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FROM NOVICE TO MASTER CRAFTSMAN:
A STUDY OF ATHOL FUGARD'S PLAYS

Thesis

Submitted for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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by

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND

" the horror of poverty is essentially a horror of ugliness. The soul which is prevented by circumstances from feeling anything of the beauty of the world, even confusedly, even through what is false, is invaded to its very centre by a kind of horror."¹

Athol Fugard was born in Middelburg, Karroo, on the 11th June, 1932, his mother an Afrikaner, his father an English-speaking South African, possibly of Irish descent. When he was three years old, the family sold the small general dealer's store in the village and moved to Port Elizabeth, which has been his home ever since, though he has lived at various times in Europe, America, and other parts of Africa. After schooling at Port Elizabeth Technical College, he went to the University of Cape Town in 1950, where he read philosophy and social anthropology, supporting himself by working in the vacations as a waiter on the South African Railways. Fugard won class medals in his first two years, but he left without taking a degree as he was afraid of being caught in an academic trap: even then, it would seem, he was aware that his future lay in writing. He hitch-hiked with Perseus Adams, the poet, through Africa, then became a sailor for two years, being captain's tiger on a small cargo ship sailing in the Far East. He returned to Port Elizabeth in 1954, and in 1955 to Cape Town, where he met an actress, Sheila Meiring, who became his wife in 1956. This led to his first involvement in theatre. In 1958

1 Simone Weil, Waiting on God, translated by Emma Crauford, Collins, Fontana, 1974. p. 123

they moved to Johannesburg, where Fugard found a job as clerk in the Native Commissioner's Court at Fordsburg. The experience was a harrowing one:

"Every black man and woman in South Africa has to carry a pass-book, with endorsements which decide where he may live, work, seek work, travel etc. etc. Any violation of these endorsements is a statutory offence and is dealt with in a Native Commissioner's Court. The usual sentence is from two weeks imprisonment. My time in the Fordsburg court in Johannesburg was traumatic for me as a white South African. We were kept very busy, averaging about one case every three minutes. During my six months in that Court Room I saw more suffering than I could cope with. I began to understand how my country functioned."¹

It was also a time when he made his first black friends and visited them in their ghettos. From these experiences he wrote his first full length plays, which express the misery and suffering and, equally important, the undiscovered humanity of black township life. 'No-Good Friday' describes the lives of "black people in those townships, threatened as always by white laws and black gangsters."² Through their African friends they managed to get together a cast and rehearsed "wherever and whenever possible. 'No-Good Friday' received considerable attention when first presented."³

'Nongogo' was written after he left the Native Commissioner's Court. It is a play about a woman who had been a mine worker's whore. Like 'No-Good Friday' it was rehearsed wherever and whenever possible. In 1960 the Fugards went to Europe, where they worked in theatre until their return to South Africa.

1 A. Fugard, Three Port Elizabeth Plays, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1970. Introduction. p. viii.

2 Ibid, p. viii

3 Ibid, p. viii

While there, Fugard was exposed to the work of Brecht, Sartre, the avant garde Ionesco, and Pinter with his private, coded use of language. It is remarkable, however, that Fugard has not subsequently written himself into a corner as so many modern writers have, notably Beckett, Osborne, and Pinter, who seem unable to break away from their definitions of themselves. In fact a study of Fugard's plays reveals a continuing development, and that he has not allowed himself to become straight-jacketed by a particular manner. He has with time developed a characteristic style, but it is one that allows him considerable flexibility. Typically he is a miniaturist, preferring a two-hander to a play with a bulky cast. This is hardly surprising when one remembers that as a boy he had been an avid naturalist and specimen hunter, discovering untold intricacies in minutiae with his microscope. His finding universal significance through examining minute particulars is in part a reflection of circumstances, for the Pass Laws and the Group Areas Act certainly did make it difficult to put together plays with large casts: but the achieved style is also a reflection of Fugard's meticulous concern with specifics. Like Blake, he knows that one can find a universe in a grain of sand, that Lena's "blikkie condensmilk" when understood in its context is a symbol for a whole area of human sweetness longed for although rarely had. The stagecraft as a whole reflects Fugard's belief that two people are enough to demonstrate the entire human predicament.

During his period overseas Fugard began to keep notebooks, daily records of anything that seemed to be important, whether

events or thoughts or observations.¹ From the fragments he has published, and from his own references to these notebooks, it is clear that they contain the seeds of many of his plays as well as providing a commentary on his work. The idea for 'The Blood Knot', for example, appears as the first entry in the first notebook.² These notebooks are not, of course, available for publication or scholarly scrutiny. There is, however, in the Collection a fascinating manuscript of his unpublished novel 'Tsotsi'.³ Beginning with an examination of this, in which one can see the instinctive dramatist feeling uncomfortable with the limitations of narrative prose while testing out his major pre-occupations, this thesis traces Fugard's development as a dramatist. He begins as a novice and he finishes, in 'Boesman and Lena', as a master craftsman. The specific task of this thesis is to analyse and explain the growth and development of Fugard's dramatic art. One would like to suppose, for the purpose of such a study, that a knowledge of the history of South African theatre is necessary in order to understand the present, since it is the past that has shaped the present and made it what it is. One could even find such a task singularly appropriate to a study of Fugard's plays since so many of his characters can only make sense of their predicaments by reviewing what has happened to them in the past. But the history of drama in South Africa has been oddly bleak and empty, like the Swartkops mudflats in winter. Not that there is nothing to report, but that

1 These notebooks are at present housed in the Pringle Collection at Rhodes University.

2 Three Port Elizabeth Plays, Introduction p. viii

3 This is also housed in the Pringle Collection. I wish to thank the author for permission to examine the manuscript and make quotations from it.

what there is to report about South African theatre before the 1950's is almost entirely negative, fortuitous, and empty of potential lines of succession. The further back one goes, the more empty the scene becomes.

William Plomer's observations about the condition of South African culture in 1920 are uncompromising in their near despair. Talking of his joint editorship of "Voorslag" with Roy Campbell in 1925, he says¹: "The title had been chosen before my advent, and signifies a whiplash - not that it was intended to interest amateurs of le vice Anglais but to sting with satire the mental hindquarters, so to speak, of the bovine citizenry of the Union." So bovine were the citizens in their reaction to this magazine that the editorship of Campbell and Plomer ended before it had properly begun. The story illustrates the attitude of South Africans, and the English speaking in particular, to the arts. True of the arts in general, it was particularly true of the theatre. Alwyn Andrew, writing on the defects of the South African theatre at the time says: "A small, scattered population, whose chief interests are sport, gold and farming is unlikely to provide artistic sustenance."² He describes the theatre in South Africa as consisting of groups of amateurs performing plays written and previously produced elsewhere, and then goes on to speak of the one permanent, and the several impermanent, professional groups being similarly employed. Theatre overseas, he continues, is professional first and amateur second; here it is the other way round. He concludes that

1 Quoted in January, 1951, edition of 'Trek', Volume 15

2 Quoted in February, 1951, edition of 'Trek', Volume 15

the theatre in South Africa, since it consists almost entirely of amateurs, is essentially imitative rather than creative. Of the National theatre, which came into existence in 1948, he says that its choice of plays was bad, that it had to tour a vast country and play to frequently small and inexperienced audiences, on inadequate stages, in inconvenient halls. There was no permanence, since the team, the producer, and the management changed from tour to tour.

Mervyn Woodrow says: "Of the three art forms, i.e. the prose novel and short story, poetry and the drama it seems that drama is still the Cinderella. This is certainly the case if we compare the amount of work that has been published.¹ Woodrow then quotes at length from an article published in 1938 by Professor J. Y. T. Greig in which he endeavours to determine the boundaries of South African literature in English. Drama is not even mentioned by the eminent professor of English. Yet his omission is not malicious but empirically justifiable, and one may check on its veracity by following the suggested reading list at the end of this introduction.² The fact is coldly and unpleasantly clear: nothing of significance happened in South African theatre until the Second World War. Here the necessary conditions for an indigenous theatre began to take shape: national crisis, political stability, the sudden plunging of South Africans into the richness and variety of world culture, and the new escalation in racial conflict and awareness. The Second World War also gave rise to a new

1 "South African Drama in English", 'English Studies in Africa' Volume 13, September 1970. p. 391 - 410.

2 Page 21.

flowering of poetry and prose. Everything suggests that the war brought in major economic, political and cultural changes, and that these changes formed a truly fertile matrix for the potential catalysis of Fugard's creative imagination.

During 1942 'Trek' drama critics dealt almost exclusively with Cape Town theatre because there was virtually nothing happening elsewhere. What were people in Cape Town being offered? During the period August to December 1942,¹ the following plays were either produced or read: James Bridie's "Sleeping Clergyman", Joseph Kesselring's "Arsenic and Old Lace" George Kaufman's "The Man Who Came To Dinner", Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra", Shaw's "The Apple Cart", and Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest". On December 4th there is mention of a very poor production of "Macbeth" at the Standard Theatre in Johannesburg, and on December 18th Durban appears on the scene for the first time, having been sorely handicapped thus far - and much further into the future - by lack of a good hall. It is almost inconceivable that a city the size of Durban in 1942 had no venue for live theatre, but then one remembers that in 1946 Johannesburg had only two theatres for 350,000 Europeans.² Having complained about the lack of a hall, Oliver Walker goes on to say that Durban's interest in drama had been sustained mainly by 'those gifted player-producers Winifred Curtin and Elizabeth Sneddon' operating from the Green Room Theatre, which comprised a very large stoep at Manor House. The play produced on this occasion was "The Other Cheek" by Flight-Lieutenant Cecil Maiden

1 'Trek', Volume 7, August - December, 1942.

2 Library Theatre, and the old Standard Theatre.

who was stationed at Durban for the war period. He wrote and had produced several plays during this period, but none highly thought of by Walker, who says: "His main virtues are competence and industry, but up to now his contribution to our dramatic literature does not rate higher artistically than an imported Austin Reed suit."¹

A theatrical event of 1943 which now seems highly improbable was the opening of 'Johannesburg People's Theatre', founded with the avowed intention of spreading leftwing propaganda. Their opening presentation consisted of four one-act plays, among which were 'Private Hicks' by Albert Maltz, dealing with pacifism; 'According to Plan' by Geoffrey Parsons, a play about the Russian front, and 'Virtue Rewarded' by William Titus, showing up the evils of the capitalist system. Later in the year the Young Pioneers presented "The Emperor's New Clothes" at the People's Theatre. This was described by the critic, 'Z.R.R.'² as 'propaganda with charm'; propaganda for the Left of course. What is significant about this, however, is that the Young Pioneers were a group of coloured children. At about the same time in Cape Town City Hall the Eoan Group, also young coloured children, presented 'The Diary of a Dancer'. The Eoan Group figured quite often in Cape Town until the end of the war, when the Cape Coloured Theatre Guild was formed. At that moment it seemed possible, according to 'Trek',³ to look forward to the growth of a living Non-European Theatre in Cape Town and, in time, throughout the country, but this

1 'Trek', Volume 7, 18th December, 1942.

2 'Trek', Volume 7, 15th January, 1943.

3 'Trek', Volume 8, 18th May, 1945.

is the last mention of a coloured theatre and it was soon in decline, for white was separated from black and there was no mutual feed system.

In 1948 the National Theatre made its debut. It had its origins in a Federation formed in 1938 to link together amateur theatrical societies. This Federation, started by Mr. P. P. Breytenbach, who was its President, survived the war and was "ready to receive the blessing and financial support of the Government in 1946."¹ In his presidential address to the 1940 conference of the Federation, he visualised the formation of a professional company which would draw on the amateur theatre, and which would not only bring live theatre to a people hungering for it, but would also offer prospects of permanent employment to potentially good actresses and actors, "and help to establish a form of drama peculiar to South Africa".² Mr. Breytenbach "caught the ear of the professionals who themselves had vision of a South African drama culture, and by 1942 managed to get these actors and actresses together for informal discussions. The period of idealistic dreams was now over. The period of active preparation to launch a National Theatre for South Africa had begun."³ During 1942 a memorandum was drawn up and presented to the then Administrator of the Transvaal, with the request that the Union Government be presented with the case for a National Theatre. Unfortunately nothing came of this particular effort, as all energies were being devoted to the prosecution

1 "The National Theatre in South Africa. A survey of its Origin and Development as a Guide to other nations contemplating similar organisations." 19th January, 1951. This document was compiled on behalf of the National Theatre Organisation for submission to Advocate J.B. Piggott of Hobart, Tasmania, and was kindly lent by Professor F. G. Butler of Rhodes University.

2 Ibid

of the war.

However, in 1945, the Union Department of Education published a report on the need for adult education. This report emphasized the need for theatre. A National Advisory Council for Adult Education was appointed to implement the report. Mr. Breytenbach was appointed to the Council to represent cultural activities, and it was he who persuaded the Council of the importance of establishing a National Theatre to take live drama to all parts of the country. Mr. Breytenbach convened a sub-committee with Major Myles Bourke (Head of the U.D.F. Entertainment Unit), and Mrs. Anna Neethling Pohl, with a Mr. S. C. M. Naude as Secretary to draw up a memorandum, for the second meeting of the Council in April 1947. This memorandum, which was submitted to the late J. H. Hofmeyer, stressed at the outset how lacking in the arts South Africa was, especially theatre, and that what there was was amateur; amateur theatre, however good, could never achieve what the professional theatre was capable of. In fact the memorandum saw the role of theatre in South Africa not only as advancing the education and cultural life of the whole community, but also as being an active force in social reform and in the removal of racialism:

"In every sphere of social and cultural life in South Africa, changes must come in precisely the same way that changes and reforms must come in the Government, not only in this country but the world as a whole. The theatre has been proved to be a very active force in social reform. A growing country must grow on sound foundations. We have an opportunity now which few countries have ever had, of building a theatre from the foundations upwards that should be second to none in the world."¹

Just as one is becoming filled with admiration for the idealism of the sub-committee in wishing to remove racialism,

1 Scheme suggested by the Sub-Committee appointed to draw up a plan for a South African National Theatre.
(Kindly lent by Professor F.G. Butler of Rhodes University.)

it becomes clear that the racialism being referred to is that between the English and Afrikaans sections of the community:

"A National Theatre in South Africa would be one of the finest weapons against racialism. True art knows no race discrimination and in a National Theatre Afrikaans actors and actresses would be cast in English plays and vice versa, apart from each playing in their own tongue A National Theatre would provide a common ground where the two sections could meet. It would be the pivot of a new cultural alliance between the two sections. It would knit the two races together - not only the artists - but the audiences throughout the land."¹

There is absolutely no mention of the Coloureds or Africans, and yet the sub-committee saw no irony in the statement "True art knows no race discrimination"; the defeat of Smuts in 1948 and the start of the separation of the races and the entrenchment by legislation of racialism was less than a year away. Athol Fugard, with his unpublished novel, 'Tsotsi', and his first plays about the victims of that racialism, was then about 10 years away.

The memorandum referred to above recommended the appointment of a board of Governors and the setting aside of funds to set the scheme in motion. A grant of £4000 was voted, and a loan of £3000 was made available to launch the first touring companies. With this ludicrously small financial backing on which to justify itself, National Theatre became an accomplished fact, even if only as an experiment. The first plays - English and Afrikaans - were launched in January 1948, after country-wide auditions, on a six months tour of 32 towns, giving 150 performances.

This first experiment was an outstanding success, and the

1 Scheme suggested by the appointed Sub-Committee for a South African National Theatre.

Council was well satisfied. For each of the next three years a subsidy of £15,000 per year was given. By 1950 it was clear that a small company sponsored by the State was the only answer to the problem of bringing good theatre regularly to the people, but of course it was still only scratching the surface of the problem. A press statement released on behalf of the National Theatre Organisation¹ shows that early in 1951 productions had been taken to 393 centres, 873 performances had been given, with a total attendance of 319,000. The cost of these ventures was £125,000, and the review stresses how impoverished the Organisation is, and how essential it was that financial security be obtained before adequate planning and organisation could be got under way.

While the National Theatre was doing a great deal for drama, it was having grave problems of finance and hence of organisation. It continued with its work until 1963, when its functions were taken over by CAPAB, PACT, NAPAC, and PACOFS - four performing Arts Boards that worked on a provincial basis. This was a more satisfactory answer to the aims and objects of the NTO, as the country is too vast to be covered by one such organisation. These Arts Boards derive their funds from grants by the Department of National Education, from the Provincial Councils, from cities in the area, and from other smaller local authorities. In addition there is a South African Co-ordinating Performing Arts Council on which the four Councils or Boards are represented. This body confers once a year on matters of wider, general national import in the Arts world.

1 National Theatre Organisation - Review of first three years and future prospects - 24th February 1951. (Also kindly lent by Professor F. G. Butler of Rhodes University)

During the 1960's and early 1970's most white Universities in the country started speech and drama departments to teach the basic discipline of dramatic art. These drama schools initiate much dramatic activity that would not otherwise take place, and they develop local talent that is often fed into the stream of professional theatre.

In 1950 and 1951 the country, despite the advent of the National Theatre, reverted to theatrical gloom. The 'Trek' editorial for December, 1950 states:

"In this month's issue, our theatre critic refers to the poor standard of plays represented by the Johannesburg Repertory Theatre during the year." This group, he says, is more concerned with cheap entertainment and box office possibilities than with the promotion of good theatre. 'Melpomene', the critic, goes on to state: "It is idle to encourage the theatre groups to attempt indigenous plays when none are forthcoming, but I repeat that a good deal of virtue has gone out of our acting after years of negative enterprise - the repetition of box-office hits, with block-booked runs and none of the excitement of chance."¹

However, in October a new Repertory Theatre was opened in Johannesburg - a small step, but one in the right direction. 'Trek' ends in April 1952 with the Tercentenary celebrations in Cape Town. The play-writing competition for this event, sponsored by the National Advisory Council for Adult Education, was won by F. G. Butler's 'The Dam', a verse drama set in the Great Karroo. It deals with a farmer's obsession to build a dam. He is an English speaking South African. To achieve his object he requires the permission of a neighbouring Afrikaans farmer, and the labour of the non-whites. It is easy to see the symbolism of the project in the South African

1 'Trek', Volume 14, December 1950.

situation. The dam, if it is to become a reality, represents a coming together and a working together of the races. This coming together has life-giving properties in the context of South Africa, just as the water of the dam will have for the surrounding countryside. As it stands the play is lacking in dramatic tension, since the events do not happen, as it were, from inner compulsion or necessity of character, but follow a pattern pre-determined by the moral message of the play. However, the play is important for other reasons, for it can now be seen as prophetic: Kaspar and Katrina, the coloured couple, become a little disgruntled and unhappy:

Katrina: We have no future, nor our children.

Kaspar: The Longs are good people, Katrina.

Katrina: They treat us well, they pay us well, but we
Do not live by bread alone. We too need hope,
Need to be told that our children have a future.
But they have never told us. It is getting cold.
(She goes to pack the basket)

Kaspar: How long, O Lord, how long?
(He strikes a solemn angry chord)
The mills of God have ground us fine and small.
What can we do? I've seen what a single tank
Can do to well-armed men: What can we do?
Is God a God of favourites? But let it be.

Katrina: The poor wait patiently, but not forever.

This unhappiness causes Susan, who is the daughter of the farmer who built the dam, to choose there and then to pick up the Cross of the poor and the dispossessed in South Africa, in other words the Coloureds and Africans. She rejects not only her heritage, the farm, but also the love of Sybrand, son of the Afrikaans farmer who enabled her father to build the dam in the first place by selling him the land on one bank. Thus we see a symbolic rejection of the marriage of the two European races, and the metaphysical discomfiture of the non-whites despite the sacrifice of a section at least of the

European race on their behalf. There is a hint of the growing impatience of those who live without hope.

Mervyn Woodrow says¹ that in the twenty years from 1949 to 1969 almost as much drama in terms of quantity was written as in the whole of the preceding century. He regards 'The Dam' and 'The Dove Returns' by F. G. Butler as the progenitors of a new movement. He is even more enthusiastic when he comes to discussing the quality of this recent 'crop', which shows such a spectacular leap ahead that he is led to speak of a 'renaissance of English drama.' He sees the start of this renaissance as coinciding with the coming to power of Nationalists in 1948, for it is then that the crisis of identity for all non-Nationalists begins; Woodrow says of the English speaking and writing South African:

"Forced now to become in large part an observer, a sleeping partner, he draws on his dreams, on his visions of humanity, on courage and justice and love and hate - and he gives himself now to the 'expression of human experience.'"²

This is where Fugard comes in. For him the suffering of black and brown (and white) people under the discriminatory laws of the country is human experience, and he expresses it, bears witness to the poor and the deprived and the unwanted, and puts an end to the conspiracy of silence about the real issues. The experience of which he wrote was not new: in fact it is as old as the coming of the English speaking settler:

"Pringle came to South Africa with the intention, explicitly avowed in his 'Introductory Stanza's':

1 "South African Drama in English", 'English Studies in Africa' Volume 13, September, 1970, p. 391 - 410.

2 Ibid

"To point the indignant line with heavenly light ...
 That it Oppression's cruel pride may blight
 By flashing Truth's full blaze on deeds long hid in night.

He has had worthy successors in this: Cripps, Paton, Allonby, Delius, all know how to point an indignant line. Fighting for 'Afric's race reviled' has proved a difficult task. This is not entirely the fault of white self-interest and un-Christian prejudice: it is quite as much owing to the intimidating distances between primitive tribal life and even the most unsophisticated European existence."¹

Although the experience is clearly not new, Fugard's treatment of it is. In his plays we move away from a rational view of man's life, or at least a philosophy which regards life as a rational business. Under the influence of Miller, Sartre, Camus, Ionesco, Brecht, Beckett, and Pinter, Fugard is able to achieve a fresh perception by applying a new technique to the old experience. This is a basic situation which is described by Koestler in his discussion of comedy and the roots of creativity:

"A situation is always comic ... if it participates simultaneously in two series of events which are absolutely independent of each other, and if it can be interpreted in two quite different meanings."²

The insight does not only apply to comedy, but to all creative acts. Artistic invention can become dulled by repetition and lack of fresh frames of reference. Fugard, by introducing a new frame of reference to the old question of the 'clash of cultures', gives us new revelations.

"Habits are the indispensable core of stability and ordered behaviour; they also have a tendency to become mechanized and to reduce man to the status of a conditioned automaton. The creative act, by

- 1 F. G. Butler, editor, Oxford Book of South African Verse, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1963. Introduction p. xxx - xxxi
- 2 Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation, Pan Books Ltd., London, The Danube Edition, 1970, quoting Bergson. p. 79

connecting previously unrelated dimensions of experience, enables him to attain to a higher level of mental evolution. It is an act of liberation - the defeat of habit by originality."¹

By viewing the problem of the 'clash of cultures' from the point of view of Africans who are suffering humans belonging to the poor, the deprived and the unwanted part of the community, he alters our whole perspective. We see what happens not only to people who are the victims of apartheid and the discriminatory laws of the white man, but also to Europeans who have failed materially and spiritually despite the advantages conferred upon them by the colour of their skin by the same apartheid laws.

The African encounter is thus ambiguous, ironic and painful. Professor F. G. Butler observes² that most South African poets have tried to belong to Africa, but that, finding her savage, shallow and unco-operative, have been forced to give their allegiance, not to another country, but to certain basic conceptions. This is not true of Fugard. On the contrary, it might be said of him that, finding the behaviour of the white man "savage, shallow and unco-operative", he has been forced to give his allegiance to the suffering black humanity of the townships. The wheel has come full circle. We are made to realise that the white man, seeking - as he thinks - salvation, is in fact destroying himself as a human being as a result of his treatment of his fellow humans.

