an inner world, Marius rejoices in an outer one: "The poplars with their autumn foliage standing around as yellow and still as that candle flame!" (p. 53). When Elsa describes the Karoo as "very dry and desolate", Marius retorts: "Dry it certainly is, but not desolate. It might appear that to a townsman's eye" (p. 50). Coleen Angove (1986:82) claims that in his relationship with nature, Marius reveals something of the Afrikaner tendency to exclusivity when he replies rather complacently to Elsa's criticism of the harsh dryness of the Karoo: "It is

my world - and Helen's - and we can't expect an outsider to love or understand it as we do" (p. 51). His misunderstanding of Miss Helen's world is also incorporated in those words. He fails to understand that her statues are an attempt to overcome the spiritual drought in her life, therefore he suggests she leaves her world and goes to the Old Age Home taking only a few ornaments with her. He fails to understand that the room she occupies there will be just that - a room. Her Mecca will be lost to her forever. He sees space as something without spiritual meaning: "As you can see it feeds us. Can any man or woman ask for more than that from the little bit of earth he lives on?" (p. 51). We feel almost sorry for Marius. His space is so limited. It is ironic that he claims: "I didn't escape life here, I discovered it, what it really means, the fullness and goodness of it" (p. 53). Marius is like his landscape - without vanity and conceit. That may be why Miss Helen's sculptures look like "monsters" to him (p. 66). Their ideas about reality are irreconcilable, yet Marius does not comprehend it: "Why didn't you come to me, Helen? If only you had trusted me enough to tell me, and we had faced it together ..." (p. 70). It is only when Helen lights all her candles and she is transformed into a joyous, sparkling human being reflecting her true inner self that Marius accepts that their worlds are completely different: "Mecca! So that's where you went ... I didn't realize you had travelled that far from me. So to find you I must light a candle and follow it to the East! ... No. I think I'm too old now for that journey ... and I have a feeling that you will never come back" (p. 73).