1 Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation, Pan Books Ltd., London, The Danube Edition, 1970, p. 98

2 F. G. Butler, editor, Oxford Book of South African Verse, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1963. Introduction p. xxxvi

Van der Post, in his introduction to 'Turbott Wolfe'¹, has something to say on this matter. Surveying English literature in South Africa, he states that there appear to him to be four distinct phases. The first begins with Thomas Pringle, who took upon himself, as it were, the pain of Africa, but whatever the extent to which he identified with South Africa, he remained a stranger, a visitor writing about Africa in English. The second stage is represented by Olive Schreiner, who belongs here: 'she is utterly in and of the country,'² but she does not write directly about the black and coloured people of Africa:

"She too made her breakthrough but not in this direction. Her triumph was to realise for the first time the rejection of woman and her values in Africa in every except the purely biological sense. This was true not only of woman but far more subtly and profoundly true of those feminine aspects of man himself on which his capacity to create depends - One reason why the history of Africa is so terrible is that the lack of recognition and the scale of this rejection has been so great."³

The third phase is that of Rider Haggard, who was the first writer to find the black man romantic, and who made him the hero:

"He saw in the black man something epic and heroic, his spirit an instrument of honour in search of greater honour. To know human beings through the sense of wonder they provoke is, I believe, the beginning of grace on this earth."⁴

The fourth phase in van der Post's view is William Plomer, to whom he attributes a heightening of people's awareness on racial matters:

1 W. Plomer, Turbott Wolfe, Hogarth Press, London, 1965. Introduction by L. van der Post, p.p. 28 - 33

2 Ibid. p. 29

3 Ibid. p. 30

4 Ibid. p. 31 - 32

"For the first time in our literature, with Turbott Wolfe, a writer takes on the whole of South African life. Suddenly the barriers are down and imagination at last keeps open house in a divided land. The black people of South Africa are no longer just a problem. Nor, in Turbott Wolfe, are the black people used merely as an incitement to adventure and romance. They take their place in their own right as individual human beings beside the white persons in the story."¹

Fugard must now be added to this list. Of all South African writers in English only he has shown what it is like to be black or brown in South Africa. He has discovered the identity, the humanity of those who suffer under the discriminatory laws of the white man, and has demonstrated that suffering. Lest it be thought, however, that he bears witness only for the Africans and Coloureds, it is worth stating here that Fugard's compassion and charity extend to all suffering people: "People Are Living There" and "Hello and Goodbye" are testimony to his feeling for those whites who are the victims of urban poverty with all its intellectual and material limitations. There are no heroes, only victims; what heroism there is is absurd, as is that of Sisyphus. Like his, the stoicism of Fugard's characters is achieved in an absurd situation. Sisyphus, having so nearly fulfilled his task, watches his stone crash down into the valley below which is filling with the dark of sunset. He stands for a moment in the failing light and "contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus, convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who

1 Ibid. p. 32

knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling."¹

Like Camus, Fugard can make affirmations in what looks like the very pit of despair and hopelessness:

"I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He, too, concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."²

This is precisely the keynote of Fugard's maturest work, that it "makes of fate a human matter, which must be settled among men."³

1 Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, Translated by Justin O'Brien, Penguin, 1975. p. 110 - 111

2 Ibid, p. 111

3 Ibid, p. 110

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CHAPTER TWO

'TSOTSI'

'But the full meaning and miracle of sharing in another man's suffering eluded his stumbling attempts to catch it.'¹

I

The manuscript of this novel is at present housed in the Pringle Collection at Rhodes University. It consists of 50,000 words in 144 pages of manuscript; it has no title, though Fugard proposed to call it 'Tsotsi', after its main character.² Written on commercial note paper, it is systematised from note books Fugard kept while he was a sailor during the years 1952 - 54. This systematisation took place in London in 1960 - 61, which means the novel was put together six to seven years after the initial draft, which has now disappeared.

II

'Tsotsi' is about a gang of four township thugs: Tsotsi, the leader; Boston, the drunken intellectual; Butcher, so named because of the precision with which he kills; and de Aap, a simian character with long arms, great strength, and limited intelligence. The novel opens with the four of them waiting for the dark. They drink, talk, and listen while Boston weaves verbal fantasies, but finally even Boston dries up. The moment has come for Tsotsi to announce his plans for the night. As he tells them that they will 'take one on the trains', he studies their reactions, particularly Boston's. Tsotsi has chosen the trains because it is the thing Boston dislikes the most. And so they set off.

1 A. Fugard, Tsotsi, p.71

2 This was confirmed by the author in Johannesburg, August, 1976

Now the scene changes to a railway station where we meet Gumboot Dhlamini, who is to be the gang's victim. An optimistic, hopeful man who walked a thousand miles to Johannesburg the year before, he has done well and is about to return to his wife and the child who was born after his departure. He has heeded the advice of his friends about safety, but now with his departure drawing near he becomes careless. This causes the gang to notice him. He is caught in the train with his hands at his side and is jammed so tight that he cannot move them. Pressed round him are Tsotsi and his gang, with de Aap holding him, helpless. It is the moment for Butcher to stick in the sharpened bicycle spoke and work it up into the heart. Just before Gumboot dies, Tsotsi bends close to whisper an obscene reference to Gumboot's mother in his ear. He does this because he has learnt that a moment of hate at the end disfigures the face in death. By this action we are shown how totally evil Tsotsi is. Boston, sickened by the whole business, vomits when they get off the train.

Now the gang drinks at Soekie's place. Boston, defending himself for his squeamishness, is nervously protesting too much. He is pacing up and down looking for some inner thing, de Aap is half-asleep, Butcher has gone off with a whore, and Tsotsi assures himself (after looking at them all) that everything is 'exactly the same as always'. He needs to affirm this rather more than usual because (although he does not realise it) he is changing inexplicably, and at odd moments feels uncomfortable. He is vaguely aware that Boston has something to do with it, and that is why he hates him: in

the six months he has been with the gang he has been upsetting with his questioning. Tsotsi doesn't like being questioned. No one knows anything about him (Tsotsi) except that he is 'the hardest, the quickest, the cleverest that had ever been and that once somebody had tried to find out something and was dead'. Boston asks no questions while he is sober, but now at Soekie's he is drunk. The word 'decency' comes to him as he is pacing up and down seeking something within himself. 'Decency', that is why he was sick after the murder, and the thought frees him of their ridicule. Tsotsi, unaware of the meaning of the word, advises him to see a doctor as 'decency' could be nasty. Boston asks him how old he is. Danger flares in Tsotsi's eyes. He hates these questions because he doesn't know the answer to them: he doesn't know his name, his age, or any details about himself. Boston, still upset about Gumboot's death, persists in his questioning, with the result that Tsotsi suddenly attacks him and savagely beats him up. If the others had not held him back he would have killed Boston. Tsotsi runs out of the shebeen haunted by the last words Boston utters through blood and broken teeth:

"You'll feel something, ja Tsotsi. One day it's going to happen. And God help you that day, because when it comes you won't know what to do. You won't know what to do with that feeling."

These are prophetic words; in fact they may be regarded as an adumbration of the plot.

Tsotsi is running away from himself. Eventually he rests in a grove of bluegums, and begins to revue the pattern of his life. When he thinks of himself inwardly, he thinks of darkness. The first rule of his life at the

start of the day is to see to his knife, make sure it is sharp enough, and if it isn't, to sharpen it. This anchors him firmly in the day and in his world, but to us it indicates just how empty and pointless the existence is of one who lives entirely by action:

"The first rule was the rule of the waking moment. That moment always came as a miracle - a sudden eruption of light as he opened his eyes and sound as well and sensation, feeling and smelling. It was a moment of great peril because the impact of the world around him, on his senses, was like a flood that threatened to tear him away from his moorings and cast him adrift on a new day as aimless as the others caught in the wanton tides of the location streets. It was at this moment that his first rule operated. It was simply that before anything else, eating, washing, pissing, he had to see to his knife if it wasn't in need of sharpening he would simply play with it for a few seconds enjoying the security of it in his hand. Whatever the case might have been, the blade dull or as keen as sight, when he put it away in his pocket and looked up, the day was his. He, Tsotsi, knew himself, and his dark purpose, and everything was alright. The knife was not only his weapon, but also a fetish, a Talisman that conjured away bad spirits and established him securely in his life."¹

The second rule which governs his life is never to disturb his inward darkness by thinking about himself or remembering any of his past - he neither knows nor wants to know about his past. He shies away from any sort of thinking because he can't follow where the thought will lead. In addition there is a Fugardian given here in the form of a special assumption that his characters are amenable to truth once it has been put into words:

"His second rule, which operated from then on through every other moment of the day, was never to disturb his inward darkness with the light of a thought about himself or the attempt at a memory. He was not only resigned to not knowing anything about himself, he didn't want to know anything."²

1 Fugard A., Tsotsi, p. 26

2 Ibid. p. 27

Boston's questioning almost causes him to break this rule, which is why he assaulted him. But despite Tsotsi's best efforts, his past comes back to haunt him.

Tsotsi's third rule is an extension of his second - he tolerates no questions from another, because questions cause his darkness to reverberate. This is what has just happened this evening: Tsotsi had in fact decided to take one on the trains precisely because he knew Boston disliked it the most, and Boston had started asking questions. But why does Tsotsi tolerate no questions. What is there to know? The answer is another Fugardian given where theme, meaning and character intersect, and character and background form the presented world. He fears the nothingness which he knows with all the certainty of his being is behind the facade of his life. Ironically it is only in the presence of someone dying that he feels alive.

At this moment he stands up, ready to run again, but someone is coming, a woman carrying a parcel. That she is moved by fear Tsotsi is easily able to recognise, since he has seen fear in others so often. He confronts her. Terrified, she gives him the parcel, and he accepts it in a sort of trance because it is making a crying noise. She runs off leaving Tsotsi bemused, to find that the parcel contains a baby.

Now Tsotsi makes an unpredictable and for him irrational decision: he decides to keep the baby. He buys a tin of condensed milk at an Indian shop and goes home to feed the baby. It smells. The problem pushes Tsotsi near to panic,

But he finally changes the baby, feeds it, and then tries to decide what to do with it. Where can he hide it? As he is pondering these questions, a demolition gang comes past. They are breaking down doors and windows and tearing off roofs so no more people will come into the township. Under the Group Areas Act, the authorities have proclaimed that the township itself will be no more. But Tsotsi asks no questions, is not concerned about why they are being knocked down or where the people are going to go. He simply wanders deep into them to find a place to hide the baby and the condensed milk: all evidence of his weakness must be hidden.

He begins to wonder why he has kept the baby. The end of his logic is death, yet he has saved the child. He is resentful at the hold it has on his life, and puzzled that he is doing things that do not fit into the pattern of his life:

"Suddenly, very sharply, and with more pain than he had ever felt before in his life, light stabbed his darkness and he remembered.

The memory was of a dog, a bitch, a yellow bitch, and he knew definitely that it was crawling towards him, he thought possibly in great pain, but certainly crawling. There was at times even the sound of a whimper as she came crawling almost to him, very close, so that he could see her eyes, and in them the thought he had had of pain. Then, just when it was certain that something was going to happen, the image blurred and faded and his darkness flowed in."¹

Something had happened that he had guarded against for a long time: he has remembered - the past and the present, the dog and the baby, are linked. Despite himself he is undergoing a transformation. Whereas before he has never been curious, now he is, and wants answers badly. He now has a motive for

1 Ibid. p. 42

keeping the baby; he hopes it will evoke more memories.

There is a buried theme or generative idea here. If a criminal is one who refuses to face his own humanity and vulnerability, it seems very probable that there is this subsidiary theme here, for Tsotsi, by remembering, is beginning to cease being a totally evil man.

Tsotsi leaves the baby in the ruins and decides to feed it again the next day, in the hope that it will again work its strange alchemy. Fugard now describes the burial of Gumboot in a drab ceremony, and in a cemetery as desolate as the lives have been of those who now lie in it. The fence round it is falling down, the trees deformed. As Gumboot is buried by the Rev. Henry Ransome, of the Church of Christ the Redeemer, who doesn't even know Gumboot's name, we become aware of the impotence of formal religious establishments and their servants. Fugard in this work has not yet rejected God; but true values and true humanity are to be found elsewhere than in the Church. This is not stated in so many words, but it is clearly implied: there is a dismissive attitude to clergymen and the Church, while the regeneration of Tsotsi is a private and internal thing.

At about the same time Boston awakes. His awakening is excruciatingly painful. He discovers his trousers have been stolen. He is watched intently and expressionlessly by a child. This is a remarkable scene, the implications of which are horrifying. What type of life is this that renders one so young so insensitive to the sufferings of others? The

system is judged by Fugard and found wanting. Eventually Boston staggers off down an alley, feeling everything is finished.

At that very moment Tsotsi has to announce to Butcher and de Aap the plan of action for the night. Now especially they miss Boston and his stories that fill out this moment. The extent to which Tsotsi has already changed is indicated by two factors: he finds himself irritated by Butcher and de Aap, and he has difficulty in making decisions because of an awareness of alternatives. Up to this moment he has lived as a victim of dark impulses of whose origins he is unaware. They go by train to Terminal Place, an ill-lit square on the edge of the city. There he loses Butcher and de Aap, so he departs alone, following his victim, a cripple called Morris Tchabalala. Morris, who has lost his legs in a mine shaft collapse, now drags himself along on his hands, his life encompassed by bitterness. He is a brave man, soured and hardened by his experiences, whose life, as he makes his way to the eating house, is examined in great detail. We are reaching a climacteric in the story. Symbolically Tsotsi, an agent of death, meets Morris, a victim of life, or perhaps a maimed agent of life. The outcome is that Tsotsi comes to an awareness he would never have dreamed possible, while Morris, the half-man, discovers how sweet life is despite all the drawbacks:

I am content to live it all again
And yet again, if it be life to pitch
Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,
A blind man battering blind men.¹

1 Yeats W. B., 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul', Collected Poems, 1952, p. 267

First, however, we have to be made aware of the 'frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch':

"Whatever else you could say or see about him, Morris Tchabalala was not afraid. That is why, when the foot came down on his hand on the pavement of Terminal Place he had no hesitation. "Whelp of a yellow bitch." It wasn't because of the pain. His hands were hard now, his fingers had forgotten their disgust of gobs of phlegm or dog piss because they no longer felt them. It was the insult of the foot that stung him. It meant that he hadn't been seen and nothing provoked so easily the harsh and bitter reality of his life. No one found half a man as meaningless as Morris Tchabalala himself."¹

Slowly Morris comes to realise that he is being followed by this ice-cold young man, Tsotsi. He is not worried at first, but the time comes when he realises he wants to live; what is left of him wants to live. When he has to leave the eating house and its temporary shelter, he is frightened, for as he leaves Tsotsi picks him up again.

At this point the story of Morris and Tsotsi is retold from Tsotsi's point of view, as he also has to be made aware of the 'frog-spawn' of Morris's ditch. When Morris had called him the 'whelp of a yellow bitch' the remark had 'torn with savage fury into his thoughts, stampeding them into a split second of chaos and terror.' He had been thinking of the yellow bitch earlier. Now, his fear turned to hate, he decides to take Morris, even though there is no profit in it. Morris's method of locomotion reminds him of the yellow bitch - her back legs had also been useless:

1 Tsotsi, p. 52 - 53

"It was his ugliness, the slow, creeping deformity of the man that kept Tsotsi faithfully behind his back. He studied him with fascination. In the crowds of Terminal Place he was able to follow unobserved and yet get close enough to hear the swinish grunt the cripple made after every reach of his long arms. He caught snatches of the lunatic conversation he kept up with himself. Once he was so near that looking down he saw where three deep creases had already been grained into the neck by the repeated effort of forcing the head back so as to see ahead. The beggar had to do this from time to time and Tsotsi noticed that the skin folded up and bulged out like the ropes of a double-stranded noose, and then he looked like a dog that had been pulled up short by a savage jerk of its leash. His hands were the same lifeless grey of the pavements. Their nails were almost bluish-black There was the thing about his movement. It was all in the arms. From the shoulders down he might just as well have been a sack of potatoes because he dragged himself like that. In this he reminded Tsotsi of something. At first he couldn't think what it was, and when he did remember he was excited. He moved like the bitch of his memory. It was a comparison that worked both ways because it also revealed something about the bitch that he had not realised. Her back legs had also been useless. She had only used the front ones like him. After the discovery Tsotsi's interest in his victim rose to an obsessive intensity, and he let his time and opportunities slip by. This man, this half-man, this unsightly and disfigured remnant of a man Tsotsi accepted with all the certainty of his unnumbered years as being the valid image of life.

He was a symbol of this precisely because he was bent, and broken and so without meaning that other men had abandoned him. This was the final reality to life. Everything else was just rouge and lipstick on an ugly face. Smiles and laughter changed nothing, no more than a new pair of trousers would have given back the cripple his legs."¹

Tsotsi, his mind in a turmoil as a result of the similarity of Morris's method of locomotion to that of the yellow bitch, is able, despite the hideousness of the half-man's appearance, to identify with him - an identification rendered the more remarkable by this very fact. He becomes aware that he is

1 Ibid, p. 67 - 68

glad he has missed opportunities of taking Morris, and that he is considering Morris's feelings. He asks himself how this had come about. His mind gropes for an answer, and as it stumbles about bumps into snatches of the truth. He remembers Boston being sick after the job on the trains, and feels there is some connection with his present situation. "But the full meaning and miracle of sharing in another man's suffering eluded his stumbling attempts to catch it." He comes to accept that "The ceaseless magnification and focus of his interest in the cripple had found a crack and a way into the experience of his flesh. That is what it was, the experience of Morris Tchabalala's flesh."¹ He is suffering from sympathy, something that lets light into his darkness. He feels so different that he thinks he must even look different, so he goes off to find a window in which he can see himself, but because of the light all he sees is a shape that could be any man. The author is enlarging and extending the dramatic irony by showing that those who search too closely fail to find themselves, whereas those who are less involved with themselves gain more. When Tsotsi moves up to the glass he can't see himself, but standing further back he can, though the image could be that of almost anyone. That this comforts him shows the extent to which he is identifying with fellow humans, and the extent to which he has grown as a human being:

"Feeling as if he had drunk too much Tsotsi lurched to his feet and around to the front of the shop. He wanted to see himself. He was sure he looked different, that he would see on his person some sign of the past few hours. A new head, maybe, with other eyes and strange lips speaking different words. There were none of the mirrors that some of the big shops had in the main street. But a

1 Ibid, p. 71

little way down he caught the ghost of his reflection in the display window of a shoe store. The light of the pavement was too dim for it to be clear. When he moved up to the glass his image disappeared. He could only see it standing well back and at that distance and dimness he recognised nothing except the shape of a man. 'It could be me?' he thought. 'Or Boston or Butcher, or even the beggar if he had had legs.' There was a comfort in this thought."¹

When Morris and Tsotsi finally meet there is an anti-climax, a deliberate defusing of the situation so that confrontation gives way to an exchange of words. Morris admits that he has been feeling a fear of death, but Tsotsi wants to know how Morris pisses and shits, so Morris explains. Morris tells him he wants to live. Tsotsi, strangely sympathetic, lets Morris live, and walks back to the township, his thoughts in turmoil - the baby, Boston, the bitch, bluegums, shoebox, Morris. Choice is playing a far greater part in his life than he had ever imagined possible - life is not nearly as inevitable as he had thought. He is discovering how painful awareness is, how agonising it can be to feel for other people, and how difficult the matter of making decisions is. But from the questions he asks Morris, it is clear that Tsotsi has not the words or the intelligence to measure and articulate the experiences and feelings flooding through him. He perceives but dimly the great light that illumines the moral area into which he has moved.

Now, this new development needs to be dramatically tested, hence the following incident. If Tsotsi were not put in a position where he must choose whether to react in the old way or in the light of his new feelings, his transformation would

1 Ibid, p. 71

be meaningless. When he comes to the ruins to fetch the baby, he sees a line of ants leading down the wall to the shoebox, then over it and into the corner beyond. The milk had attracted them. Tsotsi cleans them off the tin first, as he is almost too frightened to lift the lid of the box. When he does, the baby is quiet, in a sleep close to death. It is smelling again, and it is being attacked by the ants, but they have not been in the box long. His first look brings an overwhelming sense of despair. He knows he is facing a crisis, but he doesn't know whether he has minutes to spare, or whether he is too late. He resists a temptation to throw everything deep into the ruins and never come back, and instead goes to work and cleans up the ants. The baby awakes and cries feebly. Its eyes have lost their focus:

"'Milk! I must get milk for him.' He went down onto his knees and bent close to the baby, as if it might whisper a few words of advice or encouragement. He studied the face intently. Those eyes! They made him feel he wasn't there. Tsotsi brushed his fingers past in front of them. They didn't blink. The baby's breathing came in shallow, fretful little sighs ending with a Tick-tick-tick-tick from deep in its throat as if something was counting off a few seconds for every breath. A few seconds of what?

Tsotsi put out a finger and touched the small pink palm of one hand and the fingers closed on his like the tendrils of a lazy anemone. He felt the tiny, moist hold with a palpitating heart. He had a name for his experience of that moment. He was 'feeling for the baby'."1

He remembers that Miriam Ngidi has a young baby she is still breast-feeding. Her husband went off to work one day and never came back. Eight months pregnant, she searched for him, but without success. Now she earns a living by doing washing. Indirectly the life of the townships - a life style forced onto the people who live there - is here

being judged. Tsotsi kidnaps Miriam and takes her to his room. She thinks he is going to rape her, instead he orders her to feed the baby. She has to fight down her disgust, but by the time it has drunk enough she is feeling better and asks a few questions. She ends by making a slighting reference to the child's mother: 'A bitch in a back-yard would look after its puppies better.' The words have a strange, frightening effect on Tsotsi, as it recalls his own memories and the past that for so long has been a closed book to him until recent events stirred them to life. By remembering, Tsotsi is being forced into awareness: in his case unawareness means the violent criminal way of life he has been leading. These developments cause him to be like a child again. By finding and caring for a child he recovers a sense of childlike innocence.

It is now Sunday night. Tsotsi sits quietly as he has no desire for movement:

"He was frightened of anything that threatened to disturb the memory that had come to him from a long time away. He kept quiet and sat in the dark and remembered it again from beginning to end, pausing only in the deep silence between each reliving to wonder how he had ever forgotten."¹

He relives a portion of his childhood. His mother is talking to him, calling him 'David'. His father, who has been away many years, is returning the following day. He remembers his mother's love, her warmth, her smell. There is also an old woman with a face like a tortoise and hands like fowl's feet, and she tells him that he knows nothing of the world's troubles yet. Then he remembers that chained up out in the

1 Ibid, p. 90

yard is the yellow bitch. He remembers going to bed with his mother, the warmth of lying next to her even though the blankets are thin. Suddenly the door is broken open and his mother and many others are taken away by the police - no passes. David is left, alone, at ten years old. He remembers his mother's warning never to move if she is taken away - he must wait for her there. So he waits, although there comes a moment when he wishes to go, but the old lady stops him. With the coming of day, however, she goes out to look for his mother, and he is left alone. In due course his father arrives. The boy is terrified and hides in the back yard. When the father discovers that his wife has been taken, he goes berserk, shouting frantically for her. He comes into the back yard, and the yellow bitch snarls at him. David hears a heavy dull sound, and a thin screech of dog pain, then the steps recede and David opens his eyes. The yellow bitch has been kicked, and she is walking round in circles biting at her own back legs, and rolling over and over. Suddenly she stops and tries to stand up, dragging herself on her front feet because her back legs have been paralysed. She comes on until she is only a few feet away when the chain stopped her. There she gives birth to a still born litter, and then dies beside them. After this David runs away.

Tsotsi returns to the present, and finds he is glad he has the baby: he feels a sense of identification with it, as if the baby were somehow himself. But by now the baby is ill, so he goes to fetch the woman to feed it. Miriam offers to take the baby and look after it, but Tsotsi, now very possessive, wants to kill her. She asks how he got the baby,

and he tells her in bits and pieces as he remembers. He can't really explain why he wants to keep the child. He won't part with it because it is so closely identified with his regeneration: it is a symbol of his rebirth.

He hides the baby in the ruins, and then goes to where he had lived in the pipes with a gang soon after he had run away from home. It is much as he remembers it. So it is all true, it had happened. Tsotsi finds it necessary to check on his past in this way because it is difficult for him to believe the memories that are crowding in on him. He needs to assure himself they are true:

"The only change was that some rubbish seemed to have been thrown or blown into the river bed. He hurried down to it. When he found the shell of the motor-car almost as he remembered it, there was no longer any doubt. It was true; it had happened, and to him."¹

He leaves to look for Boston, and finds him in a shebeen. The proprietress says Boston is in pieces, held together by dry blood. He is in a stupor, so Tsotsi carries him away in his arms. Boston wakes up and is shocked to see who is carrying him. Tsotsi puts him on his bed and examines him closely in an effort to understand him, to 'find a way into the experience of his flesh' as he had done in Morris's case. It is almost as though he wishes to become one with Boston, to identify totally with him as St. Francis did with the lepers, and yet there is also a great deal of irony in this:

"..... he now saw all that there was of Boston, stretched naked on the bed. In the shebeen and when carrying him through the streets he had deliberately deferred the moment of looking, of really looking at him so that through the touch of his hands and his eyes he would feel him the way he had felt the cripple. But this time

1 Ibid, p. 112

There was no preamble to the experience. As he turned away from the window it hit him. Boston was thinner than he had ever imagined. His ribs stood out clearly, pressing against the skin with the violent effort of each breath, which seemed to arch his whole body. In the uncertain light his legs were out of all proportion to the rest of him.

Tsotsi went to the bed and examined him carefully so absorbed in his purpose that he hardly felt the liquid wax fall onto the back of the hand holding the candle. The head was almost misshapen by blue swellings on the forehead. One eye was so swelled that all that remained of it was a straight lipless fold of skin. Even as Tsotsi looked a few drops of colourless liquid oozed out and trickled down the cheek. Impulsively he put out a hand and caught up one on his finger. He tasted it. Tears From the eyes he moved slowly to the nose - a clotted mass of blood and broken bone - then to the mouth and the cuts about the chin.

Very lightly he put a hand on Boston's chest. The flesh was warm and living and felt like pain. It was red as it had been broken open. Under the blackness it was as red as pain!"¹

Tsotsi is immensely excited and moved. He blows out the candle to save it for when Boston wakes up.

At this point we are filled in by direct narration on Boston's background. Boston is a lapsed intellectual, a man with a sad past. He shows a steady decline as a human being since, despite knowing better, he stumbles into crime. There is less hope about him than there is about Tsotsi for this very reason: Boston knew, and still knows, the better way, yet chooses the way of death, while Tsotsi, who didn't know, and only dimly discerns, the better way, is now moving in the direction of life. When they meet - they have to meet as there would be no novel if they did not: their conflict is central to the whole story - the action starts. This results

1 Ibid, p. 114

in violence, then in the transformation of Tsotsi. Their final meeting is the climax of the novel. Tsotsi, who first impressed Boston with the 'purity of his evil', is now seen by him to be suffering the torture of awareness, while the issues he raises are God issues. Tsotsi is asking about God. Such changes are not only painful, they are also frightening. They share their common humanity, and are close together in a sort of communion, not only physically, but also metaphorically.

Boston wakes up on Tsotsi's bed in the darkest hour of the night. He asks why Tsotsi has brought him there. Tsotsi says it is because he needs to speak to him - Boston, the teacher who has read all the books. Boston looks at Tsotsi and sees that where there had been darkness in his eyes there is now something like light. Tsotsi tells Boston about the baby, in broken sentences. Boston goes into a reverie as he listens. Suddenly a phrase comes into his mind: 'The fields of my youth'. The remark seems irrelevant, even to Tsotsi, when Boston says it out aloud. Tsotsi, realising how little he really knows, goes on, telling Boston about Morris, and how he'd let him go. Eventually Tsotsi asks him what it all means:

'He had told his stories and Boston had listened and now he must ask his questions and Boston must answer them. He turned back into the room, and fetching his chair sat down next to the bed.

"Boston, you've read the books."

"I've read the books."

"So tell me man. What does it mean."

"What?"

"What I told you, Boston."

Boston closed his eyes. "We're sick, Tsotsi. All of us. We're sick."

"From what?"

"From life."

Tsotsi dropped his head and Boston felt the other man's anguish and for a moment it was like a stab of pain that cut through his own in which he was wrapped like a baby in its swaddling clothes. He stretched out an arm and touched Tsotsi, and waited for him to look at him, and then into those eyes, desperate eyes, he said, "I don't know Tsotsi. I know nothing. I am blind, and deaf and almost dumb. My words are just noises, and I make them in my throat like an animal." Then he gripped Tsotsi's arm very tight because he was suddenly seeing something clearly and it might help to say it.

"You are different." Tsotsi bent forward. "You are changing Tsotsi." And then later, "You must be frightened. It happens man."

Tsotsi bent still closer, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, until their heads were only inches apart, and in that way he had only to whisper as if frightened that the very walls might hear, wanting his questions to pass as a final secret between Boston and himself.

"Why Boston. What did do it." A sudden elation lit up Boston's face, he tried to smile, but his lips wouldn't move, and his nose started throbbing, but despite the pain he whispered back at Tsotsi. "You are asking me about God."

"God?"

"You are asking me about God, Tsotsi. About God."¹

For a long while they are silent. As the gray light steals into the room, Boston says, 'The green fields of my youth,' and gives a deep emphasis to green. He stretches out his arms, as if towards the light, then gets up and moves to the door. Tsotsi tries to stop him, but Boston has seen a vision, and is impelled to move towards it as in a trance, but there is no clear resolution of this incident:

"I must get going, Tsotsi. I tell you it was green, green man, the grass in the fields of my youth. I must man."²

1 Ibid, p. 123 - 124 .cf 'The Guest' by A. Fugard and R. Devenish, Ad. Donker, 1977, p.71,
2 Ibid, p. 124 where life is diagnosed as the disease from which we all suffer.

Tsotsi gives him trousers to hide his nakedness. He refuses food. 'The last he saw of Boston was the figure of a man, stumbling, half-running down the street. Ahead of him the sun had cleared the cooling towers of the gas works. It was a new day.'

Fugard now focusses the attention on Isaiah an old African who weeds the garden of Father Ransome's church. He is also the bell ringer. Isaiah offers tea to a very tired young man; it is Tsotsi. Isaiah tells him about God, and invites him to Church that evening.

Finally we meet Tsotsi taking the baby to Miriam because it has refused the milk she left for it. She gives it medicine, feeds it from a bottle, and explains to Tsotsi how she had felt about giving her milk to his baby, whom he now calls David. Miriam goes out to do her washing. Tsotsi falls asleep. When he awakes the church bell is ringing. He leaves David with Miriam at her request. This is an act of trust, a giving of himself to another, then he goes to Church, suddenly amazed, in his new awareness, that he could for so long have been so ignorant about what was now so obvious:

'On the way he realised that the Church bell had been ringing all his life, but that he had just never stopped to listen All his life. And he'd never heard it, or bothered or wondered what it was. The thought made Tsotsi uneasy.'¹

There is a similarity here to 'Cry the Beloved Country' in that the ending has the same sort of hopefulness that Paton's book has. Both have a looking up in faith.

1 Ibid, p. 133

There follows an alternative ending. It is set out on nine pages numbered 102 - 110, but these have no apparent relation to the pages of the text which go unbroken from 1 - 134

In these eight pages Tsotsi has a rather acrimonious interview with Rev. Ransome during which he tears down a cross, smashes it, and calls upon God to appear. When he doesn't, Tsotsi comes close to killing Ransome, who is bitter about Gumboot's death and its pointlessness:

'The last ravaging, tormenting attack of his darkness was passed. He knew the very moment of its going. The knife was in his hand, the man bowed and waiting; one rhythmic impulse of the arm up and down and he would have asserted again the primordial existence of darkness. He has looked at his hand, holding the knife, he had looked to his heart for the command which on a thousand other nights had shot to his muscles like dark lightning in his blood and he had killed without thought, hate, regret or memory. In the Church he had looked again, waiting for the hand to move, but the hand was part of himself and he had to tell it. He had tried, he had failed and in that last shattering defeat, his impotence revealed and layed bare, he had fallen to his knees in defeat, and more than defeat, in resignation. What must be, must be. Amen. So be it.'

Tsotsi leaves, and follows the path he took the night he beat up Boston. He comes again to the bluegums and there he relives the most recent happenings of his life:

'He sat down, with his back to a tree.
Here it began. Here with the baby. I wondered why it happened the way it did, he thought. Why the baby - and after the baby the small memory of the yellow bitch. Why? That's why it tormented me. It no longer does. Do I know the answer then? No. It doesn't seem to matter. There is a baby (the words of Miriam. She was right) and it must eat, it is a man baby and his mother gave him away. I tried to feed it - the woman feeds it better. It must live. That's all.

1 Ibid, p. 107

And with himself too, the memory of that day his mother never came back, and the yellow bitch. She had died, but he had to live that was all. Was it ever different. Before the baby? Wasn't it the same. I didn't feel it. That was something for you alright! Feeling. I felt Boston. I felt for the cripple. I said it then and I was right. And feeling was light, it illuminated the body, the flesh, and gave it eyes to see. The other way was darkness, and that was how it had been and that was the difference.

Light and darkness.

My eyes are heavy, and also my head, and the peace is still upon me, but there is life now. I can think one more thought before sleep. God. Yes. I have not seen you. But that will come in its day.¹

He goes to the ruins to fetch the baby to be fed, and is killed trying to rescue the baby from the ruins which are being bulldozed by the demolition squad. A wall falls on him and he is crushed, but his face when they uncover him has a beautiful smile on it.

III

The style of the novel at the beginning is hesitant, and as a result the exposition of the novel is not dynamic, though occasionally a flash of accurate perception cuts across the uncontrolled flow:

"The old woman is shaking her tin of scolding words in the back yard." One sentence is 18½ lines long and almost incomprehensible. There are also problems with tenses, punctuation and spelling. However, just when one is sure the novel is going to be embarrassingly bad, the exposition ends and the conflict begins, and it is from this point that the early awkwardness grows less and the style more assured.

1 Ibid, p. 109

Eventually it emerges as recognisable Fugard, powerful and confident and philosophising:

'This man, this half-man, this unsightly and disfigured remnant of a man Tsotsi accepted with all the certainty of his unnumbered years as being the valid image of life. He was a symbol of this precisely because he was bent and broken and so without meaning that other men had abandoned him. This was the final reality to life. Everything else was just rouge and lipstick on an ugly face. Smiles and laughter changed nothing, no more than a new pair of trousers would have given back the cripple his legs.'¹

One recognises the power of this, but at the same time notes a sort of youthful over-eagerness to be decisive, since the philosophic generalisation emerges from a particular case.

The setting of the story is an African township, which is bounded by the great white city of Johannesburg. Although we never enter this city, we are aware of its presence, as it is a vital element in the setting that encloses the world of this novel. It is there as a point of reference, an unknown from which all evils stem - and there are many evils. The township is a world of primary emotions, and of teeming life, of obscene poverty and gratuitous suffering.

Out of this violent setting emerges the main theme of 'Tsotsi', that of painful rebirth, the redemption of a lost soul from darkness and unfeeling violence. Light is let into Tsotsi's mind which before had been known for the 'utter purity of its evil'. The atmosphere is therefore one of hope, struggling slowly towards a slender illumination. It is most probably true to say there is more naive hope in 'Tsotsi' than in any

1 Ibid, p. 57 - 58

subsequent Fugard work, or in all of them put together. But even this early the human motto is 'Suffero ergo sum,' 'I suffer, therefore I am.'

The tone of the novel is very serious. Fugard's attitude is that of a spokesman and apologist for the neglected humanity of the townships. He is fascinated by the teeming and varied life there, and he does not let it become clichéd by allowing us to view it through the filter of our usual moral precepts: the presented world of the townships is simply one in which primary passion can operate. In this sense Fugard's prose-narrative is dramatic, in that it offers, or strains towards offering, the tale without the teller.

A large part of 'Tsotsi' deals with the protagonist's quest for, and reliving of, his past, and is presented direct. The author, in telling us about his characters, is thus intervening directly in the story, and in one sense coming between them and us. The problem is that he has to explain too much before getting to each climax of action or dialogue. One senses that it is precisely the explanations and linking passages that Fugard finds unsatisfactory. He is trying to 'explain' Tsotsi, and because he is unable to understand Tsotsi himself he does not really make him credible.

There are only two developed characters in the novel: Tsotsi and Boston. Butcher and de Aap are merely members of the gang, and we learn very little about them that their names haven't already told us. They are types, acting only when necessary for the action. Miriam, who breast-feeds Tsotsi's

baby is a good woman, almost too good to be true. She is the loyal wife, and the perfect mother. She has a brief moment of life when she tells Tsotsi that she thought he was going to rape her, and that that would have been less unpleasant than giving her milk, otherwise she remains the stereotype of a good woman.

Only Tsotsi and Boston are presented in any complexity. Tsotsi is the apotheosis of evil, a man whose inner darkness is illumined by not the faintest ray of light. It has never occurred to him that anyone has any feeling, or that he could feel anything himself. It is ironic that the conflict is set in motion precisely because he is beginning to feel, and this mainly as a result of Boston's questioning. For this reason Tsotsi doesn't like Boston, and we become aware that he makes decisions about 'taking one on the trains' because he knows that this particular form of their activities is the one Boston dislikes the most. But it is very difficult to take all this seriously. Boston and Tsotsi are coloured by an existentialist sort of ambience, a kind of Sartrian or Dostoevskian pattern of metaphysical angst which they do not have the language to cope with. Fugard's problem is that he tries to bring their self-awareness closer to his own assessment of what they should be feeling or saying. 'Darkness' and 'light' are, of course, symbols that would or should fit into their mouths, but Fugard clearly means a great deal more by 'darkness' than his characters can themselves articulate. If we compare the language of 'Tsotsi' with that of 'Boesman and Lena', we see that in 'Tsotsi' Fugard tries to have characters articulate by direct awareness,

whereas in 'Boesman and Lena' he has characters mumble on in low-level specifics with the author providing the overall framework which they (unconsciously and therefore ironically) illuminate by their inability to get to it. In addition, when Lena says she doesn't know, she means it, but Tsotsi and Boston are fixed in a more self-styled knowing because their actions stem from their knowledge. They are built in the rational mode, where the assumption is that by knowing something a man can change his behaviour. Underneath this is another level of awareness that knowledge does not alter anything.

Tsotsi remains a remote, unreal figure who finally, unlike Boston, does not convince us of his authenticity, since we are never allowed real clarity about the meaning of such notions as 'purity of evil' and 'inner darkness'. What do they mean? Moreover the emotional switch from violence to awareness of the preciousness of life is too sudden for us to be able to accept. Tsotsi's conversion and redemption are finally unconvincing.

We can understand why Tsotsi is as he is, but we are given no effective insight in to the nature of evil: the whole fictional technique is inadequate to convey this to us because we are told these things, not shown them. The critical issue, then, is that Fugard does not seem to have made up his mind whether evil can be explained by a man's social background (whether his parents are poor, or separated, or he is separated from them, whether there is racial separation etc. etc.), or whether it must be regarded as part of the

human condition. And when you have given a sociological explanation of it, how do you then account for the transcendence of evil or good? Is the arrest of Tsotsi's mother a meaningful explanation of what he is? If so, how does one account for his redemption?

Boston is the lapsed intellectual, and his story is a sad one. As a student academic he is very successful, but this success is vitiated by his failure with the girls - a failure that bankrupts him as a person, and starts him on the long slide to crime and extinction. His story is a not uncommon one: to descend is easier than to rise, and more common. This is one reason why Boston is the more 'successful' character: another is that he is aware and articulate, and hence able to express himself. He is sickened by the violence, with the result that immediately we identify with him. His awareness of the sociological conditions informs and enlightens the story, yet it does not enable him to triumph over those conditions - awareness does not grant release or escape: part at least of the Fugard thesis is that awareness does not help. This is in direct contrast to Tsotsi, and paradoxical in that action stems from unawareness. This is why Tsotsi is phoney, and why Boston is the really interesting character. When last we see Boston he is in the throes of some inner revelation or mystical experience that could transform his life.

There is another paradox in the novel. All who are sensitive and aware get hurt, yet having feeling and being aware are the requirements for salvation: there is no redemption for

the callous and unfeeling. It is only when Tsotsi starts feeling for other people that his regeneration can commence.

'Tsotsi' is very interesting to students of Fugard: not only does it adumbrate themes he is to pursue later, but it also foreshadows his general obsession in the plays - his search for meaning. The way forward for Tsotsi, as for many later Fugard heroes, is by looking back. Tsotsi has to discover his past before he can find his future; he has to make sense of his own history in order to discover his meaning in the present.

Fugard, a white man, is writing about black men because he knows them and, it is clear from the novel, identifies with them. The life imposed upon blacks by whites is clearly the moral issue in South Africa, and is therefore an issue that cannot be avoided.

CHAPTER THREE'NO-GOOD FRIDAY'

"There is a green hill far away,
without a city wall,
where the dear Lord was crucified,
who died to save us all." ¹

"No-Good Friday" is chronologically the first of Athol Fugard's stage plays that comes within the scope of this thesis. It is set in old Sophia Town and, more specifically, in a backyard about which are clustered a few rusty, corrugated-iron shacks; there are washing lines and a fence, and the room where Willie, the chief protagonist of the play, lives with Rebecca.

The cast of twelve - the largest in any of Fugard's plays - is all African, except for Father Higgins, a white priest. At the beginning of the play Rebecca, a young woman, is - and has been for four years - living with Willie. Willie, who is in his thirties, works in an office in town and studies in his spare time for a B.A. degree. Their friend is Guy, an unemployed though talented jazz musician who only gets the break he is looking for at the end of the play. Father Higgins, the white priest, introduces Tobias, a rural African, to Willie and Guy. Moses is a blind man who Tiresias-like can yet 'see', and whose hearing is acute, while Pinkie and Peter are backyard characters. Shark, a township gangster, technically the main antagonist, sells 'protection' with the help of Harry and another thug. The cast is completed by Watson, the phoney, self-seeking township politician.

1 Hymn No. 106, The English Hymnal, Oxford University Press, 1933.

Shark and his men sell protection against being robbed of their pay-packets on the trains: it is hardly necessary to add that the subscriptions they collect are not voluntarily given. Anyone who refuses to pay is knifed. This is the fate of Tobias very soon after his arrival in Sophiatown: in his ignorance he refuses to pay up on the Friday night in question, and is swiftly killed. No one has even warned him about Shark and his gang, or thought to help him at this moment.

His death at the end of Scene II initiates the conflict. Willie, who is vaguely dissatisfied with his lot, is oppressed by Tobias's death, for he saw it happen and did nothing. During the remainder of the play he becomes more morose and isolated as he searches within himself for some answer to his problems. He is angered and frustrated by his helplessness to alter the conditions of their lives, by the hopelessness that surrounds them, the futility of his studies, in these circumstances, and with being constantly held up by everyone as a 'good guy'. Tobias's death is the catalyst that transforms Willie from a studious, friendly person into one who is profoundly discontented. Unfortunately this divine discontent does not make him more articulate: on the contrary, he becomes increasingly monosyllabic and silent. The main point here is what happens when we begin to question our own lives and their meanings. Already there is an ironic foreshadowing of future plays. The playwright is confronting his characters, who are caught up in the turmoil of life, and in appearances, with the truth about themselves. What, he is asking, is the real basis of these lives? He wants to see how they will react when they really submit their lives

to cross-examination. This is a clumsily executed way of drawing attention to the fact that each person can ask seriously what his life means. In a later play like 'Hello and Goodbye' the answer is more complex because it adumbrates a metaphysic of the human condition. In 'No-Good Friday' Willie's silence and moroseness serve only to bring these enquiries up against socio-political forces, and this in turn serves only to short-circuit the search. The whole process is external, not internal, and this also lessens its effectiveness, characterising the play as serious yet naive.

Willie's apparent surliness alienates his friends, particularly Rebecca and Guy. Rebecca feels that he has rejected her, and she simply leaves Willie. Guy, unable to understand what has happened and is happening to Willie, departs to play in the concert that means so much to him. He is hurt that Willie let Rebecca go without saying a word, and appalled that things have changed so drastically for the worse in such a short time. He becomes a devil's advocate, trying to get Willie to abandon his plan to face Shark when he returns at the end of the two hours he has given Willie to change his mind about paying his 5/- subscription. Shark is prepared to forgive Willie for having reported the murder of Tobias to the police - he is in league with the police anyway, so has nothing to fear - but he can't let Willie opt out of paying his weekly subscription. Willie remains, therefore, to face the consequences alone, serene in the happiness he has found. The play ends with Shark and his men off-stage; they are about to appear to deal with Willie.

What sort of world is presented to us in 'No-Good Friday'? It is a grim one, where evil triumphs and there is no redress for wrong; where personal relationships are destroyed or shown to be unenduring; where, if there is love, it is frustrated; where God, if he exists at all, is reckoned to be on the side of the thugs, and where there is no mention of religion even from the priest. The background against which the action takes place is one of cramping, destructive poverty, represented by the few rusty corrugated iron shacks. The people whom we meet are deprived and suffering because of the nature of South African life. We see this world in isolation, and fragmented, since it is preying upon itself. The whites, with their spacious gardens and houses, are seen as privileged in comparison with the Africans, and as corrupt, since the police are not only in league with Shark, but are also depicted as unwilling to listen to a complaint by an African. It is a world of almost unrelieved gloom. Politicians are shown as self-seeking and shallow, and almost totally ineffectual.

With what is Fugard concerned in this play? First, with poverty, which he interprets as both the symptom and the agent of human destruction. This is the essential background for the story. Second, he is concerned with the reaction of his chief protagonist, Willie, to the circumstances of life as depicted in the township. Given the poverty and squalor, it is Willie's reaction to the murder of Tobias, to the thugs who committed it, to Rebecca and Guy, and to his own inner vision, that the play seeks to show. Willie believes that the world is the way we made it, that we are responsible for

the state of affairs and that the world is big enough for him to do something about it. His endeavours to right what is wrong, though futile, are the play's meaning, and illumine Willie's life in the short period before it is ended. His search for meaning ends bleakly with his waiting to face Shark and his thugs. His blood will be swiftly spilt, and another good life will have been uselessly wasted. But such a view ignores the sublimity of the gesture, and the total transformation in his make-up necessary to bring him to this moment.

Willie, to begin with, is a conventional figure, in that he represents all that a white man thinks a black man ought to be: he is studying for a B.A. degree by correspondence, he has a good job, is reliable and kind, and is working to improve himself. However, he is not a 'tame' black: he is sufficiently intelligent and aware to comprehend his world with all its faults, and is sceptical of, and brusque to, the only European who appears. The trauma of Tobias's death, which he witnessed (together with Guy, Reb, Pinkie and Peter) alters him radically:

He, too, has resigned his part
 In the casual comedy;
 He, too, has been changed in his turn,
 Transformed utterly:
 A terrible beauty is born.¹

Haunted by his own inaction at the time of the murder, Willie becomes morose and uncommunicative as he seeks for meaning. Without saying a word to anyone, he attends Tobias's funeral,

1 Yeats W. B., Collected Poems, MacMillan and Co., 1952, 'Easter 1916', p. 203

and he reports Shark to the police for the murder. Reb and Guy, who have always been so proud of Willie, cannot now understand the changes that have taken place. To them it seems he is unwilling to explain, to speak to them, and they feel rejected, unloved. Reb, whose understanding is limited, needs constant reassurance, and when she doesn't get it she decides to leave. Guy is aghast that Willie can let her go without so much as a word, and that he is going to throw away his life, for no apparent reason, by remaining to face Shark. Willie, though frightened, does not try to persuade anyone to stay with him in what will be his final agony, and he does not pretend that his 'answer' is meaningful to anyone other than himself. What he does in losing his life by facing his enemies is to gain peace of mind, and what is at first sight a futile gesture is significant not only to him, but also to us since it is a facing of the truth, a meaningful response in a world where the responses can be meaningless. It reveals that Willie has discovered, or achieved, moral integrity. There may even be a sense in which it is a turning of the other cheek, a complete acceptance in the sense that unprotesting submission to one's destiny is a turning of the other cheek. The irony of this situation is that it is at the same time a protest against, and a rejection of, Shark's way of life. In this sense, therefore, it represents a choosing of a better way than Shark's. There is a real sense in which Willie, in choosing death at Shark's hands, is choosing life. To accept a life without any values is death, and this he has rejected. 'No-Good Friday', although clumsily executed, comes out quite firmly for life against the death implicit in Shark's kind of life and in living without any

values. And this is the theme of the play - the discovery of true values.

"At this point, theatre establishes itself. Theatre, (that is to say) that momentary pointlessness which drives them (men) to useless acts without immediate profit."¹

Guy is a cheerful person who endeavours to inject some gaiety into the proceedings. However, it soon becomes evident that he is merely trying to 'laugh' things back to the comfortable old days when Willie was happy and working hard for his B.A. and Guy could bask in the sunshine of his learned friend's brilliance. He and Rebecca sickened Willie a little with their continual praise: "Good boy Willie, you passed another exam! Good boy Willie, you got a rise!" Guy can't believe that in such a short time things have altered so drastically for the worse, and he is quite incapable of understanding what the trouble is with Willie.

Reb is conscious of the fact that she has been living with Willie without being married to him, and, like Guy, she cannot begin to understand Willie's problems. When she asks Willie questions she cannot understand his answers, and so their alienation grows deeper. Guy asks her, 'Don't you know what Willie does anymore?' She replies: 'He doesn't tell me, and I stopped asking.' Their separation is almost complete. She needs comforting and reassuring, but in this atmosphere these are the very qualities Willie is unable to supply, so it is hardly surprising that Reb goes into a decline which ends in her leaving Willie. Her function is a deliberately

1 Artaud A., The Theatre and its Double, translated by V. Corti, Calder and Boyars, London, 1970, p. 15.

limited one: Willie alone in this play comprehends his world sufficiently to make a meaningful response to it, and therefore he has to stand alone. Reb goes because with her limited understanding she has to go, and because, in order for Willie to be isolated, it is necessary for her to disappear.

Shark is a stage 'tsotsi', and his henchmen quick killers when ordered to act. Pinkie and Peter, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, introduce a little light relief into the play: they are the necessary ordinary humans who help us to see the world of the play in a more normal perspective.

Father Higgins is a European priest who figures quite prominently in the action, yet he is not investigated in any depth. It is he who introduces Tobias to Willie and Guy, making them responsible for his well-being. This is important, since in a short while Tobias is dead, and his death initiates the main action of the play. Father Higgins also buries Tobias, tries to persuade Willie and Guy to report Shark to the police for murder, asks Willie to write to the dead man's wife (a very painful business for him, as it forces him to face the consequences of his own inaction at the time of Tobias's murder), and takes charge of Tobias's possessions. He is seen to do good works on behalf of Africans, yet he is not liked by any one; he is the voice of conscience, but he is not a sympathetic character. Why then does Fugard find it necessary in this play to have a white priest who is the voice of conscience, yet who is apparently unmoved by love or warmth? When Higgins is talking to Willie and Guy it is almost like a police interrogation, as the following extract

shows:

- HIGGINS: Yes, you must know a lot.
- WILLIE: Over here you only know as much as is good for you.
- HIGGINS: Even some one like yourself?
- WILLIE: Why should I be different from the rest?
- HIGGINS: I just thought you might be.
- WILLIE: Say it straight.
- HIGGINS: Alright. Tobias was an innocent man. A simple and a good man. He came to me on Friday looking for a chance to work and live. He asked for nothing more. This afternoon two days later I buried him. You know what it was like. You stood at the graveside with me. A fistful of flowers and a wooden cross. I buried others like that, Willie. It wasn't my first time even if it might have been yours. I know life is 'cheap' here; I've heard that sort of talk until I'm sick of it. But something inside me finds five shillings just a little too cheap. I was hoping you might have felt the same.
- WILLIE: Nobody over here thinks five shillings expensive!
- HIGGINS: Then why does it keep on happening? There are going to be others like Tobias. They'll walk in full of hope and be carried out in a coffin.
- GUY: So?
- HIGGINS: It doesn't have to be like that if only someone will do something about it.
- GUY: Such as?
- HIGGINS: Someone must have seen what happened out there on Friday night. Go along to the police and give a sworn statement. Get others to do the same. If only we can get as far as an official charge

This shows the true function of the Church, or what is seen as the true function of the Church in African eyes: it is an extension of the political and Police arms of the State, and

is therefore not trusted. It is a whiteman's Church, designed to ameliorate the lot of blacks sufficiently to avoid trouble, but not to bring about any significant improvement in their lot. The character of Father Higgins is not examined or developed in any great detail, but in this he is similar to all the other characters in the play: none is viewed or treated from the inside. The result is that we are told, not shown, as the following extract demonstrates:

HIGGINS: Ask for police protection.

GUY: Don't you understand. He's got shares in the police station. If I go along like you said, they'd let me talk for fifteen minutes. Sure they'd listen to all I said. But when I was finished: "Where's your pass?" Now I haven't got a permit to stay in Sophia Town, so I'd be in for fourteen days. And when I come out ..? If you think Toby was cheap at five bob I wouldn't be able to sell myself for sixpence. He'd be waiting and he'd get me. You can forget about the police. They protect a fellow like Shark. You see they're only interested in our passes. But a kaffir laying a charge against a criminal that would be a joke. We are all criminals. Look Father, don't be hard on us. You know what I've just said better than any other white.¹

The plot is moving along a pre-designed course, and the characters are there merely to bring about what has been decided on in advance. We do not have the illusion that they are free characters searching for the truth within themselves. It is important, however, to note how and why Fugard uses Father Higgins. Willie's behaviour is more centrally and truly Christian than Higgins's because Willie is prepared to sacrifice his life, while the priest is not, and therefore does not.

1 'Ibid', p. 35

There is a serious fault in the dialogue. The language used in the play is a mixture of the American idiom, a few Afrikaans expressions, a suggestion or two of the English public school, and a high proportion of South Africanisms. Africans, we have to accept for the purposes of this play, speak English. But why American? Expressions such as 'Like I told you', 'grab yourself a hunk of living', 'bum' meaning 'tramp', 'try real hard' and so on cause one to suspend one's suspension of disbelief. It is surprising to find an African politician saying, 'Try my best, but I'm in a bit of a hurry old man', in the public school tradition, but Fugard has chosen this style as it is designed to make Watson, the politician, look ridiculous: he is a charlatan, and ineffectual.

The examples quoted above are extreme examples. Generally the dialogue is flatter:

- WILLIE: (Getting up quickly and moving to Guy)
Did you tell him old Moses has been writing those letters home for ten years?
- GUY: Have a heart. Old Moses is fifty. No one finds work at that age. What's the point in discouraging him?
- WILLIE: I wasn't thinking of discouragement. Just the truth.
- GUY: The truth is Toby is not old, and you're going to help him get a job, and Toby will go back in a year.
- WILLIE: A year in this place is like a stray bitch, it drops a litter of ten like itself before it moves on.
- GUY: What are you trying to do Willie?
- WILLIE: Stop him dreaming.
- GUY: Suppose he is. What's wrong with that? Don't you dream?

WILLIE: I woke up long ago.

GUY: I don't get it Willie. You used to be the one sucker who always had time for a stray story. Any bum could come here and knock on your door and Willie would help.

WILLIE: Have you been talking to Rebecca?¹

This is flat because it is mere reportage, telling, rather than showing, since there is no dramatic tension in the situation. Thus there is no inner urgency or truth about it, no compulsion from within to propel it towards the truth or to cause it to take wing into the realm of thought and metaphor.

But there is another serious fault in the dialogue: there is no discrimination of character by means of speech. At any moment in the play almost any line or speech could have been spoken by any or all of the characters. In the extract quoted above one would never guess that one person is educated and the other able to write and read, but not much more. This is not yet - and it is not surprising it is not - the authentic Fugard voice: that has to wait for the technique of his play construction to become more subtle, and for the complexity of thought to force the language to grow in order to be able to cope with the situation. The true Fugard voice is partly also a deeper understanding of the way language comes out of the mouth.

As far as the structure is concerned, the first three scenes are superfluous: a more experienced Fugard would have contrived to convey the information contained in these during

1 'Ibid', p. 22

the subsequent action. Thus, instead of the slow, undramatic movement up to the end of Scene 3 and Tobias's death, we would begin with Scene 4 and Willie's acute suffering that results from the murder, about which we could be told as much as we need to know as the play proceeds. In this way exposition could be cut to a minimum, which would have been an immediate aid to character construction, and by starting at a moment when the tension is about to rise quickly, there would be a much tighter and more dramatic structure. In addition these events could have been more deeply probed and explored, their psychological impact on the characters made much richer.

There is in fact very little character complexity to distinguish this play, Willie being the only person of any stature. Basically the play is about Willie's search for meaning, but because the playwright is not able to articulate his inner struggle and search, there is a curious emptiness about scenes that should be filled with dramatic tension. The result is a sort of non-dramatic drama; Fugard never gets to the heart of the matter. He lets Guy and Shark at different times do nearly all the talking, so we are left in the dark.

'No-Good Friday' does not succeed finally because it lacks the tension necessary to drama: the first three scenes are superfluous, being expository, and the whole action is external with minimal sense of internality. Willie's gesture in offering himself as a sacrifice, though futile in

one sense, is a noble gesture, a choosing of what is morally right and a rejection of what is wrong. It is a Christ-like action in an un-Christ-like world - a world where Tobias's death is pointless, as the title suggests. The world view that the action sets out offers little hope for man, especially the deprived sections of it, and more especially the deprived black majority in South Africa. And yet, as in plays like 'Hello and Goodbye' and 'Boesman and Lena', hope does emerge, ironically out of what is most futile. However horrible the situation depicted, a noble gesture in response invests the apparent hopelessness with meaning. Suddenly the darkness is illumined by light, even if only for a brief moment. Fugard states that 'No-Good Friday' received considerable attention when first presented,¹ since it touches 'Deeply the lives of those who watch.'² It is worth quoting a little more fully from the same source, since what is said is so appropriate to 'No-Good Friday':

"Thus all your acting
Leads back to daily life.

But let us understand each other.
You may perform better than he
Whose stage is in the street.
Still your achievement will be less
If your theatre is less
Meaningful than his,
If it touches less
Deeply the lives of those who watch,
If its reasons
Are less,
Or its usefulness."³

1 A. Fugard 'Three Port Elizabeth Plays', Oxford University Press, 1974, Introduction, p. viii.

2 B. Brecht, 'Poems of the Theatre', Scorpion Press, 1961, translated by John Berger and Anna Bostock. p. 9

3 'Ibid', p. 8 and 9

'No-Good Friday' was saying meaningful things to people who lived in the African townships of the 1950's, touching their lives deeply. 'Its reasons' and 'Its usefulness' would not have been seen as less meaningful than their lives by those who watched this play.

'NONGOGO'

'No-Good Friday' was written in 1956, and performed by the Phoenix Players in 1958. 'Nongogo' was performed by them in 1959. It is set in a shebeen belonging to Queeny - the chief protagonist - in one of the townships outside Johannesburg.

The cast consists of five characters, all of whom are male, with the exception of Queeny. She, in her younger days, had been Nongogo, the mineworkers' whore, who sold herself for two and six. Sam, now a reasonably prosperous businessman who owns a shop, was previously the pimp who lived off Queeny's earnings. He still feels that he owns her, and is quickly jealous of anyone who might divert her from the shebeen business. Blackie, an ugly hunchback whose arms hang loose at his sides like those of a large ape, acts as Queeny's bouncer. Because of his deformity life has been made miserable for him, but he adores Queeny because she once stood up for him when he was being bullied. He is involved in housebreaking and robbery. Johnny is a young African salesman who is keen to make good as an interior decorator. Earlier he had worked on the mines, where he had traumatic sexual experiences of a homosexual nature: he

suffered humiliation at the hands of sex-starved men:

JOHNNY: I stood just one year in that place. A fellow can't take more. Did you hear what I said? I said a fellow can't take more.

QUEENY: Okay Johnny, I heard you.

JOHNNY: You might have heard me okay, but do you know what I mean? There's no women in those compounds and they don't let you out. There's big bursting men in those compounds and there's no women. So they take the boys, the young ones, like me. That's what they take.

QUEENY: Okay Johnny.

JOHNNY: Stop saying that because it's not okay. It's like dogs see.

QUEENY: Johnny.

JOHNNY: Yes, dogs, or something else that crawls around the garbage cans or the gutter. Something dirty! I've tried to wash it off Queeny. I've tried. Every day, I try.¹

Finally there is Patrick, a weak man who drinks too much, who sires too many children, who is unemployed, and who is prepared to be a mischievous stooge upon request.

Queeny takes an immediate liking to Johnny when he comes into the shebeen in an effort to sell a tablecloth, and invites him to return when he has completed his day's work. It seems quite unlikely that he will return, but does in fact when he misses his bus. He has sold no more tablecloths, and is thus unable to proceed with the next part of his plan, which is to buy the leftover pieces of material from a factory, as they let these go cheap. Then he would sell these, using

1 A. Fugard, 'Nongogo', unpublished, (see appendix B), p. 36

his flair for interior decoration to suggest bright colour schemes to the wives who will be his customers. When Queeny discovers he only needs ten pounds to start this particular business, she advances Johnny the money: she is very taken with him, because he is so hopeful and optimistic, and because he is so unlike the normal run of people who visit her shebeen. It is expressed in her seeing a chance of developing a business together with him, for this would enable her to escape from running a shebeen. This in turn would give her a chance to escape from her past and become 'clean'. Johnny goes off in high spirits, his intention being to visit the factory early so that he can get working.

Sam is cynical about the business, not only because his whole nature is that way inclined, but also because he is jealous of Johnny. He tells Queeny she can kiss her ten pounds goodbye, as Johnny will never return. However, he does return, and his first day is a big success: he sells every piece he has bought. He arrives back at Queeny's elated. She is not there, as she is out shopping. Sam has arranged with Patrick to come to the shebeen before Queeny returns in order to make insinuations about her past, the idea being to sow the seeds of poison in Johnny's mind. His ruse works perfectly. The celebration Queeny had arranged to have with Johnny becomes a disaster. Johnny gets drunk, and what should have been a joyous occasion becomes anything but that. He makes Queeny tell him the truth about herself. Thereafter he departs, and Queeny reopens her shebeen for business, all her hopes shattered. Sam and Patrick are delighted.

This play, like 'No-Good Friday', is the mirror to a pretty

grim scene: the illegal world of shebeens, pimps, drunks, and of course the deprived. In this murky world there is a profound cynicism about morality and higher motives, and any attempt to escape from the prison of one's sinful past is bound to fail. One of the best things about the play is the sense of foreboding that is aroused by our knowing deep down that our hopes for Queeny and Johnny are doomed. However much they want to escape, and however much we would like them to, we know that Sam with his evil tricks will succeed in thwarting them, yet we continue hoping. One or two extracts from the play will illustrate this:

JOHNNY: Nobody has done any cooking for me.

QUEENY: No one?

JOHNNY: That's what I said.

QUEENY: Your girl friend.

JOHNNY: Never had one.

QUEENY: You're joking.

JOHNNY: I'm not.

QUEENY: Why?

JOHNNY: I've never looked for one.

QUEENY: When you get around to it, what are you going to look for?

JOHNNY: Lots of things.

QUEENY: Tell me.

JOHNNY: She's going to be clean.

QUEENY: (Laughing) Clean.

JOHNNY: Live and think clean! You can always wash your hands, or your face or your feet. But your mind? Could you wash that if you got to thinking dirt or living like it? I touched real filth once never again!¹

1 'Ibid', p. 34

Queeney is falling, or has fallen, in love with Johnny, and we are immediately aware that she will be barred or disqualified by Johnny's wish for cleanness: the thing cannot work, however much we would like it to. The foreboding which is here initiated is almost immediately increased when the following dialogue takes place:

SAM: So I was wrong.

QUEENY: Looks like it doesn't it?

SAM: Maybe he's playing for more than even I thought.

QUEENY: Meaning?

SAM: You're worth a lot more than ten pounds.

QUEENY: (Coming forward) Sam I want you to listen carefully, cause I never said anything I meant so much he can have it he can have every penny I got.

SAM: Is it that bad?

QUEENY: Bad? That I found someone worth giving to. It's good Sam. It feels good. I'm going to enjoy waking up in the morning.¹

So Queeney is committed, but we know what Johnny's reaction will be when he discovers her past. Immediately after the above exchange between Sam and Queeney, Sam starts plotting, and this adds to our uneasiness:

SAM: It would be better if he (Johnny) went.

BLACKIE: Queeney likes him.

SAM: I know but she doesn't see him the way we do.
(Pause) You want to get rid of him
Blackie?

BLACKIE: Queeney would be angry.

SAM: I don't mean you must get rough with him.
You needn't touch him at all.

1 'Ibid', p. 38

BLACKIE: No?

SAM: You needn't lay a hand on him.

BLACKIE: How?

SAM: (Goes to door and sees nobody listening.
Closes it and joins Blackie at table)
Listen carefully¹

Patrick is roped in to do the dirty work so that no blame will attach to Sam or Blackie. When Sam says of Johnny, 'He will. He's the type. The fastidious kind, that don't like chewing on a bone after all the other dogs take the meat off', we know there can be no happy outcome, yet we go on hoping against hope.

However, the construction of 'Nongogo' has the same major fault as 'No-Good Friday': too much time is wasted on exposition that could have been woven into the subsequent fabric of the play. By starting the play in the second act, the playwright could have avoided much unpromising material, and thus had a far more tense and tightly-woven dramatic structure.

There are, in addition, one or two moments of unintentional high comedy, as for example when Johnny, the ingenuous young African salesman, exclaims to Queeny, to whom he is endeavouring to sell a table cloth:

Look, that's good wood. (He examines the table closely), and here, see! Stains! I say, it's essential for a respectable shebeen with a good table like this to have one of my table cloths.²

Queeny is the main protagonist of the play: she is a tough,

1 'Ibid', p. 41

2 'Ibid', p. 3

commanding woman whose beauty is faded but not entirely gone. She has survived in a rough school, and is a match for anyone. We see this toughness in her dealings with Blackie, who adores her. For his pains he is frequently savaged; he looks for some tenderness, but all he gets is the rough edge of her tongue. Sam she treats with harshness at times, yet he has some influence with her still, most probably because he is genuinely interested in her economic well-being. Because of this he escapes lightly on occasion. For all her faults, though, Queeny has retained a great deal of humanity and hope - she is still capable of love and of dreaming of escape from her rough world. It is in the nurturing of this dream of love and escape that the tension of the second act lies - in the hoping against hope that something good will emerge, while knowing that the evil scheme to undermine it is already in motion. She is searching for humanity, for love, for tenderness in a world that appears to lack these qualities entirely.

Sam does not believe in goodness. He is tough, cynical about people's motives, and a committed materialist. Love and family and the soul count for nothing, and the profit and loss account for everything. It is natural for him therefore to reject Queeny's bid to escape: she is giving up a good business for a sheer gamble. In addition it would be a slight to him either if she went off with another man, or if she abandoned her business after their years of pimping and whoring. Thus he has no compunction in using dishonest means, not only to foil her bid to escape, but also to further his self-interest. Sam is an insubstantial figure, but an

effective one in his world.

Johnny, despite his experiences in mine labour camps, is still too naive and therefore lacking in credibility. It is difficult to believe that a man of 27 couldn't 'read' Queeny when first they met, and therefore had to be led to this knowledge by fairly 'loud' insinuations. When he does find out about Queeny he goes off in high dudgeon, primly explaining away his own lack of innocence by saying he at least was trying to escape from the gutter, and rejecting Queeny's claim that she was endeavouring to do the same. This lack of credibility vitiates the ending. There is a sense of forcing an ending on the play in spite of the characters. Queeny can't escape from her present life, or from her past. This is the predetermined ending towards which the plot requires the story to move, so it is moving there regardless of whether a character has to act in a way that seems unlikely in order to bring it about. Also, action is all external: it has not been internalised and there is thus no felt inevitability about it, no sense that what happened had to happen.

Blackie is a violent criminal to whom killing would come easily: at present, however, he has not progressed further than housebreaking. He is redeemed, however, by his love for Queeny, for whom he would do anything, though she gives him no opportunity to put her under the obligation of kindness. As a result, suffering is his lot, and we feel quite sorry for him.

Patrick is a despicable character, 'a slight, unmeritable man' who drinks too much and is quite prepared, for small reward, to resort to dishonesty.

'Nongogo' thus has the same basic structural weakness as 'No-Good Friday'; each has a long, undramatic exposition. But there are more serious flaws. Both have conventional linear forms as defined by Marvin Rosenberg.¹ They move, as it were, "from left to right, from a beginning through a chain of events that will lead ultimately to the 'end'.² These events happen because they form part of the plot that has been predetermined. Because, therefore, events have to happen, to follow each other in a set sequence that will lead to the 'end', there is no feeling that they have to happen out of their own inner compulsion or necessity: all is subordinated to plot, since for an inexperienced playwright this is the safe way. The result of this is that there can be no profound development of character, since the characters have to fulfil the requirements of the plot, perhaps even to the extent of acting out of character.

Another serious criticism of these plays is the language used. While 'Nongogo' represents an advance on the mixture of Americanisms, and English public school-type talk employed in 'No-Good Friday', because it employs more usual speech rhythms, both plays are lacking in metaphorical language, as they have no great or subtle thoughts to express: they are simple, straight forward plays, expressed in simple language,

1 Calderwood and Tolliver, editors, Perspectives on Drama, essay by Marvin Rosenberg entitled 'A Metaphor for Dramatic Form', Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 103.

2 Ibid, p. 103

moving towards simple, straight forward, predetermined and therefore utterly predictable, endings.

CHAPTER FOUR"THE BLOOD KNOT"

'The whole, rotten, stinking lot is all because I'm black'.¹

This play was written in 1960 and 1961, being completed in May of the latter year. It was first performed in Dorkay House in the second half of 1961. It is Fugard's first successful and significant play.

In his article on 'The Blood Knot',² R. J. Green says that Fugard's subject is not the public sores of the apartheid state, but the inner wounds of lonely men brought about by the laws of the land. This is an accurate assessment.

'The Blood Knot' is not about apartheid, but about its victims. Although there is racial prejudice elsewhere in the world, nowhere is it entrenched by legislation as it is in South Africa. As a result of this the situation in which the protagonists find themselves is so specifically South African that the relevance of the play is local rather than universal, though this is not to deny that it may have relevance outside this country.

'The Blood Knot' is set in the one-room shack of Zachariah and Morris Pietersen in the non-white location of Korsten, near Port Elizabeth. This room represents South Africa, not only with its colour prejudices, but also with its confinement, poverty, and deprivation. Because of this

1 A. Fugard, Three Port Elizabeth Plays, 'The Blood Knot', Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 62

2 R. J. Green, 'Athol Fugard's Blood Knot, Modern Drama, University of Kansas, February 1970, p. 331 - 345

confinement to the culture of poverty, the utter meagreness of the scene, Zach and Morris are left entirely to their own devices: there is no escaping from themselves or from each other. The play tells of their relationship and the inner discoveries they make in this lonely situation so isolated from the world and yet so central in it. So cut off is their room that it is like a laboratory in which experiments on human frailties and strengths are conducted: there are no outside distractions. This helps us to see that 'fate' is internal: it is written, as it were, in a man's soul.

Zach and Morris are brothers: Zach is dark-skinned and Morris sufficiently fair to pass for white. At the commencement of the action it is almost exactly a year since Morris returned. For the ten years prior to that he had been out in the world, passing for white, a fact which he is most anxious to keep from Zach, since he is trying to win his way back into Zach's confidence. He feels now that his attempt to become a European is a rejection of his brother. He is ashamed of what he did, but it is also clear he is taking the easiest way out: he has settled for being what he is rather than live with the constant fear involved in trying for white.

Morris came back for a number of reasons: he lacked the confidence to actually 'be' a white man, and he felt the pull of the blood he shared with Zach. In addition he had come to reject the life he was living:

MORRIS: That's why I came back. I didn't want it any more. I turned around on the road and came back here because I couldn't stand that look in your eyes any more. Those bright,

brotherly eyes in my dreams at night,
 always wet with love, full of pity and
 pain God, such lonely eyes they
 were! watching and sad and
 asking me, why? softly, why? sorrowfully,
 why?1

His return has not lead to a happy time for Zach, for it has meant the loss of his old friend Minnie, with whom he would go out wining, womanising, and enjoying himself - living now and taking no thought for the future. Now his life is controlled by Morris, who has an almost womanly passion for order, and a dislike for Zach's more visceral feelings for women and strong drink. We start with the situation, therefore that each of the brothers has some sort of grudge against the other, and is attempting to achieve a position of dominance in their relationship: Zach by finding fault with Morris's household arrangements, Morris by providing Zach with numerous comforts, sympathy, an ordered life, and so on, which he hopes will make Zach so dependent on him that he will not be able to do without him. This is what the whites hope the effect of bourgeois culture will be on the blacks, and that they can buy their safety in this way.

The initiative early on in this struggle is with Zach (who, in addition to being black, is illiterate), for Morris has returned as the penitent with a guilty conscience for his act of betrayal. Morris is not illiterate: on the contrary, he can read and write, and has a power of reasoning, though its informing premiss is negative and neurotic. Zach works as a labourer and is large and strong, while Morris, who is

1 A. Fugard, Three Port Elizabeth Plays, 'The Blood Knot', Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 79

slightly built, stays at home, living off his brother's earnings. Thus Zach and Morris contain within themselves the whole South African situation with all its contradictions and its affirmations. As Fugard himself says: 'The situation of the two brothers (imprisonment in a blood tie) cannot continue Too much has surfaced - Zach's envy and hate, Morris's crippling sense of guilt and responsibility. Zach soon reaches a point where he goes into revolt against Morris, and the utter boredom and regimentation of their lives. Morris tries side-tracking him, for he easily loses the thread of what is going on in his mind, but on this occasion Zach comes back to the point and refuses to budge from it. The subject is women, and he starts reminiscing about sexual feats of bygone days.

It is at this point that we become aware that a new dramatic technique is being employed - new, that is, in Fugardian terms, since it was not employed in his earlier plays. Morris, seeking to calm Zach down after he had generated so much heat about being denied women, thinks that he might divert him by getting him involved with a female pen-pal. He suggests this, Zach agrees though without much enthusiasm, and thus the game begins. It yields such rich rewards for Fugard that he tries the experiment again and again during the course of the play. Although a game might appear a light-hearted concept, its purpose and its effect are serious in dramatic terms. By means of them the author involves his characters in situations that lay bare their weaknesses, thus enabling him to strip away their illusions layer by layer. For the characters themselves they provide interest and action, and

thus the dissipation of boredom, while for the audience they provide a situation full of dramatic irony. In 'The Blood Knot' it would be true to say that the games are the play, so well do they succeed. They arise naturally out of the predicaments in which Zach and Morris find themselves, and are not in any way forced on an unwilling action. Finally, they invest the ending with an ominous note, as there is the suggestion that next time the game is played it may not end the same way, but could lead to a violent conclusion.

In their isolation, then, Morris and Zach do battle. Their inner selves are hidden not only from each other but from themselves. First one, then the other, sees his brother for the first time, then forces that brother to face the truth about himself. These processes are painful, and they therefore cause hurt and suffering, especially because of the close proximity and isolation in which they live.

'The Blood Knot' is so constructed that the action proceeds in isolation, and this in turn excludes irrelevancies. This exclusion is another major stride forward in the development of Fugard as a playwright. The other layers of reality do not have to have other characters to represent them in the play, as for example in 'No-Good Friday', since they are already part of Zach and Morris, and we are made aware of them as and when required. As a result we have a much tighter and more tense dramatic situation.

The play begins with Morris, who is alone, lying on his bed waiting for the alarm to ring. When it does he gets up,

winds and resets the clock, then sets about his chores, knowing exactly what he is going to do: he is preparing for Zach's return. Thus immediately we are made aware that this clock introduces regimentation and triviality into their lives: it is both a direct measure of dramatic tension, and symbolically a measure of a meaningless, anxiety-ridden future. When Zach does arrive he grunts at Morris, who nods in reply. Soon he has his feet in the basin of hot water containing footsalts that Morris has got ready. He enjoys the luxury of soaking his feet, but he doesn't want Morris to know this, and so he makes little sniping complaints about the temperature of the water, and about the new brand of bath-salts. These complaints put Morris firmly on the defensive, which is where Zach is keen he should be. However, it is easy to cause Zach to lose the thread, at least temporarily, with the result that his argument is defused and vitiated. It is obvious that Morris is trying to win Zach's confidence when he says: "I'm on your side, they're on theirs. There's always two sides to a sad story and I mean I couldn't be living here and not be on yours, could I?" Clearly Morris is full of guilt: he has betrayed his blood and his relationship by going across the colour line, and is now trying to make amends. He even wants to smell like Zach. This talk leads to a discussion about borrowing Minnie's bath again. Mention of Minnie makes Zach realise how much he is missing him, and causes him to pick up the thread that he had previously lost. The conversation gets on to a tack that doesn't please Morris, since it refers to a time before his return and deals with a way of life - wenching and wining - he doesn't approve of. It seems that Morris is at heart very much a Calvinist.

Zach asks Morris why he never wants to go out. Morris replies that they are saving for their future: he wants to buy a two man farm for Zach and himself. It represents in his mind an escape from the confinement and deprivation of their present lives, and from the city streets that lead nowhere: in other words an escape from meaninglessness. While Morris sublimates the present by making plans for the future, Zach achieves the same result by remembering the great times he had with Minnie - the very memory from which Morris wants to wean him, as he cannot establish his place in Zach's affections till Minnie has been exorcised. Zach sensing this, uses the memory as a club with which to beat Morris, who in turn seizes every opportunity to cause Zach to lose the thread so that he can direct the conversation into more comfortable channels. For a while Morris is successful in keeping Zach off the subject, women, that is occupying him, but finally it comes to the surface of his mind and he won't be silenced or diverted. He hasn't had a woman for a year (i.e. since Morris returned); instead they have talked, and he is now sick of talking. The future that Morris holds out is no substitute, since Zach has always lived for the moment, taking no thought of the future. Now, to ease his longing - and to annoy his brother - he starts reminiscing about his first woman, Connie. Morris listens, doing his best to appear interested, until the details become too intimate, when he won't let Zach continue with the commentary. At this point it is abundantly clear that Morris is quite blighting Zach's life. They are complete opposites, not only in colour, size and shape, but also morally and temperamentally, and Zach's having to live by Morris's stern Calvinist code is a denial of the basic impulses of his nature. The

characterisation at this point is subtle, for they have their hooks in each other's minds, and there is thus intense interaction between them. We are also made aware of the irony inherent in the tangled knot of blood and race that must be cut in order to be accepted.

It is at this point that Morris suggests a female pen-pal for Zach to whom he can 'talk'. Here for the first time we come upon a game in a Fugard play. It is a brilliant stroke, for it suits both the author's purpose and the play's requirements utterly: the author can exploit it to explore character in depth, and Morris averts a crisis in his relationship with Zach as a result of it. The game also reaches forward to influence what happens later in the play. It does not take Morris long to sell the idea to Zach, and the plan is agreed to even though there is a marked lack of enthusiasm on Zach's part. After Morris reads from the Bible, Zach goes quickly to sleep, though Morris is unaware of this for some time and goes on talking. He speaks about brotherhood, and the deep significance it has for him; of the guilty conscience he had about leaving Zach in the years he was away from him. Even when he discovers Zach is asleep he goes on, baring his soul. Fugard has discovered dramatic irony, and one is reminded here of Shaw's Aubrey, the burglar turned preacher. As Morris goes on it becomes clearer and clearer that Morris is carrying a heavy load of guilt, but however that may be, he is also deeply moved - redeemed may be a better word - by his love for Zach. It is becoming evident that Fugard is beginning to use the resources of theatre:

MORRIS: Mother. Mother! Yes. Just a touch of sadness in it, and may be a grey dress on Sundays, and soap suds on brown hands. That's the lot. Father, Mother, and the sisters we haven't got. The rest is just the people of the world. Strangers, and a few friends, And none of them are blood.

But brothers! Try it. Brotherhood. Brother-in-arms, each other's arms. Brotherly love. Ah, it breeds, man! It's warm and feathery, like eggs in a nest.

(Pause). I'll tell you a secret now, Zach. Of all the things there are in this world, I like most to hear you call me that. Zach? (He looks at Zachariah's bed) Zachie? Zachariah!

(He is asleep. Morris takes the lamp, goes to the bed, and looks down at the sleeping man. He returns to the table, picks up the Bible, and after an inward struggle speaks in a solemn, 'Sunday' voice)

'And he said: What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me!' (Morris drops his head in an admission of guilt).

Oh Lord! Oh Lord! So he became a hobo and wandered away, a marked man, on a long road, until a year later, in another dream, He spoke again: Maybe he needs you, He said. You better go home, man!

(Pause)
So he turned round on the road, and came back I remember I reached it and held my breath and knocked and waited outside in the cold his steps beyond the door, the slow terrible turning of the knob, the squeak of a rusty hinge, my sweat, until at last, at long last after a lonely road he stood before me frowning.¹

What he says in this passage also emphasises his isolation and loneliness: for years he has been alone on a long, long road. At the moment of his arrival he notices in intense detail Zach's coat, the sad, square feet, the tears in the clothing etc. And that night, when Zach was asleep, he put on Zach's coat, because "You get right inside a man when you can wrap up in the smell of him."

1 Ibid, p. 19 - 21

As he relives the memory now he suits the action to the word, wrapping up again in his brother's coat. Then he speaks of the effect Zach's flesh has on him, and of how he almost feels the pains it suffers. This is a special Fugardian thing; the feeling for flesh. Tsotsi, in much the same way, experiences the flesh of Morris Tchabalala and Boston:

'It prepared me for your flesh, Zach. Because your flesh, you see, has an effect on me. The sight of it, the feel of it it it feels, you see. Pain, and all those dumb dreams throbbing under the raw skin, feel, you see I saw you again after all those years and it hurt.'¹

Flesh is almost designed, it would seem, for feeling pain.

Scene Two opens the following evening. There are three women mentioned in the newspaper who wish to be pen-pals. They decide on the one in Oudtshoorn: her name is Ethel. While they are eating Zach becomes a little annoyed by Morris's fussing about the food. This anger in a short while turns to rage at the frustrations of his life, and at the way they are robbed of their money by unscrupulous businessmen. What do these people think he is - a 'hotnot? A swartgat kaffer?' Morris is so upset by his reference to colour that Zach's anger turns to mirth at the look on Morris's face. The colour question always gets Morris like this because Zach, who is dark-skinned, is his brother. It is clear that Morris is very sensitive on this issue, perhaps over-sensitive. Why? Like it or not, Morris is effectively white: his whiteness is a very strong 'given' of the play. Difference in skin colour between Zach and Morris must be obvious to the audience, but it is arguable that great subtleties could be suggested

1 Ibid, p. 21

by a production that reduced difference in skin colour to a minimum. As a result of this incident Zach is moved for the first time by the way Morris says the word 'brother', and he discovers it is a warm sound.

Zach, being illiterate, finds it difficult to compose a letter to Ethel, but prompted by Morris, he manages it, though he is barely able to conceal his lack of interest. When they have finished, Zach asks Morris if he has ever had a woman, meaning in the sense that Zach and Minnie have had them. Morris does not reply at first, but when he does we discover that Zach has gone to sleep. For Morris love means warmth and softness, something more than just two donkeys going at it. He remembers, under the spur of Zach's question, and wonders what was the matter with him for not 'touching it' when he had the chance. This is subtle characterisation, and his failure emphasises his Calvinistic hang up about sex, his guilt, his lack of confidence, and the fact that he just couldn't make it as a white.

Scene Three takes place a few days later. The weariness of Zach's life, and the prejudice and inhumanity with which he has to cope in his job, emerge from his talk with Morris. It is some time before Morris discovers Zach has brought back a letter from Ethel, with a snapshot of her inside. Immediately Morris realises Ethel is white. He becomes afraid, but Zach is delighted. Morris tries to burn the letter, and violence flares between them. This is the first occasion such a thing has happened, and it is an omen. Ethel, it turns out, has a brother who is a policeman. She asks Zach for a picture of himself. All through supper Zach is exhilarated

by the situation, and is confident about the outcome, while Morris sulks: he is enjoying living with the idea of a white woman, and Morris's sulky behaviour adds to the enjoyment. The situation is very character-revealing. Zach for all practical purposes, accepts his blackness - he is so obviously black there is not much choice - but psychologically he cannot or will not accept it. The fact that there is no choice, when allied to his psychological reluctance, eventually makes him jealous of his brother's fairness. He admits that the thought of Ethel is more attractive to him than their future, their plans, or anything in the room precisely because she is white.

Zach now begins cross-examining Morris. Was there not ever a white woman in Morris's life? He concludes that someone who thinks as much as Morris does must have had thoughts about white women - and in that very room. Why had he not shared those thoughts with Zach? Thus he defeats and deflates Morris, who meekly agrees to write another letter to Ethel for him. Zach dictates a good letter, the sort that will make a girl think the writer is quite a lad. Morris is deeply unhappy: he has a feeling that his brother is going to get hurt, if not by Ethel then by himself through 'dreaming forbidden dreams and waking up too late.' But Zach will not let him burn the letter: he never had much to play with, as Morris got all the toys, so he is thoroughly enjoying this. Zach remembers more of their mother than Morris does, or perhaps it is just that they remember different things. Here we come to an important Fugardian theme, which we have seen before, and which we shall see again. In 'Tsotsi' both

Boston and Tsotsi find themselves, and are able to discover their futures, by remembering their pasts. Remembering is also important in 'Hello and Goodbye' and 'Boesman and Lena'. It might almost be called a technique of memory: memory is the compass by which the lonely and the lost steer through the trackless wastes of their lives.

To Morris it seems that these different memories are cutting them off from each other, and he searches desperately for something common to them in their past. He finds it in a game they used to play. Now as they remember it they replay it, imagining they are driving out in an old car. The experience is a most rewarding one: they rediscover not only their youth and their favourite game, but also (and this is most important) their common past and identity. Here again we have intense dramatic irony, for their identity emphasises their difference: one is white and the other black. This game springs naturally out of what they are talking about at the moment, and out of Morris's desperation. The playwright does not struggle to achieve it, or to make it seem real. It happens effortlessly, and is not in any sense an imposed dramatic solution. It is the second game introduced into the play by the author: the first is reaping rich rewards both in dramatic terms and in furthering the playwright's aim of probing character. This second game also proves very successful.

With the release of tension and the joy arising from this shared experience, they reminisce happily. This gives them a sense of togetherness, despite a number of hurtful memories,

such as jingles that poked fun at their parentage:

MORRIS: Don't you remember?
'Kaffertjie, kaffertjie, waar is jou pas?'

ZACHARIAH: (taking up the jingle).
'But my oldman was a white man.'

MORRIS: 'Maar, jou man was 'n Bantoe,
So dis nou jou ras.'

ZACHARIAH: (shaking his head) Ja. That hurt.¹

The scene ends on an ominous note of troubles to come - from Oudtshoorn. The paradox of these games is that in the playing of them serious ends emerge: games are serious. There is a great deal of dramatic irony in this, and in the fact that we as an audience are aware of far more possibilities in the situation than the characters themselves.

Scene Four takes place the following evening. Zach has a secret, which Morris suspects is a letter. He is right. Eventually Zach hands it over. Ethel and her friend Lucy are coming to P.E. in June on holiday. They will be staying with Ethel's uncle at Kensington, which is five minutes walk from where they live in Korsten. Morris manages to frighten Zach with this thought. He wants him to face the truth about the darkness of his skin, and this is a harsh truth - one of the critical issues of the play: it is what divides the brothers from each other. In 'Tsotsi' darkness is also one of the critical issues, but there it is inner and therefore universal, whereas in 'The Blood Knot' it is outward and apparently of no great consequence. However, Tsotsi's inner darkness is a result of a separation caused by the pass laws of South African society, while the fact that Zach's blackness is of importance is also due almost entirely to the

1 Ibid, p. 52

South African situation - a serious indictment of the status quo

MORRIS: What is there a man can say or pray that will change the colour of his skin or blind them to it?

ZACHARIAH: There must be something.

MORRIS: I'm tell you there's nothing. When its a question of smiles, and whispers, and thoughts in strange eyes there is only the truth and (he pauses)

ZACHARIAH: And then what?

MORRIS: And then to make a run for it. Yes. They don't like these games with their whiteness.¹

Morris reminds Zach that Ethel's brother is a policeman, and that she has an uncle and Zach's address. Zach insists that he has done nothing wrong. Morris tells him he's been thinking, though, and that's a crime, especially when the thought is 'I like the thought of this little white girl.' And Zach has been dreaming, and the whites have ways - like bread and water and solitary confinement - that will enable them to find out a black man's dreams, for which he is then sentenced to hard labour:

MORRIS: Where? You ask where with your eyes, I see. You know where, Zach. You've seen them, in the streets, carrying their spades and the man with his gun. Bald heads, short trousers, and that ugly jersey with the red, painful stripes around the body.²

Zach is approaching a moment of truth, urged on by Morris: Ethel is white, and he is black, but there is more to it than this. What does it really mean to be black in South Africa? Zach is strong enough to face the horrible reality of this blackness: the mere fact that he is black will make the lady scream, and when a lady screams uncles with fists and brothers

1 Ibid, p. 58

2 Ibid, p. 59

in boots come running, and the police are on their side.

So he can never have a hite woman:

ZACHARIAH: I can never have her.

MORRIS: Never ever.

ZACHARIAH: She wouldn't want me anyway.

MORRIS: It's as simple as that.

ZACHARIAH: She's too white to want me anyway.

MORRIS: For better or for worse.

ZACHARIAH: So I won't want her any more.

MORRIS: Not in this life, or that one, if death us do part, that next one, God help us. For ever and for ever no more, thank you.

ZACHARIAH: Please, no more.

MORRIS: We cry enough.

ZACHARIAH: I know now.

MORRIS: We do.

ZACHARIAH: Everything.

MORRIS: Every last little thing.

ZACHARIAH: From the beginning.

MORRIS: And then on without end.

ZACHARIAH: Why it was.

MORRIS: And will be.

ZACHARIAH: The lot in fact.

MORRIS: The human one.

ZACHARIAH: The whole, rotten, stinking lot is all because I'm black.¹

In South Africa, Fugard is saying, blackness is eternal and deep, and violence entrenches it. Zachariah accepts, though not without bitterness, the hurt and the unfairness - the English language itself is cruel here - of the situation, and as it were, divorces himself from Ethel and from whiteness in

1 Ibid, p. 61 - 62

a ceremony that parodies the marriage service. This is a savage irony: holy matrimony revealing the unholiness of this divorce, and divorce equals separation equals alienation equals loneliness - all the things that marriage is designed to banish or alleviate. Zach decides to be what he is, and the Europeans can be what they like, but the extent of his hurt is revealed when he says that he doesn't want to mix because it's bad for the blood and the poor babies - in other words the curse of blackness will be transferred to the next generation. The damage this situation does to humans is revealed later in this play when Zach and Morris metaphorically destroy their mother, a decision forced upon them by the exigencies of the law in South Africa.

After a whole life Zach has seen himself properly for the first time and he is grateful to Morris, who is largely responsible for the insight. At this point the dramatic stress or emphasis is reversed, and Morris is, as it were, put under the microscope. Zach's enthusiasm for this project, and Morris's reluctance to be the subject of minute examination, are most character-revealing. Zach is keen to help Morris see himself, and it is possible that here there is the irony of a never-ending back and fore interlocking swing. Morris does not want any help, for he does not want his brother to know his secret (that for ten years he passed for white), but Zach insists: other eyes see one better than one's own eyes can. As a result of Zach's intervention they find a 'solution' which is no solution. Because Morris is happy to toy with the idea of taking Ethel out, Zach is prepared to spend their 'future' money buying the outfit that would

enable him to do this. Morris is aghast, yet tempted, and surrenders without too much resistance, and the scene ends with his telling Zach to go to a good shop and to ask for the outfit for a gentleman. Another game, perhaps more character-revealing than the others, is about to begin. It will show up nasty streaks in Morris's character, and in Zach's, and will involve Morris in a contradiction. He affirms by his actions that all men are brothers, yet his getting Zach to admit his blackness and all the divisions it implies is a denial of this.

Neither is the change wrought in Zach altogether convincing. His interest in white women seems almost contrived to give rise to a situation. It is difficult to believe that Morris, who thought of the pen-pal idea, and who is so sensitive about black-white relationships, could have been so careless as to allow Zach to become involved in the first place with a white woman. Nor is their involvement with Ethel, when it seems she is coming to Port Elizabeth, too serious for them to escape the consequences simply by breaking off the correspondence. The whole action at this point is not sufficiently weighty to bring about the results that do flow from it, viz., a great moment of truth for Zach, almost a revelation, a seeing of himself for the first time. Fugard's whole problem is that there are great truths to tell, but he does not know for sure how to make them totally commensurate with the action of the play. O'Neill has this problem in 'Mourning becomes Electra', which is a great over-written tragedy, the ideas of passions effectively too divorced from the achieved reality. However, in 'Long Day's Journey into Night', as in Fugard's 'Hello and Goodbye' and 'Boesman and Lena' there is not this

divorce: the form and the ideas interact rather than pull in different directions. One must also question whether Zach's acceptance of his blackness is a denial of human brotherhood. It would seem to be, yet this surely contradicts the clear, yet unspoken, attitude of the author, which is that all men are brothers.

The next day Morris is lying on his bed. There is an unexpected knock, and Morris thinks it might be Miss Ethel Lange. This thought agitates him considerably, and he is delighted when it turns out to be Zach on the other side of the door. He endeavours - vainly as it turns out - to disguise his elation, for Zach had heard the fear in his voice, then the hurried footsteps that gave away his joy.

Zach has lots of parcels, containing all that Morris needs for courting Ethel, and is keen that he should don the outfit immediately. Morris needs time to get used to the idea, he needs to play a little with it, since there's more, as he says, to wearing a white skin than just putting on a hat, or an outfit. You must have the right something inside to 'become' a white man. Whites have that courage and confidence that blacks and coloureds lack. Morris's skin is whiter than that of many Europeans, yet he failed to pass the test of whiteness because he lacked that inner something. His lack of assurance gave him away. You can even tell by the way a man walks whether or not he is white. To pass a man must look right and sound right.

Zach manages to get Morris to try on the hat. This is the

start of the third game, and it develops later into a deadly serious business, a surrogate reality that triggers off violence. Morris tries raising the hat as if greeting Ethel. He is pleased. Then he puts on the jacket. It fits perfectly. He preens himself. This is a well-proved and fertile theatrical device - the donning of clothes (one is reminded immediately of Macbeth's 'Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?'), the assuming of roles, the wearing of disguises: ironically, and with great dramatic subtlety, the covering up strips one naked. Thus Morris, dressing up, stands revealed.

The game develops. Morris addresses Ethel, but Zach stops him, saying he is being too servile. Morris insists the tone is right for addressing a lady. They are both thoroughly enjoying themselves: they think they are preparing Morris to take Ethel out.

However, this is not the main reason for playing the game, since we know that when Ethel drops out of their lives they nevertheless continue to play it. In their dull, dreary lives it represents an escape from boredom and frustration. Now Morris must imagine that he has to buy a packet of monkey-nuts from Zach for Ethel. Morris addresses him very politely. Zach says he would never hear that. Morris next tries 'hey' followed by 'boy', but Zach is a cheeky one and still refuses to be drawn. Morris points out that he is asking for it. Zach agrees. Morris's next attempt shatters Zach, for he hurls the word 'Swartgat' at him. This stuns him, showing that Zach has not in fact accepted his blackness - yet.

Immediately Morris is apologetic, but it is not until he whips off the jacket and hat that Zach comes back to the present from his daze and realises this strange being is in fact his brother. Morris explains that he returned a year previously because he had rejected the sort of man he had just been portraying. (Why, then, does he bother to portray him? This incident, and subsequent ones of a similar type, reflect very badly on Morris). Also because he was haunted by his brother's eyes. Morris is having his moment of truth. He admits he did try to cross the colour line:

"But don't you see, Zach? It was me! That different sort of man you saw was me. It's happened, man! And I'll swear, I'll take God's name in vain that I no longer wanted it. That's why I came back. I didn't want it any more. I turned around on the road and came back here because I couldn't stand that look in your eyes any more. Those bright, brotherly eyes in my dreams at night, always wet with love, full of pity and pain God, such lonely eyes they were. Why did I do it? Why try to deny it? Because because I'll tell you the whole truth now. ... Because I did try it! It didn't seem a sin. If a man was born with a chance at a change, why not take it, I thought The long arm of the real law frightened me - but I might have been lucky. We all know that some are not caught, so so so what was worrying me? You. Yes, in my dreams at night, there was you, as well." 1

He remembers the pain in Zach's eyes, which he has just seen again after calling him 'swartgat'. He insists he is no Judas, yet that is what he would appear to be, and his use of the word 'swartgat' causes us to actively dislike Morris.

Scene Six provides a soliloquy by Zach. It is spoken as though he were in conversation with his mother, and is like

1 Ibid, p. 79

a confession. With two men together it is difficult to know which is reliable. This personal soliloquy is necessary to define Zach's credentials, and show us his spiritual centre. Apart from the fact that this soliloquy is giving us the truth, as by convention it is bound to do, this particular scene is interesting because it touches on something quite fundamental, and it points to the later destruction of Zach's mother. Zach is feeling rejected because of his colour, and is seeking reassurance from his mother. Whom does she love best - Morris or him? Hasn't he got some beauty too?:

"Whose mother were you really? At the bottom of your heart, where your blood is red with pain, tell me, whom did you really love? No evil feelings, Ma, but, I mean, a man's got to know. You see, he's been such a burden as a brother. (Agitation). Don't be dumb! Don't cry! It was just a question! Look! I brought you a present, old soul This, old Ma of mine, is gratitude for you, and it proves it, doesn't it? Some things are only skin deep, because I got it, here in my hand, I got beauty to haven't I?"¹

The following evening when Zach returns from work, Morris sits disconsolately, his belongings packed in a small bundle. The room hasn't been tidied, nor has Zach's footbath been prepared, but it takes him a little time to realise that Morris is not quite himself. Slowly the story comes out. Morris just can't carry on, and he had intended taking to the road again. He'd written a letter to Zach explaining, then remembered that Zach couldn't read - without him Zach couldn't read, and that had hurt. He'd realised then that he couldn't go, so he had stayed, though this had not prevented him from giving up. Zach now presents him with a letter from Ethel but he is not interested, for she is to blame - everything had been fine until she came along. When he does

1 Ibid, p. 81 - 82

read the letter there is good news for them: Ethel is not coming to P.E. as she is now engaged to be married. Their problems are over and Morris begins to come alive again, but at once Zach goes into a decline because Morris won't be wearing the suit any more. Zach would like him to don it, as the sight of Morris dressed up makes him feel good. Why should this be so? Is it just an excuse for the game?

Fugard's new skill in handling complexities enables him to get away with apparent contradictions, such as Zach's pride in his brother's whiteness, and in his ability to ape an arrogant European who takes pride in humbling Zach - a process from which he appears to get some masochistic enjoyment. At the same time Zach's position has been resolved more clearly: he is at least in part moved by his love for Morris, and this is important as it forms part of the affirmative counter thrust of the play. Hate leads to love, just as the blood knot has lead to hate. Zach encourages Morris to put the suit on. Even without Ethel Morris feels the suit was a damn good buy. When he has the suit on, Zach cheers up. The game begins, the biggest, most transparent game of all. Zach is almost unmoved when Morris calls him 'swartgat', and when he uses it again Zach pretends that he is Morris's 'boy', and that Morris is his 'baas'. This game develops to the point where the protagonists almost take it for real. Both Zach and Morris reach the point of violence: Morris, playing the white man, - perhaps all white men in South Africa - does in fact attack Zach violently with his umbrella, while Morris is saved from his brother's attack a little later by the ringing of the alarm clock. Zach plays the part of the

humble and humiliated black - perhaps all blacks in South Africa - who is yet capable of turning on his arrogant oppressor, as Morris finds. During the course of the game they exorcise the spectre of their mother, driving her away with blows and curses: at last they are free of her haunting presence. This is an utterly horrifying scene: Zach and Morris metaphorically kill their mother, in the process heaping abuse on her. The killing amounts to a sacrifice of their mother on the altar of racism, a necessity forced upon them by racist South Africa, and it provides a potently destructive commentary on the evils of apartheid. In destroying their mother Zach and Morris are at the same time utterly destroying themselves:

MORRIS: I'm telling you, I can't.

ZACHARIAH: Why?

MORRIS: Not with that old woman watching us.
(Zachariah stops and looks questioningly at Morris) Over there. (Pointing)

ZACHARIAH: Old woman?

MORRIS: Horribly old.

ZACHARIAH: Alone?

MORRIS: All by her lonely self.

ZACHARIAH: And she's watching us?

MORRIS: All the time. (Impatience). Can't you see? She's wearing a grey dress on Sunday.

ZACHARIAH: (Recognition dawning). Soapsuds ...

MORRIS: ... on brown hands.

ZACHARIAH: And some feet. The toes are crooked, hey!

MORRIS: With sadness. She's been following me all day, all along the road, the long, unending road ... begging!

ZACHARIAH: Call the police.

MORRIS: No, no. Not that.

ZACHARIAH: Then what will we do?

MORRIS: Let's work it out. We can't carry on with her watching us ... behind that bush ... like an old spy.

ZACHARIAH: So she must go.

MORRIS: I think so, too (A step in the direction of the old woman) Go away.

ZACHARIAH: Is she moving?

MORRIS: No. (Trying again.) Go away, old one! Begat and be gone! Go home! (Sign.) It's no use.

ZACHARIAH: (Trying to scare her off) Hey!

MORRIS: Excited) She jumped! Ha ha. She jumped!

ZACHARIAH: Voetsek!

MORRIS: Another jump. (Zachariah goes down on his hands and knees.) What are you doing?

ZACHARIAH: Stones.

MORRIS: Hoooooo! She heard you. She's trotted off a little distance. But you're not really going to use them, are you?

ZACHARIAH: It's the only way. (Throws)

MORRIS: Almost. (Zachariah throws again.) She jumped!

ZACHARIAH: Voetsek!

MORRIS: Yes. Voetsek off! We don't want you!

ZACHARIAH: Bugger off!

MORRIS: You old bitch! You made life unbearable!

ZACHARIAH: (Starts throwing with renewed violence). Hamba!

MORRIS: She's running now.

ZACHARIAH: Get out!

MORRIS: Kaffermeid!

ZACHARIAH: Ou hoer!

MORRIS: Luisgat!

ZACHARIAH: Swartgat!

MORRIS: You've hit her! She's down. Look ...
Look!

ZACHARIAH: Look at those old legs sticking up!

MORRIS: She's got no broeks on! (Their derision rises to a climax, Morris shaking his umbrella. Zachariah his fists). That's the last of her, I think. By God, she ran! (Pause while they get their breath.) Where were we?¹

When the alarm clock saves Morris from being assaulted by Zach and brings the game to an end, Zach is pretty shaken. He asks Morris what happened, and Morris is able to interpret the experience. They were carried away by the game, further than they should have been, but he is glad they have the game, for it will pass the time. At this point the play is saying that racialism is also a filthy, savage, flimsy and obvious 'game': it is not real because it is based on an untruth. Morris and Zach have no future, other than life in this room, but lots of people get by without futures. They are tied together by the blood that knots their lives. All this is a substitute for life, a surrogate for real living, but this substitute, the game, will provide a release from the boredom and utter triviality of their lives. What Morris says is in effect an admission of the hopelessness of their lot. They are imprisoned by their blood, and their lives stultified by it. Can anyone live without hope?

So Zach and Morris accept the realities of their lives and of their situation. They come to terms with the selves they previously hadn't dared to contemplate, let alone articulate. Are they better off with this new awareness? Have they grown

1 Ibid, p. 91 - 93

as people? At the start, we recall, Morris fussed about like a neurotic maiden aunt, tending to the wants and comfort of Zach. He was endeavouring to make Zach so reliant upon him that he would become indispensable, and he had saved up quite a sum of money from Zach's wages for their future - a two-man farm that would enable them to escape from the narrow room of the here and now, and from the city streets that lead nowhere. There is no substance to this future; it is just another mental game that Morris plays to sublimate the boredom and dullness of the present, and he uses it to counter Zach's efforts to achieve the same effect by vividly reliving sections of his past. In the play, with Zach behaving like a petulant husband, there is little communication between them, or awareness of themselves. Each is trying in his own way to achieve dominance over the other, so they conceal their real selves while they snipe at each other.

The result of the action is that Zach comes to a hurt and reluctant acceptance of his blackness: he will be able to live with it without becoming embittered. With Morris's help he has exorcised his liking for white women: he knows they are not for him, now or ever. He is still capable of being moved to violence by the attitude of the whites, here represented by Morris, but that is only after extreme provocation. He is a man to whom violence comes easily, and who is without hope. These facts in themselves would provide an inflammable situation, and when you add to them a game that at any moment could lead to a violent resolution, the outlook is very bleak.

Morris is white and almost effeminate, and at times when he is 'playing white' very nasty. He can read, is not unintelligent, and is a man of some vision, but he does no work (as though there were no place for him in the world). Where has he arrived at by the end of the play? He is looking forward to his surrogate for living in the form of a game that enables him to transcend for a short while the pain of the present. It is almost as though for him the game is life, or life is a game - there is nothing more: life is lonely and empty for him, but he is redeemed by his love for Zach and his feeling for Zach's suffering. However, he is greatly in need of redemption. Apart from acting out a part as an arrogant European, he is a parasite, living off a black labourer who is his brother, and surely this is symbolic of the South African situation. He regiments his brother, and divides up his life into artificial parts at the behest of an alarm clock. Morris is the bureaucrat and technocrat, measuring meaningless time: one who buries himself beneath loads of trivialities in order to escape the moral demands of humanity. Even learning the truth about himself and Zach by means of the game only leads him to want to make the game his life, not for any further illumination it will bring, but for its own sake - a form of emotional self-indulgence. Morris is like the moths that he talks about quite often - attracted to the light. Deeply he wishes to be white. And the ending is ominous. There is the clear suggestion that sooner or later the alarm will fail to go off, and Zach will attack Morris. What then?

The setting of the play is a poverty-stricken one-room shack which totally isolates Morris and Zach from the world. By

means of this isolation Fugard excludes everything that is irrelevant to his experiment in brotherly relationships: Morris and Zach only have themselves to contend with, but in Morris's case 'self' can be defined as Morris plus Morris's imagination, and Morris's definition depends on what the outside is like. Thus the achievement of the play is that we 'see' outside the better for not 'seeing' it but inferring it from the evidence of the damage done to two naked souls.

The isolation both simplifies and complicates the playwright's task. It simplifies things by removing chance happenings, chance encounters, and chance human beings, leaving only two characters to deal with, but this very fact also complicates the task. With such a narrow focus faults will be magnified, while any loss of dramatic tension will become doubly evident.

The success of the narrow focus is due to an important device adopted by the author: this is the playing of games, a richly rewarding dramatic technique which has a paradoxical effect - serious ends are served by what are apparently unimportant endeavours. Because they arise so naturally out of the action in each case, and are so appropriate in context, they perfectly serve the dramatist's purpose, which is to strip away the illusions of his characters, while serving to divert the protagonists themselves and to keep the audience's attention riveted on what is happening.

Another device (of less structural/thematic importance, though) is the alarm clock, which dominates their lives. Morris effeminately fusses about time and order, and because he runs the household Zach also comes under its sway: the time it

measures is, in any event, meaningless time. It is an appropriate symbol of their lives.

The games and the clock are dramatically most effective. It is difficult to imagine the play without the games: it would be like 'Hamlet' without the Prince. They create, naturally and effortlessly, situations of tension: they are little plays within the play, gripping because they often reveal what Morris or Zach would rather keep hidden. Once initiated they compel the person concerned to face the truth about himself. As he twists and turns to avoid the probe, we are utterly gripped, for we are also aware that the inquisitor in his turn is revealing himself as he seeks to drive the other into the open. The main theme of the play deals with the acquisition of awareness, and the pain suffered in the often reluctant progress towards inner knowledge. This theme is the very life blood of drama: it figures doubly in 'King Lear', which is the story of two old men progressing from self-love and almost complete unawareness to illumination and selflessness. One, having had his eyes plucked out, can now 'see', and realises that he stumbled when he saw.

The alarm clock demands attention: literally it cries out aloud, and as something always happens when it rings it arouses a sense of expectation. In the final game, when Zach is about to attack Morris, and we have seen him moving closer to him and we are expecting violence, the ringing of the clock is like an explosion.

'The Blood Knot' is modelled on Sartre's 'No Exit'. In this play four people are locked up in a room and can't get away

from each other: hell is human company from which you cannot escape. Hell is NOW, in these circumstances. In the situation in which Zach and Morris find each other all they can do is to play games, and it is here that the dramatic technique is linked with the theme: the racial discrimination that is forced upon them leads to self-destruction. Even brotherly love, in such a context, when it is tied to differing skin colours, leads to destruction. Yet here there is a strange paradox: the action presented is that all men are brothers, yet the outcome of the play would seem to make it abundantly clear that the contrary is true. Not only are the brothers destroying each other physically, but lack of brotherhood in their social environment causes them to 'kill' their mother and thus to lose their souls - a more serious matter. In the presented world of the play it is perhaps not so much demonstrated that blacks are also human as that whites are also sub-human. After all, they helped create the environment that made the situation depicted in the play possible, and in this situation the 'white' man behaves just as badly as, perhaps even more badly than, the black.

Another way in which the dramatic technique bears a close relationship to the theme is that the number of characters is reduced to two, one of whom is black and one white. This represents, for Fugard, a new insight into what is inherently dramatic, while the reduction of characters places a heavy burden on the dramatic structure, though when it is successful yields rich rewards. To be successful, however, in such a situation the author needs to be infinitely resourceful. Now, while the games are successful, and often yield rich rewards,

and the author is very ingenious, there are too many games, with the result that it becomes difficult to continue suspending disbelief. The games, vastly successful though they are, are in the end a weakness because they are over-done.

This is a long play and at times boring: nothing happens. The first three scenes provide far more information than is necessary for the resolution of the play. The author has discovered that human beings can talk about anything, but all the talk doesn't serve to define the characters or to reinforce the plot. In fact it might be said that in this play there is an obsession with talking rather than with meaning, and that the characters have been loaded with more words than they can carry. It would be possible, by compressing some of the information of the first three scenes into scene four to eliminate them altogether. One is also tempted to ask how two such unlearned men are able to come out with such complicated ideas.

CHAPTER FIVE"PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE"

"Descartes was wrong: it is not the clarity with which we know ourselves on which science is founded, but on our elusiveness, which constitutes a never-ending to be and which keeps the human effort in motion." ¹

In an interview with 'To the Point' in 1972, Fugard said, two or three months before his 40th birthday:

"The thing for me is, a play is not so many words on paper; a play is an experience in a theatre. I have absolutely no reverence for words on paper, texts. The criterion is what a living audience gets from a living performance on one particular night. That's the criterion, and everything else is subordinate to that."

Judged by this standard, 'People Are Living There' is a successful play, both in South Africa and in the United Kingdom. More recently, in April 1977, it has been revived - successfully - at Johannesburg's Market Theatre, and in early May it was televised by the S.A.B.C., winning critical acclaim. And yet this is an unsatisfactory play, as I shall endeavour to show.

The setting is the kitchen of an old, double-storeyed boarding house in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. The time is a cold winter's evening. Milly Jenkins owns the house to which the kitchen belongs; she is fifty years old, but not a youthful fifty. Life has not been kind to her. The latest

1 M. Versfeld, Persons, Buren Publishers, 1972, p. 25

misfortune is the breakup of her affair, which has been going on for ten years, with one of her lodgers, a German named Ahlers, whom we do not meet. The second protagonist is Don (Donovan Bradshaw), a disillusioned twenty year old B. Com. student. The cast is completed by Shorty Langeveld, a postman, and his wife Sissy. All three are lodgers in Milly's boarding house. Although the main focus is upon Milly, while Shorty is meant to play a subsidiary role, it is he who steals the show and overshadows Milly. Shorty is unintelligent, almost illiterate, but kindly, while his wife is unintelligent, unkind, and distinctly bitchy.

Milly, rejected by Ahlers, is lonely and looking for company. She coaxes and bullies her boarders into remaining in her kitchen, so that she has an audience, (and we a play). She is quite happy to spy on her lodgers through key-holes to discover what they are doing. However, the fact that she is lonely does not make her act kindly towards her boarders in her quest for company: on the contrary, she is rude to them and they to her. It soon becomes apparent that she is embittered, especially about Ahlers. Her desire to be revenged on him, to humiliate him, initiates a good deal of the action. Having coaxed Don into the kitchen, she uses the force of her personality and some cheap stratagems to hold him captive. To Shorty she is brutal, since she doesn't need him as an audience while Don is there; she despises him anyway, not only for his simplicity, but also for the way he lets his wife go out with another man she - the wife - claims is her cousin.

While Milly and Don are talking, Sissy and Shorty come in, and we witness Shorty being humiliated by his wife. Her values are utterly trivial and materialistic - she only has one pair of stockings but 'Jossie's got five pairs you know. Five. And she hasn't even got a husband.' - and she gets great delight and amusement from writing in lipstick 'Bad-boy' on Shorty's forehead. She is, ironically, quite unaware that, far from showing Shorty up, it is she herself who is being revealed. She certainly has not heard of conjugal rights, and is most probably ignorant about sexual intercourse. Shorty knows about it, but can't cause it to happen. He is almost illiterate like Sissy, but is redeemed by kindness, unlike her. However, there is more to Shorty than just kindness. His concern for the silkworms suggests that kindness is broadened to compassion in him. He becomes, in Eliot's definition, "some infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing." Like the 'silkie' he endures Sissy's cruelties, and Milly's and Don's. He has a real and harmless interest in nature, unlike Don and Milly who haven't, yet ironically are 'silkworms' spinning verbal cocoons.

When Ahlers begins to move in his room overhead, Milly starts thinking up ways of revenging herself on him. These come to nothing, and she is reduced to shouting abuse at him. She almost succeeds in talking herself into believing that she is glad the affair is over. Like Sissy, Milly too is quite unaware that her actions are, as it were, stripping her naked. She wants Don or Shorty or both to go out with her into Johannesburg to the same place as Ahlers in order to

have a good time where he can see that she is enjoying herself and is not in the least worried about him. Enjoying herself, in Milly's vocabulary, means having the sort of evening depicted in the coca-cola ad. She is naive enough to believe there is romance and a good time round every corner. The cynical twenty year old Don, who has experienced it all, knows differently. There is no hope of their going out: it is just a game she is playing. She suggests to Don that she has a secret. This leads to another game: Don tries to guess what it is, and in the process he suggests a lot of things that might have happened to her in the past. She denies all his suggestions, but the game suits her very well, since it holds Don's interest, and in her too. She is able to disclose that she suffers, and to describe this in some detail:

MILLY: Hold your horses. We'll try again.
 It hurts. An ache. A sort of dull
 ache.

DON: Go on.

MILLY: 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. And it's not my eyes,
 because sometimes, when it's at its worst,
 Hope comes back. And you know how?
 Mildred Jenkins, I say, you're Alive. And
 suddenly there is Hope and colour again.
 That's something else. Hope. The way it
 comes and goes¹

1 A. Fugard, 'People Are Living There', Buren - Publishers, 1969. p. 33

Don elicits from her that the hope is growing less. Soon Don is doing nearly all the talking recounting a dream of his, making suggestions about her life. What he has to say becomes more and more depressing.

DON: 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 ditch for friendship. From then on it's just a matter of days.¹

Milly is unwilling to accept this version. Despite her frailties she has considerable resilience and is a survivor: life will not overwhelm her. Don on the other hand, is frightened of life, and even at twenty soured by it. He insists that his version of what life is about is correct: it is not a happy picture he paints. He reduces her ten years with Ahlers to statistics reflecting the quantity of beer they drank, and the weight of sausages they ate. These statistics are funny, but they are meaningless, and they end up making Milly cross. However, there is an irony here, for there is meaning in the meaninglessness: the statistics reveal the barrenness of their relationship, and the poor quality of their style of life. Milly would be happy to go back to Ahlers and the sausages and beer, so that the statistics become a protest against such a culturally mindless method of passing one's life.

Milly puts on a pair of boxing gloves that Shorty brought in to keep her hands warm. She remembers how Ahlers was destitute ten years ago when she took him in; she claims to

1 'Ibid', p. 37

have started him on the road to success. She begins to take her anger and frustration out on Don and Shorty. Shorty gets her to try to hit him - he easily dodges, but then he deliberately lets her connect. She is very happy until she realises he brought this about to make her happy.

Don brings her to the point, eventually. The point about Ahlers is that he hasn't broken the law: they were not married, but in Milly's view he must be punished. To achieve this and to help Shorty do the same to Sissy she thinks of having a party: Ahlers and Sissy will come back to realise they haven't been missed at all. Don is sceptical of their being able to produce such a party out of the hat, as it were, especially when there is no reason for celebrating. Milly claims it is her birthday, so all resistance is overcome. "She who laughs last, laughs longest, and tonight I'll also make it loudest. I'll have him down here, on his knees, begging for mercy before the cock crows thrice. That's my vow. So help me God".¹

But Milly is living in cloud-cuckooland. Ahlers doesn't care if she has a party or not.

Act Two begins with Milly and Don waiting for Shorty to return with the food for the party. This does not get things off to a swinging start. It is soon perfectly clear that this show can never get off the ground. Soon they've drunk the small amount of muscadell, and eaten the food. Don

1 'Ibid', p. 48

regards the party as over. Milly is indignant, as they have not yet begun to enjoy themselves or get into the party spirit. She speaks as though it were possible to turn this on at will. First Milly rends Shorty, appealing to Don to help her. He does so. Shorty is told all sorts of personal home truths about his intelligence or lack thereof, his appearance, his inability to sleep with his wife, and about his being a poor white. Shorty threatens violence. Milly adds details about Shorty that Don has forgotten or omitted, after which she lacerates Don with savage words. Don turns on Milly: the party is becoming a free-for-all in gross personal insults which are far too hurtful to be amusing in any way. Eventually they come back to the present. Milly accuses Don of deserting her in her hour of need. They discuss where they are at in their lives at this moment. Life appears hopeless, but while Don accepts resignedly, Milly is prepared to fight:

MILLY: I tried! I've never stopped. Mildred Jenkins, I said this morning, when the window went grey and I knew we were at it again. Mildred Jenkins, I said, don't give up! No man is God! Get up on your two legs and fight.

DON: You won't get a medal for that. I also got out of bed. I also breathed, and walked and scratched myself and all the other heroisms. Shorty, too. We suffered the same fate. We're also victims.¹

Milly admits she has wept twice that day already, and that life is miserable, and asks if that is all that people get. Don replies:

1 'Ibid', p. 63

DON: (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 than one came from. You're in the home stretch, Milly!¹

Milly feels she has been hoodwinked, but she is not certain by whom. She begins to examine her life, and is lead into reminiscing about her young days when she was happy.

Happiness began to slip away with the coming of adolescence. She arrives at the point in her story when she tells Ahlers that she has had the menopause:

MILLY: 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. It sounded logical the way he put it. To do with function. The function of a thing, and being a woman, that meant babies. 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. So you see it's gone. Or just about. A little left but mostly in the way of time. The rest just Gone. Not broken, or stolen, or violated - which might make it sound like there's been no crime, I know. But I did have it and now it's gone and nobody ever gets it back so don't tell me that doesn't make us victims. Don't ask me how! Somehow! Victims of something. Look at us. All flesh and bone, with one face hanging onto your neck until you're dead!²

In this passage we see Milly facing her moment of truth about Ahlers: the affair is over, and she knows this and accepts.

1 'Ibid', p. 64

2 'Ibid', p. 66 - 67

She could have hidden the truth from Ahlers, but in fact she tells him, and this precipitates the demise of their affair. It is a piece of honesty which adds a new dimension to her character. Before this one had not thought of her in terms of honesty, even although in the passage from which the above extract is taken she is facing the truth about her life not only with great courage, but also, it is clear, with great truthfulness. She wonders why everything in her life must end on the muck heap, and whether there is not another solution. When Don challenges her to find it, she says that she will.

When Sissy comes back she is disconsolate: the evening with Billy was not a success, since he seeks exactly what one would expect him to. When she and Shorty are about to retire for the night, Milly realises Ahlers is returning and tries desperately to cheer the party up in a last effort to fool him that they have had, and are still having, a wonderful time, and that he now no longer matters to her. This is not successful. She has to resort to addressing the unseen Ahlers direct and being insulting to him. Instead of crying, she and Don end laughing at the funny side of their situation. Shorty had said earlier that he would love Sissy even if she had only one leg and one eye, while Don had suggested that the easiest way to commit suicide was to put a brown paper bag on one's head and breathe. Milly now imagines Sissy hopping about on one leg like a kangaroo while Shorty wiped away his tears with his boxing gloves on, and Don with his head in a brown paper bag telling the world it was painless. Milly, as usual, would be in the middle of the mess. It is

an hilarious picture, and as it begins to tickle her fancy her laughter commences, soon becoming enormous. This ending is most important, for it tells us a very great deal about Milly. First, she will not be overwhelmed by her world and its troubles: she has resilience; so that she will transcend her difficulties and any disappointments she may suffer. Next, she has a sense of humour which enables her to see the funny side of circumstances which would depress most people. Laughter is a transforming activity, a way of viewing the world that rejects and dispels gloom.

Just what is it that Fugard is doing, or attempting to do, in 'People Are Living There'. The title itself emphasises the importance of people: it is people that matter. 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 what matter. The people concerned are Europeans, English and Afrikaans speaking, and this is important for it is the first occasion on which Fugard has made Europeans the subjects of a play, other than the ineffectual priest in 'No-Good Friday'. By doing this he is saying that Europeans also are important, they too are people who can be poor and therefore also are capable of suffering: it is not only the culturally and materially deprived African and Coloured whose humanity we are asked to recognise.

More important, the playwright is showing us how people react to their surroundings, and how they can rise above their circumstances. In this play the surroundings are squalid, while much of the detail of the lives lived there is sordid.

The action depicts a struggle for survival, of man against poverty and a not very friendly environment. This is a situation which gives rise to several ironies. Don is not culturally deprived like Shorty, Sissy, and to a lesser extent Milly, yet life is defeating him; it may already have completed its conquest. 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 timid and is withdrawing from life. There is a further irony in the fact that he uses his rational faculty to justify his becoming one of the living dead. Milly, on the other hand, does want to live, even though what she considers as living has been deeply influenced by the advertisements depicting the good life:

- MILLY: I said think of a bright idea for a good time. Don't you understand the English language. A good time!
- SHORTY: I don't know about that.
- MILLY: How can anybody on the face of this earth not know what a good time means! You've see them, laughing and singing and dancing...
- DON: The Coca-cola ad.
- MILLY: Exactly! ¹

Milly opts for life, and will not be defeated by unhappiness or disappointment or poverty. Her sense of humour will also help in this struggle, but having said that it is nevertheless true that there is a sense in which she is defeated. 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.

1 'Ibid', p. 25

Ironically 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 illumines his life: it is a rock against which waves of hate and discontent break and pass by. Sissy, on the other hand, is a culturally deprived person who has no redeeming features of character. Her understanding is so limited, her view of the world so cramped by ignorance and circumscribing convention, and her make-up so unilluminated by any spark of kindness that there is very little hope for her as a human being. It is difficult to see her surviving, just as it is difficult to see Don making a success of things. She is the sort of person one would expect to meet in some of Barney Simon's stories in 'Joburg Sis'.¹

At one level 'People Are Living There' is about survival, or at least about who will survive, and who will not, in a culturally and materially deprived lower middle class urban environment. More centrally, however, it is about the indignity that our system forces on people, and is a protest against the spiritual impoverishment that flows from such a state of affairs. The circumstances and surroundings of their lives are squalid, and there is no means by which they can throw off the mental and material shackles that bind them to this way of life. Because there are four characters, and not two as in 'The Blood Knot' and 'Hello and Goodbye' - 'Boesman and Lena' has three, but from the point of view of character development there are effectively only two - the focus is wider and there is not the same exploration of, and discovery about, character that you get in these plays.

1 B. Simon. Joburg, Sis!, Bateleur Press, 1974.

'People Are Living There' grows from the germ of bitterness, which is expressed in the form of deeply insulting and wounding remarks. This, together with the sordid surroundings, the poverty, and the narrow outlook of the characters would make the whole thing too dreary, and the metaphysical gloom too intense, were the atmosphere not relieved by humour: Shorty delaying the party for the purchase of beetroot leaves for his silkies, Don turning Milly's relationship with Ahlers over ten years into so many pints of beer drunk and so many pounds of sausages consumed, Sissy's ignorance about matters sexual, Milly's description of the way Ahlers used to dress and her reaction to it, the grandfather clock that doesn't chime correctly unless it is punched hard, Milly sending Shorty out to do just that and when he fails to hit it hard enough adding he should imagine it was Sissy, and Ahlers thinking his name worthy of perpetuation.

The humour, then, is essential to the play, since it lets in the light, and it is a considerable achievement in itself, since the utterly dreary circumstances of the lives of these people would appear to be totally antipathetic to humour. It seems even more improbable that Milly herself, when facing the very painful truth, can see the humour in situations, but she does:

MILLY: It sounded logical the way he put it. To do with function. The function of a thing, and being a woman, that meant babies. 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.¹

1 'Ibid', p. 67

The humour, in addition, shows Fugard's versatility. He is thought of as the writer who bears witness to the deprived, the destitute, those on the edge of mental breakdown, and the world's unwanted. These are not usually situations where humour is appropriate. Where it is appropriate, however, and necessary in order to rescue the action from descending deeper and deeper into dreariness, he is able to create it and make it an integral and redeeming part of character and situation.

Although the main focus of this play is on Milly, who is a most interesting and most human character full of contradiction, not unattractive failings, and gifted with a sense of humour, the greatest achievement of character creation in this play is undoubtedly Shorty. Although Milly, like Lena, wants her life, which as a situation is dramatic or potentially so, she only says the words: there is no felt connection or presented connection between the little girl in white that Milly used to be and her present condition. Milly, also is sterile - something, it would seem, almost self-inflicted, or at least most appropriate to her. At times she is savagely cruel. Such moments decrease her attractiveness. Shorty, however, has no such faults, though it is not intended to suggest he is perfect. On the contrary, one can find him annoying at times, and frustrating for the very reason that he is frustrated by his goodness. Can one be too good in this world? In the world of private relationships can one be too innocent for one's own good, a sort of non-political Brutus constantly making naively wrong decisions from the highest motives? It would seem so. When Milly tells

Shorty to imagine the clock is Sissy and therefore he should hit it harder, we laugh because it is a remark to which we easily respond since she has been so unkind to Shorty that his smacking her would be most appropriate. In reacting in this way we overlook the fact that he loves Sissy, and that it would be a violation of his nature to hit any woman, let alone Sissy. He is a gentle man to whom violence does not come easily. He got to know Sissy because he was moved to do an act of kindness:

DON: How long have you been married?

SHORTY: Going on for six months. I met her down by Booyens. Her Ma's place I was still a telegram boy then. Her Oupa died you see. So I gave her Ma the telegram and when she reads it she cries, Don! Hell, man, that old woman cries there on the back stoep. Sissy was in the yard. They got an old tyre hanging from a tree there ... for a swing, you know. She was swinging. Anyway, her Ma was crying there and Sissy calls out: "What's wrong Ma?" So I take off my cap and I go over and tell her. She asked my name. That's how we got friends with each other.¹

His love for Sissy is genuine, uncorruptible and lasting:

DON: How long do you give yourself?

SHORTY: What?

DON: Your marriage. How long do you think it will last?

SHORTY: Forever.

DON: In the face of all this !

SHORTY: We do love each other.

DON: Let's discuss this objectively. What do you think love means?

SHORTY: Well, I say to love something is to like it a lot, and more than anything else. And you?

1 'Ibid', p. 18

DON: Suppose I say sex.

SHORTY: You mean ?

DON: Yes. I put it to you that the heart
 of love throbs below the belt. Very
 good! (Makes a note.) Yes?

SHORTY: (Strongly). No!¹

His simple answers are direct and in marked contrast to Don's snide insinuations couched in Freudian terms. Throughout the play Shorty performs, almost unnoticed little acts of kindness which are not designed to bring him any accolades, but spring from the deep well of his goodness. He let's Milly connect with the boxing gloves because it will make her happy and take her mind off her problems. He does his best to make Milly's party go, joining in the songs while Don remains aloof. When Don and Milly say wounding things to him he is hurt and threatens to hit Don, but he says and does nothing unkind, unlike the other two, who are expert at savaging people. Shorty, although he has not been responsible for the insults, is the one who is keen to be friends again. When his wife returns from her evening out with Billy he treats her with kindness and love.

Although Shorty is almost illiterate, uncomplicated, honest, good, and simple, it must not therefore be thought that he is an easy character to have created. On the contrary, to have painted a picture of natural, unaffected goodness in an uneducated and ignorant human being who has moments that are almost sublime is an outstanding achievement. One is lead to think of Dostoievsky's "The Idiot". Milly, by comparison,

1 'Ibid', p. 19

though she is quite 'a character', is not nearly such an impressive creation. The playwright directs our gaze at her, and to a lesser extent at Don, and he makes them 'jump about' in order to maintain the play's momentum. Shorty, however, is able to grow without too much attention being directed at him. In this sense he is more natural: Milly and Don are exotics grown in the hothouse of the playwright's imagination, while Shorty is the rugged indigenous plant that grows without artificial aids. He is inarticulate, yet this very quality is made to work for him, not against him, in a manner that foreshadows Outa in 'Boesman and Lena'.

Yet Milly remains the heroine, or anti-heroine. It is significant that the word 'hope' occurs often in her speech. Although she has been battered by life, and frequently disappointed, she rejects Don's gloomy world-view and unhappy predictions for a more optimistic and hopeful outlook. Milly is a loser. Her lover has rejected her after ten years together, she has not been sufficiently successful to afford the life style she would like, and there is apparently little she has to look forward to, yet she remains undaunted. Life will not make her give up. She will continue to bully and badger her lodgers to get them to do her bidding:

SHORTY: I did like you said, Milly.

MILLY: And?

SHORTY: (faltering). And ... Mr. Ahlers ...
he said ...

DON: Thank God!

MILLY: Go on.

SHORTY: ... to tell you that he knows I don't shave
and

MILLY: Yes.

SHORTY: ... and that he is going out to dinner with an old friend from Germany.

MILLY: (quietly). Come here, Shorty.

SHORTY: No.

MILLY: Will you kindly come here.

SHORTY: I did it just the way you said, Milly.

MILLY: (now impotent with anger). Shorty Langeveld come here this very minute.

SHORTY: What are you going to do?

MILLY: I don't know yet

SHORTY: I'll ask him again.

MILLY: (stops and listens). Sssssh! (To the door.) It's him! (To Shorty.) Sit down! (She lights a cigarette.) Sit down, I said.

SHORTY: You're not cross with me no more?

MILLY: Sit down. Talk to Don. Pretend nothing's happened. It's him all right.¹

She then proceeds to give vent to her bitterness against Ahlers as he comes down the stairs. The words come pouring out in a great tirade. There are many examples of her bullying: she bullies Don and Shorty into the party which she hopes will put Ahlers in his place by showing him that she does not care, but ironically the very need to show this reveals to us how deeply she has been hurt and how much she still cares. Ahlers could have her back at any time if he so wished.

Milly also has a very cruel streak in her. What she says to Shorty at one point is pure vitriol, which he has done nothing to deserve. Her party has not been a success, and she takes

1 'Ibid', p. 22 - 23

out her bitterness on Shorty:

SHORTY: It wasn't so bad, Mill

MILLY: Is this all you want?

SHORTY: I'm happy.

MILLY: You're not.

SHORTY: But I am.

MILLY: 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 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.¹

To Don she is equally savage:

MILLY: 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. Furthermore, you also blow you nose on the sheets.

What she says to Shorty and Don is desperately wounding.

Milly would be a monster were she not redeemed by her resilience and her optimism, but above all by her sense of humour, since this mitigates the nastiness, and an impulse to generosity.

These two last qualities are shown in the following extract:

MILLY: I must have been off my mind! I mean, when I think of it now, was I blind or something? There he stood ten years ago, on my threshold, with his suitcase of artificial roses - and I could have slammed the door in his face! I only bought a bunch out of pity. He gave me the old song and dance. Down and out, no friends, where's the next meal and all of this on the verge of tears. So open went the big heart and out came the helping hand. It took him eight trips to move in he only had the one suitcase. I'm telling you it was pity. That's the only reason why I went out with him to begin with. He looked lonely and as it so happened it was the end of his first week under my roof. "Dress up,"

1 'Ibid', p. 60 - 61

2 'Ibid', p. 62

he said. "Ve must haf a celebrashin."
 And then they appeared! Those leather
 shorts with the bells and braces! Oh,
 my God! I nearly died of embarrassment.
 It was his legs! "You can't" I said.
 "I'm waring white. They'll stare."
 "But ve ver dem in da mountince." That
 was him. Da mountince!l

There is a way, apart from her disappointments and bitterness, in which Milly suffers. It is a mood of depression in which the colours of things go grey, and the world becomes dull and dreary for weeks on end. "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." But then things get better. "Mildred Jenkins, I say, You're Alive. And suddenly there is hope and colour again. That's something else. Hope."

Milly is hardly subtle, (though this is not to deny the subtlety of her creation). She is almost larger than life, domineering, cruel, bitter and disillusioned, at times gloomy, yet hopeful, generous on impulse, and optimistic. She is a complex character, often contradictory, a partially introverted extravert, and basically honest. Her hope is without foundation: we can see there is no escape from her sordid world for Milly, or for any of the characters in this play, so that it appears her hope is based on ignorance, which ironically is a source of strength. Yet this view is too simplistic. Don has done his best to dispel her ignorance about her situation, and her prospects for the future, so that she is aware of these possibilities. She refuses to accept them; she rejects them. She has the gift of hope, which she invincibly believes in. She makes Don's gloomy

forecasts irrelevant, so that we too question his view of the future.

Don is an unsatisfactory character creation. We never discover what he is about, since he provides a point of view without being a participant in the play and thus never really comes alive. He mouths some of the things the author wants to say. In preceding and succeeding plays characters rise to and struggle with their insights. In each case this provides a dramatic situation. Don, however, is an ineffectual frightened young man whose comments we find it difficult to accept since he has not won our respect as a person. Because of this and the fact that he never gets involved his pronouncements vitiate the proceedings. It would seem that Fugard has disobeyed his own rule, which is, 'Don't tell me, show me.' for Don is telling all the time:

MILLY: What do you mean, forgotten?

DON: You lose your place in the mind of man. With a bit of luck once or twice in your 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

MILLY: Rubbish. That's absolute rubbish. Morbid
 muck. 1

Nearly always when he speaks he is providing comment. However, Don's ineptness and passivity and sickness are a sort of showing, and it is merely the range of his ideas which is too much for the context. We are compelled to ask whether he is an example of the playwright failing to 'show' us, or whether he is a dramatisation of a human failure. The question is not difficult to answer: Don is not convincing as a failure. There is no point in the play when we are shown, or made to feel deeply, that Don is a failure; he merely says that he is, thus indulging his fear of life and his predilection for being gloomy. His fear and gloom are too glib, too convenient for the playwright's purpose to be convincing. He is being used to strike sparks off Milly, and thus to fire the play's action. This is why he says what he does, not because he believes in what he is saying. At other times he is Milly's stooge, rending Shorty at her behest and in conjunction with her. Milly is acting under the spur of disappointment and bitterness, but there is no accounting for Don's attack, nor for its unbelievably hurtful nature:

SHORTY: I don't mind a few jokes.

MILLY: There's only one. You. You're the joke. Sissy was right. You're ugly and a joke and I'm filled with shame to find you doing all this to mankind under my roof. Do you understand now? Must I say it again? We find you revolting. Ask him. (She smokes violently.)

SHORTY: (to Don). She's joking.

MILLY: (to Don). Tell him (Pause). Coward! Funk!

DON: What do you hope to gain from all this?

MILLY: The truth. I want you down here - rock bottom - where you belong. Are you scared?

DON: No.

MILLY: Well, he's waiting to hear it.

DON: I study you, Shorty.

MILLY: He thinks you're a curiosity.

DON: It's in the interests of Science.

MILLY: Get to the point.

DON: You see, you're what they mean by simple-minded.

MILLY: He once called you a perfect specimen of a retarded poor white.

DON: Overseas you'd be a labourer - digging up the streets in London.

MILLY: No you don't! You said he'd be emptying the dustbins in Birmingham.

DON: Here we have Natives to do the dirty work. You're saved by your white skin. Because examine the facts. You can just about read and write. You can't carry out the simple duties of a postman. I don't think you could do anything complicated. You blunder on from day to day with a weak defence - yet you survive. You even have a wife.

MILLY: Aha!

DON: I'm amazed at your survival. According to Darwin you should be dead. That's all.

MILLY: No it's not. You've left out the best bit of the lot. Sissy. Tell him what we whisper.

DON: I don't think she's properly your wife.

MILLY: Don't be clever. He's a simple-minded poor-white, remember.

DON: I don't think you know how.

MILLY: (to Shorty). Do you understand. He 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. (They watch Shorty intently).¹

Apart from the fact that all this is far too hurtful to be funny, it would also appear to be unnecessary in the sense that it is not warranted by the circumstances that give rise to it - Don, the puppet, obediently trots out this vitriolic beastliness when his puppet master, Milly, jerks the string. If the incident were convincing, Don would be an unspeakable person. He is not the portrayal of a failure, but a failure as a portrayal by the artist. He has been used at times to spark action, and at others to act as a commentator to make clear what has not been demonstrated by the action.

How well does Fugard know what he knows? He is portraying a society that is limitless in extent, for there is no escape from it for those who are its victims: they will wander for ever in this man-made hell. The characters have no roots in their world, and would all prefer to be somewhere else - that is, with the exception of Shorty. He does have roots in this world of sordid Braamfontein, since he knows its geography and this is important to him in his work. He would not rather be somewhere else. He rejects the thought of a move to Cape Town: its strangeness would be terrifying to him in his near-illiteracy.

The world of an impoverished urban environment, of a squalid boarding house with its culturally and emotionally deprived inmates, is one the playwright handles with a certainty derived from a total knowing. He can thus create that world in complete detail with absolute authenticity. There is a sureness of touch that reveals he is working from the inside. One of the reasons why Don is unconvincing is that he does not belong in this world: his ideas are too much for the context.

The vocabulary of Freud, and the glib cynicism of the undergraduate do not fit here.

The people Fugard examines in 'People Are Living There' have, basically, 'had it'. They are unaware of this fact, but even if they were aware of it they would not know how or why. Milly and Shorty will survive, but as the victims of circumstances of which they know nothing. The vision of the play shows the circumscribed view of those who are mentally shackled by ignorance or fear and can therefore never escape. 'People Are Living There' is a great shout of protest against a system that can allow people to become mentally and physically sterile, who are so emotionally deprived that they are sub-human; it speaks on behalf of those who are unwanted.

And yet it remains an unsatisfactory play. Its laughter is at people, rather than with them. Although its basic premiss is that people matter, it is often so needlessly cruel and wounding that one questions whether these people matter. The exception is Shorty, who alone of the characters is deeply examined and developed. He is a brilliant portrayal of uncorrupted innocence and goodness, and yet he is somehow peripheral. The main focus is Milly, and she is abrasive. The play is successful because of its humour, because it is true of a certain section of white South African society, because it asks some profound questions and yet expects no uncomfortable answers or indeed thought processes. It is a glimpse of, rather than a careful look at, a way of being smothered under the dung heap.

CHAPTER SIX"HELLO AND GOODBYE"

'The essential truth to be know concerning this universe is that it is absolutely devoid of finality. Nothing in the way of finality can be ascribed to it except through a lie or a mistake.'¹

"Hello and Goodbye" is part of a trilogy of family plays set in or around Port Elizabeth: the other two are 'The Blood Knot' and 'Boesman and Lena'. 'The Blood Knot' deals with the relationship of two brothers, 'Boesman and Lena' with husband and wife, while 'Hello and Goodbye' is an examination of the relationship between parents and children, and of the effect this has on the relationship between brother and sister. Not only is it set in the very heart of the family, it is also deeply rooted in the culture of white urban poverty. Both in specifics and in world view it is dominated by this crushing reality. In the lives of Hester and Johnnie however, there is something more than just this crushing poverty. Hester feels very strongly that the quality of their life as a family need not, even bearing in mind how poor they were, have been so spiritually second class, so deeply without joy. It is a criticism of her father's and her brother's Calvinism, which took great pleasure in disapproving of life, especially of her life. This had finally led to her leaving home to make her own way in life, and probably to her becoming a prostitute. When she returns home many years later her feelings are unchanged about her

1 Simone Weil, Waiting on God, translated by Emma Crauford, Collins, Fontana, 1974, p. 130

father and the Calvinist way, but she regrets the way in which she had treated her mother, realising now that she had rejected her mother's love.

She has come home not only for a share of the compensation she believes her father was paid by the Railways when he had the accident which left him a cripple, but also seeking one good or wholesome memory from her past. She is met by her brother's indifference and suspicion. When she enters one becomes aware that here, for the first time in a Fugard play, a 'real' woman is taking her place. She has been, and will continue to be, a Johannesburg prostitute, hard and bitter, yet she has her beauty too. The courage and honesty with which she faces her situation, her knowledge of the loneliness involved and the lack of love she must endure while deeply desiring more permanent relationships - all these constitute a heroism that touches her sordid life with great beauty.

Her brother, Johnnie, is in a desperate state. He is on the verge of a mental breakdown as he faces the loneliness and pointlessness of his life now that the father whom he loved is dead. As the black thoughts of his father's death and the emptiness of his life move in on him, Johnnie has to resort to desperate measures to escape them: he counts the number of seconds there have been since Christ, thus also hinting at the thematic centre of the play. ✓ This opening soliloquy of the play is most important, for it serves to define the circumstances of the play. Without it we would have difficulty in knowing about Johnnie's being on the edge of a mental breakdown. When there are only two people in a

play, how do you decide who is 'right' unless you have been given some perspective, and this the opening soliloquy does. Also, it establishes that the father is dead. When Johnnie therefore starts bluffing his sister that the old man is still alive, dramatic tension is produced, for we are waiting all the time for Hester to make the discovery that Johnnie is lying. Our knowledge of his being dead adds an ironic dimension throughout to his behaviour, for we see him obeying the commands of a dead father, and using his 'presence' in the next room to hide behind whenever Hester frightens him - and he frightens easily. Johnnie, we realise, is living a lie, he is a fake, and this is entirely appropriate to him in the context of the play.

One would think that, in these circumstances, he would be delighted by the visit of his long lost sister, yet the opposite is true: he is unwelcoming and suspicious when she arrives. Johnnie's history shows why he is like this. He had wanted to be an engine driver, yet when the moment of departure came he was unable to face the thought of leaving his father, nor had his father seen fit to encourage him to go. This, in a sense, was Johnnie's moment of death: he rejected life, and has been unable thereafter to accept any of its challenges or to make any of its affirmations. His is a living death. The squalor and dirt of the home (he can no longer be bothered to clean it) mirrors the state of his life) and in the end he moves even further into the dark by opting to be a spiritual and physical cripple. Hester offers him life in the shape of going to Johannesburg with her to start afresh, but he is unequal to the challenge: he has been dead too long for her to bring him back to life:

HESTER: Hang on, Johnnie. Listen - pack up and come with me.

JOHNNIE: Where?

HESTER: Joburg. Where else?

JOHNNIE: A holiday?

HESTER: Or for good.

JOHNNIE: And then?

HESTER: Anything. Anything's better than this, Boetie. Get a job, a girl, have some good times. What do you say?
(Pause. She realises it is useless.)
You won't come.

JOHNNIE: Suppose - just suppose there are ghosts, and he did come back to haunt, and I was gone! I'll stay. Just in case, I'll wait.¹

He has chosen the world of ghosts, and there is a very real sense in which he is a ghost himself. The crushing hand of his father, which blighted Johnnie's life in the past, lingers on after the father's death. The old man's selfishness has turned Johnnie into a ghost on crutches, for having come across these while Hester is looking for the compensation money he accepts them as his own, and they become his symbol. He is a mental and spiritual cripple, keen now to become a physical one as well, even although there is no need for him to be a cripple in any way:

HESTER: To hell with what I said. I'm here.
(Looking around.)
Mind you it's easier than I thought.

JOHNNIE: I've noticed that. It's always easier than we think.

HESTER: I thought it would be hard, or hurt - something like that. But here I am and it isn't so bad.

JOHNNIE: It's never as bad as we think.²

1 A. Fugard, Three Port Elizabeth Plays, 'Hello and Goodbye', Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 161.

2 Ibid, p. 111

Even though he does not know what Hester is talking about, these remarks are most revealing, as though Johnnie has had a sudden insight, though he is careful not to let the thoughts influence his behaviour or illumine his mind. He clings to what he is and rejects what he might be, terrified of the unknown or of any challenges, that might arise. The crutches will defuse any challenge:

JOHNNIE: Why not? It solves problems. Let's face it - a man on his own two legs is a shaky proposition They'd say shame, buy me a beer, help me on buses, stop the traffic when I cross the street.. slowly.¹

Johnnie, then, is a denial of life, but not so Hester: she is going back into the world, into life, even if it is the 'frogspawn of a blind man's ditch'. So although the play depicts life as an extremely sordid business, it presents affirmations of great beauty. God is absent from this world: Johnnie claims that He exists, though his life would seem to deny or vitiate such a claim, while Hester states quite categorically that there is no God, and that there never was, yet aspects of her life suggest that she is wrong in this assessment. Her honesty and courage, and the generosity of her impulsive gesture in inviting Johnnie to accompany her to Johannesburg to begin anew, invest her life with meaning. Ironically she is not aware of this, but we are. She is responding to situations in a way that makes life meaningful. According to Frankl, it is the nature of one's response to challenges that give significance to 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.

1 Ibid, p. 162

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 self-preservation 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."¹

Hester is choosing life rather than death: her words deny God, but her actions do not. In Johnnie's case the exact opposite is true. This poses the question why two children from the same family respond in such differing fashions. According to R. D. Laing, "Our behaviour is a function of our experience. We act according to the way we see things."² Hester and Johnnie react differently because they have been treated differently: Hester was disapproved of, rejected by her father, whereas Johnnie was not; on the contrary, he was his father's favourite, while Hester was regarded as an unclean thing. She becomes a rebel who is prepared to suffer, whereas Johnnie is ultimately suffocated by his father's embrace. In addition, there is a buried thesis in Fugard's plays that recognises women as the stronger vessels with a greater capacity not only to survive, but also to respond affirmatively. Morrie and Zach in 'The Blood Knot' settle for a life without hope, and there is a clear indication at the end of the play that their relationship will soon explode violently. Milly in 'People Are Living There' is a survivor: her counterpart, Don, isn't. Shorty, however, is in a

1 Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, Hodder and Stoughton, 1964, translated by Ilse Lasch, p. 67

2 R. D. Laing, The Politics of Experience, Penguin, 1969, p. 24

different category: his natural, unforced goodness and primal innocence render him immeasurable and incomparable by normal human standards. He is, therefore, a freak in the Fugardian world. In 'Boesman and Lena' it is Lena who seeks for explanations and who has the desire to identify, and who therefore is responding more positively. Boesman has settled for death. If we add Hester and Johnnie to this list of Fugardian characters it is easy to see that women emerge more favourably than men do from the mill of life.

Memory is a life-giving thing. Tsotsi discovers his way forward, and achieves redemption, by remembering his past. While he was in ignorance of his earlier life he lived in darkness, but the rediscovery of his past leads to awareness, which is painful but redeeming. Memory, at one point, also helps Morris and Zach. It is most important in Hester's case, but the mere fact of memory is no guarantee that its possessor will be lead towards enlightenment: Johnnie, even with memory, is in a state of darkness. Mainly he remembers his father, who was his raison d'être. Now that he is dead, there is no purpose in Johnnie's life: he merely exists to mourn his father's passing. Without memory, however, we are in a state of darkness or death, and there can be little or no awareness. Hester's illumination leads to no revelation or transformation of her life. Her world is metaphysically emptier and more chilly than Tsotsi's, so her courage and honesty are rendered more beautiful.

Hester returns to Port Elizabeth to check whether her memory of her past life there is correct and whether her attitude

to it is therefore justified. Ironically she is not frightened of finding things different, but of finding them the same. During the slow journey back she starts remembering details from the past. Some of these make her feel sick and she almost turns round and returns 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."

On the train she has to endure torture at the hands of a fat, Calvinist woman "dressed in black like bibles" who preached at her about the Kingdom of Heaven being at hand and the evils of Sunday sport, "and all that rubbish." There is irony in this situation, for it was the strict Calvinism of her father that she had left home to escape. Calvinism is more consciously a part of this play than of 'The Blood Knot': its effects are more deliberately examined. Johnny, as a young child, used to tell his father what Hester had been doing, thus getting her into trouble. Father and son enjoyed Hester's wrongdoings: 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." We are shown here the hypocritical side of Calvinism, the side which enjoys disapproving of other people's behaviour, for the act of disapproval is, consciously or not, an indulgence in self-righteousness. This aspect of Calvinism has no charity in it. Women are ipso facto unclean creatures. Hester's

mother, and Hester herself, were badly treated. Mrs. Smit, in fact, was driven into an early grave by the unhappiness, hard work, and grinding poverty of their life. She was a poor, frightened little woman harried 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. Calvinism, if we judge it by Johnnie and his father, leads to death, not life:

HESTER: somebody was something else
 married.
 (Retrieves the paper just discarded)
 Them. Mommie and Daddy. 1931.
 Graaf Reinet. Johannes Cornelius Smit.
 Anna Van Rooyen.

JOHNNIE: Happily married, faithfully parted by death.

HESTER: Since when?

JOHNNIE: 1931 onwards. Through the years, the
 setbacks, the hardships

HESTER: Since when was it happily married?

JOHNNIE: Daddy. He told me

HESTER: Then tell him from me he's a liar.

JOHNNIE: I've always believed it.

HESTER: Well, you're wrong. What did you know about
 her? You wasn't even five years when she
 died.

JOHNNIE: That 's true. I've no memories.

HESTER: And I've got plenty. So don't talk to
 me about happily married.

JOHNNIE: What was she like?

HESTER: See for yourself. There's a picture in the
 album - it's here somewhere. Smallish.
 None of her things fitted me when I was big.
 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.
 (She sees Johnnie staring at her.)
 I saw her face in the coffin.

JOHNNIE: You what?

HESTER: Saw her, in the coffin.

JOHNNIE: You peeped?

HESTER: They gave you a last look.
(She is talking with the calculated indifference of someone not sure of their self-control.)
He was there. Some uncles and aunties.

JOHNNIE: Where was I?

HESTER: Somewhere else. You were too young. They pushed me forward. 'Say goodbye to your Mommie, Hester'. I said it - but I couldn't cry. I was dry and hot inside. Ashamed! Of us. Of her, Mommie, for being dead and causing all the fuss. Of him, Daddy, his face cracked like one of our old plates, saying things he never said when she was alive.
And all the Uncles and Aunties kissing him and patting him on the back and saying 'Shame!' every time they saw you. It was those cousins of his from Despatch, who never came to visit us. The whole mob of them, all in black, the little girls in pretty dresses, looking at everything in the house and us looking like poor whites because there wasn't enough cups to give everybody coffee at the same time. I hated it! I hated Mommie for being dead. I couldn't cry. I cried later.
I don't know, maybe two days. Everything was over, the relatives gone. He was in bed with shock. The house was quiet like never before.
Then there was a knock at the back door. I opened it and it was that coolie who always sold the vegetables. 'Where's your Mommie?' he asked. I couldn't say anything at first. 'Girlie, where's your Mommie?' Then I told him. 'Dead.' I just said 'Dead,' and started to cry. He took off his hat and stood there watching me until I shouted 'Voetsek!' and chased him away - and sat down and cried and cried. Because suddenly I knew she was dead, and what it meant, being dead. It's goodbye for keeps. She was gone for ever. So I cried. There was something I wanted to do, but it was too late.

JOHNNIE: What did you want to do?

- HESTER: Nothing.
(Looking at the certificate in her hand.)
Johannes Cornelius Smit - Anna Van Rooyen.
Biggest mistake she ever made!
- JOHNNIE: You don't know what you're saying.
- HESTER: Yes, I do! I'm saying this was the biggest mistake she ever made. Marriage! One man's slave all your life, slog away until you're in your grave. For what? Happiness in Heaven? I seen them - Ma and the others like her, with more kids than they can count, and no money; bruises every pay-day 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!
- JOHNNIE: Daddy never beat Mommie. He was never drunk.
- HESTER: Because he couldn't. He was a crock. But he did it other ways. She fell into her grave the way they all do - tired, moeg. Frightened! I saw her.
- JOHNNIE: This is terrible, Hester.
- HESTER: You're damned right it is. It's hell. They live in hell, but they're too frightened to do anything about it because there's always somebody around shouting God and Judgement. Mommie should have taken what she wanted and then kicked him out.
- JOHNNIE: And the children.
- HESTER: So what! If you get them you get them and if you don't want them there's ways.
- JOHNNIE: Hester! Hester!¹

Soon after Hester's arrival, she and her brother are quarrelling. Hester, spitefully, tears up the letter she had written home, and which Johnny, in his slothfulness, has not yet read. This leaves the question of why she returns open. She is looking for something that will belong to her and her only "and no sharing with brothers or fathers." Johnnie is suspicious of her motives in returning, being convinced she wants something. He claims that he knows

1 A. Fugard, Three Port Elizabeth Plays, 'Hello and Goodbye', Oxford University Press, 1974. p. 148 - 150

Hester and therefore can interpret her, but she denies this. Hester's just being there is a crime in Johnnie's eyes:

HESTER: Must I have a reason to visit my own home?

JOHNNIE: Just leave us alone. We're doing all right.

HESTER: I haven't done anything, for Christ's sake.

JOHNNIE: You're here.¹

Johnnie claims that his father is groaning, and that it is Hester's fault: he is resuming his old habit of blaming her for everything:

HESTER: Fifteen years gone and one hour back but I done it again! Home sweet home where who did it means Hester done it. 'I didn't do it. She did it!' If I laughed too loud that did it. Have a little cry and that will do it. Sit still and mind your own business but sure as the lavatory stinks that will also do it.²

She threatens that one day she really will do 'it'; then she will be happy, and will say goodbye for good and go back home. Johnnie, engrossed in his deception, goes out, apparently to give his sick father medicine. Hester continues to muse about home. She sits in silence for a few seconds, then lifts her head to look round the room. The soullessness of this particular room reminds her of the rooms she has inhabited in Johannesburg, and that a room in a boarding house is now home. This is the start of one of her starkly honest memories of her life in Johannesburg. As though lancing a boil, she creates a terrifying picture of the loneliness, the hopelessness, the soullessness of these life situations; the sameness, the feeling of being lost:

1 Ibid, p. 125 - 126

2 Ibid, p. 127

HESTER: There's no address! No names, no numbers. A room somewhere, in a street somewhere. To Let is always the longest list, and they're all the same. 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. So many times! Then I started waking in the middle of the night wondering which one it was, which room lie there in the dark not 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? So you listen. But men dream about other women. The names they call are not yours. That's all. You don't know the room, you're not in his dream. Where do you belong?¹

Whatever else she may have returned for, Hester also has in mind the compensation money she thinks her father must have received: she is keen to get her hands on that. Johnnie's worst suspicions are confirmed, but he is prepared to strike a bargain. Hester may take any money there is if, having found it, she will then depart. He would like to add the rider that she should not return, but Hester will not agree to that. Before events have unfolded sufficiently for this bargain to be struck, however, Hester has unpacked with terrifying honesty the realities of her life as a prostitute. Johnnie at this point is continuing the pretence that his father is still alive, and becomes morally indignant when he feels his father's rights are being infringed. He resists any suggestion that the old man may die. When Hester is unpacking the first box, Johnnie is trying to satisfy his vulgar curiosity about the details of a prostitute's life, but his sister ignores his questions. The first article to come out of the box is a dress that belonged to her mother:

1 Ibid, p. 128

it still has her mother's smell. It brings back a flood of painful memories:

HESTER: Hey!
(Another smell)

JOHNNIE: What?

HESTER: It's her.

JOHNNIE: Who?

HESTER: Mommie. Smell, man. It's Mommie's smell.

JOHNNIE: (Smelling the dress). I can't remember.

HESTER: I'm telling you, it's her. I remember. How do you like that, hey? All these years. Hell, man, it hurts. Look, I claim this too. You don't need it. I'll put it on one side and pack it in with my things when I go. Remind me.¹

The next item she pulls out of the box is one of her own dresses when she was a girl. At the sight of this and its unpleasant memories it brings back she is almost unable to carry on.

At the start of Act Two the floor is cluttered with suitcases and boxes with their contents spilled or spilling out on the floor. Hester is examining a photo album, and both she and Johnnie are trying to remember names of friends and acquaintances from their past lives. Hester has been unpacking and for some time will continue to unpack, the suitcases and boxes that her brother brings in. There is a very real sense in which these are their lives: all the junk and rubbish represent what they were and how they lived. Hester feels this most strongly:

1 Ibid, p. 134

- JOHNNIE: (pointing to the crutches.) I put them on top of the wardrobe after he had that fall - he said his walking days were over - and then I forgot all about them.
- HESTER: What?
- JOHNNIE: These. The crutches.
- HESTER: (She can't find the knife and is trying to break the string with her hands.)
Doesn't he use them any more?
(Pause. Johnnie stares at her.)
I asked doesn't he use them any more!
- JOHNNIE: Sssssssh! I thought I heard a groan. No. I carry him. When I sweep the room I carry him in here. He's not heavy.
- HESTER: Where's that knife? This looks good, man. It's tied up tight. Maybe it's in here!
- JOHNNIE: It wasn't heavy.
- HESTER: That doesn't mean a thing. It would be bank-notes. Come on, use your muscles.
- JOHNNIE: You promised you would go, remember.
- HESTER: Yes, yes. Hurry up.
(The box is opened. Johnnie looks in past Hester's greedy hands.)
- JOHNNIE: Shoes!'

(Hester burrows through a collection of old shoes - men's, women's and children's. From the bottom of the box she brings out a paper bag which she tears open. The contents spill on to the floor. Johnnie retrieves one.)

Crutch-rubbers. Shoes and crutch-rubbers. Do you get it? Footwear! Amazing!
(After a final scrabble through the box, Hester sits down wearily on the suitcase.)
- HESTER: What's the time? No, don't tell me. It doesn't matter.
- JOHNNIE: (holding up a pair of girl's shoes). Yours?
- HESTER: Turn them around. Yes.
- JOHNNIE: Dainty. How old? Seven, eight, nine ...?
- HESTER: Older. Ten or eleven.
(Johnnie drops them carelessly on the floor.)
Don't do that! Give here.

(He passes her the shoes.)

Yes, one of my birthdays. Mommie bought them, I think. I wore them all that day and after that they were my specials - Sundays and so on - until they pinched so much I couldn't wear them any more.

JOHNNIE: They're still in good shape.

HESTER: So what good was it saving them up for best? What's the use of them now? I wanted them then, when they fitted, when the other girls were laughing at my old ones and my father's socks. The second-hand Smits of Valley Road. That was us! You in my vests, me in his socks, Mommie in his old shoes because the best went into boxes, the boxes into dupboards and then the door was locked. 'One day you'll thank me', she used to say. Ai, Mommie! You were wrong. There should have been more.

JOHNNIE: More what?

HESTER: Anything. Everything. There wasn't enough of anything except hard times.

JOHNNIE: Because we were hard up. Breadwinner out of action.

HESTER: Other people are also poor but they don't live like we did. Look at the Abels - with only an Ouma!
(Shoes in her hands.)
Even the birthdays were bugged up by a present you didn't want, and didn't get anyway because it had to be saved. For the rainy day! I've hated rain all my life. The terrible tomorrow - when we're broke, when we're hungry, when we're cold, when we're sick. Why hell did we go on living?

JOHNNIE: (leaving the box). This is fascinating. Let's test your powers of observation.
(He puts three men's shoes on the floor in front of Hester.)

HESTER: So?

JOHNNIE: Notice anything strange?

HESTER: I didn't come here to play games.

JOHNNIE: I spotted it. They're all left shoes. They're Daddy's. That's the leg he lost in the explosion!
(Hester pushes the shoes away with her foot.)
That's not a very nice thing to do.

HESTER: Run and tell him I did it. Go on ...
Run! Waste my time with rubbish.
(Looking around.)
That's what this is. Second-hand rubbish.
What's it good for?

(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.)

JOHNNIE: Our inheritance.

HESTER: All I'm inheriting tonight is bad memories.
Makes me sick just to look at it. Can't
we pack some away?

(Hester scoops up an armful and goes around looking for an empty box, but can't find one.)

JOHNNIE: I can't say I'm bored. Some interesting
things are coming to light.

(The crutch-rubbers are on.)

There! Good as new.¹

Various points emerge here with great dramatic force: not only was the quality of their life as a family 'second-hand', it was more second-hand than it needed to be - other families that were equally poor didn't live like the Smits did. It is clear their life was utterly without joy, so that Hester, who has come back seeking one good memory of her childhood and adolescence, finds that all she is "inheriting tonight is bad memories." While Hester is suffering under the impact of painful memories, Johnnie's interest in his father's crutches is burgeoning: they set up vibrations in his mind which he does not yet fathom, though it soon becomes clear that they are 'his' and he is 'theirs': Johnnie and the Crutches belong to each other. As soon as he has fitted new crutch-rubbers from out of a box the contents of which were at least partly to blame for the hurtful recollections his sister is suffering from, he tries them out, and then he begins

1 Ibid, p. 138 - 140

to enjoy himself on them: his memories now are all of his father. He recalls how his father used to stand at the window for hours on end watching the traffic, and he feels that with crutches he could also do this, since "it's like being propped up." There is powerful dramatic irony in this: Johnnie will prop himself up with crutches, both literally and metaphorically.

Johnnie asks Hester what she will do with the £500 when she finds it. One of the first things she thinks of is that she will stay at the sort of posh hotel where previously she had been refused service because she was sitting by herself in the lounge. The memory of her humiliation makes her indignant. She comments acidly upon the hypocrisy of the business world and society, and on marriage, which also involves women in selling what they've got between their legs, while men, although married, continue to use prostitutes:

HESTER: They're supposed to be open to the public! But when I walked in 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. And then let one of those bitches smile as though she's not also selling what she's got between her legs. Give them a chance to say Yes and I DO - because who the hell ever says no - put a ring on their finger and they think they're better.' That being married gives them a licence to do it.' I'm sick of that lot with their husbands and fashions and happy families. They don't fool me. And I'll tell them. Happy families is fat men crawling on to frightened women. And when you've had enough he doesn't stop 'lady'. I've washed more of your husbands out of me than ever gave you babies.

JOHNNIE: That's known as exposing your dirty linen in a place of public entertainment.

HESTER: Who the hell do they think they are? Laughing at us like we're a dirty joke or something. Let them live in a back-room where the lavatory is blocked again and the drain is crawling with cockroaches and see if they go on smelling like the soap counter in Woolworth's. Money, brother, Money! You can do anything with money. And my turn is coming. Bring in the boxes. I've wasted enough time.¹

What Hester says reveals not only the sordid horror of a prostitute's life, but also the cultural paucity inherent in such a way. That she should choose in the first place to spend her money like this tells us how narrow and confined her world is, and how limited her choice. It also makes abundantly clear that prostitutes are people by revealing to us their humanity in the suffering involved. Fugard is bearing witness for those who have to live by these means.

Hester goes on unpacking boxes with vegetable seeds, old newspapers, nails, screws, tools, old keys, shoes, crutch rubbers - junk of all sorts. It brings her eventually to a brutally harsh realisation of who they were, what they were, and how utterly lacking in quality their way of life was:

HESTER: Who the hell would have wanted anything to do with us? We weren't just poor. It was something worse. Second-hand!' Life in here was second-hand.... used up and old before we even got it. Nothing ever reached us new. Even the days felt like the whole world had lived them out before they reached us.²

In her search through all the detritus of their lives Hester forgets what it is she is looking for. Almost she is overwhelmed by the rubbish that makes up the family's biography: the muddle about her on the floor is the muddle

1 Ibid, p. 142

2 Ibid, p. 146

her mind is in at this moment. She cannot remember which boxes she has examined, and which are yet to be done. She is becoming desperate:

(Johnnie reappears empty-handed.)

JOHNNIE: Hester.

HESTER: Where's the box?

(Exit Johnnie)

Why the hell did I ever come back?

(Johnnie reappears, a box in his hand, but he doesn't hand it over immediately.)

JOHNNIE: Hester.

HESTER: Wasn't there one thing worth saving from all those years!'

JOHNNIE: Hester!

HESTER: I'm not talking loud.

JOHNNIE: What will you do if you don't find it?

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?
(Hester looks with bewilderment at the chaos around her).
You've forgotten what you're looking for!

HESTER: Shut up!
(She moves among the boxes with growing desperation)
You think I've missed it? How long have I been ? Which one did you bring in last? Are you deaf? When did this one come in?¹

Her statement that she would like to find just one thing that has a good memory, one thing that made her happy, is like a

1 Ibid, p. 146 - 147

cry of anguish, a cry for help that goes unheeded and therefore unanswered. Here we are not being told what it is like to suffer; we are being shown it and made to feel it ourselves. We identify with Hester, so that we feel more acutely her agony of spirit.

One of the main insights of the play is the cramping, destructive, life-denying effects of poverty when it occurs in conjunction with a world view that has no room for joy and charity. "Hello and Goodbye" gives us a devastating portrait of a marriage that is spawned by these conditions, especially when the family concerned, or at least the male part of it, suffers not only from a blight of the spirit that destroys all joy, but also is a prisoner of its own 'mind-forged manacles'. Father and son are imprisoned by the narrowness of their creed, and the whole family pays the consequences. Johnnie maintains their parents had a happy marriage, but Hester soon dispels that idea. Their mother was a small frightened, down-trodden, over-worked woman who died of fatigue and harrassment by an over-bearing father. Marriage was the biggest mistake she ever made. Johnnie demurs, but Hester spells it out:

HESTER: Marriage! One man's slave all your life....¹

Hester rejects this way utterly because she loathes it so completely. For all its hideousness and sordidness, her 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

1 Please see extract already quoted on p. 141

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 been taken in 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:

This is the most important insight or revelation of 'Hello and Goodbye'. Nor is this view vitiated by Hester's admission, a moment later, that unwanted children (it is not clear whether they are in the foetal stage or have actually been born) can be got rid of. 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."

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:

HESTER: 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

Being born? Being dead? They're mistakes.
All we unpacked here tonight is mistakes.¹

Johnnie's response is to dare Hester to commit suicide, and he is genuinely keen for her to do so. Hester curtly refuses. Johnnie's reply is most revealing: "Too much to hope for." What sort of man would dare his sister to commit suicide, be keen for her to do it, and express disappointment when she does not.

Johnnie may appear at first to be the more mild and less nasty, but in fact he is revealed as very much more unhealthy. To begin with, he does not have his sister's honesty, there being areas of his life he cannot face at all. He is nastily inquisitive about the sordid details of Hester's life, and he has the macabre desire to see her commit suicide. All his life he has been shielded by home and daddy: he has only lived by proxy, and now that his father is dead there is nothing - his existence will become even more life denying. Hester's life, on the other hand, has some beauty, for all her faults. Her awareness, her courage, and her honesty set off, and illumine, and therefore transcend, the sordid horrors of a whore's life. She glosses over nothing.

At this moment Hester comes across a letter from the Railways about Johnnie. It is clear he had lied to her when he said he tore up his application to be a learner stoker. Now she forces Johnnie to admit the truth. Although he loved engines, he could go no further than the bridge at the end of Valley Road. There he turned round and went back to daddy. The details that he mentions in relating this story are also

1 Ibid, p. 151

most character revealing. Johnnie is still a little boy. He loves his father, and is happy to be subservient, perhaps because he is unwilling or unable to make decisions for himself:

JOHNNIE: I got as far as the bridge. Nine o'clock in the morning, sun shining, the world a hustle and a bustle, everybody busy, happy - only him, back there

So, back there. Simple as that. Here. I told him I missed the train. We agreed it was God's will being done. He helped me unpack. Said I could still keep the shirt.

(Pause)

He's not to blame. He was no problem. What he wants, or God wants I can do. I fetch, I cook, I sweep, I wash, I wait it was ME. What I wanted.¹

He enjoys being a skivvy, having no responsibility for his own life. The unconscious arrogance of 'we agreed it was God's will' is breathtakingly ironical. In the end, then, Johnnie is a little boy, incapable of cutting the umbilical chord. He sums himself up pretty well when he says, "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."² This is why he is unable to leave home to become an engine driver, despite a love of steam engines that causes him to become lyrical when describing them. They give him, the poor white, a feeling of power: he describes them in terms which contrast ironically with his feebleness and lack of power and life:

JOHNNIE: Yes, I wanted to go. They are the most beautiful things in the world! Black, and hot, hissing, and the red glow of their furnaces, their whistles blowing out like ribbons in the wind! And the engine driver, grade one, and his stoker up there, leaning out of the cab, watching the world like kings!³

1 Ibid, p. 154

2 Ibid, p. 154

3 Ibid, p. 153

This is a hymn to a steam engine. Earlier in the play, Johnnie's speech rhythm unconsciously takes on the rhythm of a train when he is talking of driving an engine:

JOHNNIE: Onward, always onward. Eyes on the road. Leave the corner and over the bridge, under the cliffs and long the river and no regrets. I never look back.¹

There is an irony here, for even in this he is taking after his father, who was a railwayman.

Johnnie then, is a nothing. When Hester offers him life, an escape, he is unable to accept:

HESTER: Don't make yourself another piece of junk! Hate him! It's clean and new. Let's find something tonight that isn't worn out and secondhand - something bright and sharp and dangerous.

(Johnnie reacts with terror to this tirade. he picks up the crutches but Hester tries to stop him from going on to them.)

Don't Johnnie!

JOHNNIE: Let go.

HESTER: No.

JOHNNIE: I feel faint.

HESTER: They're not yours.

JOHNNIE: They fit.

HESTER: Don't you understand. They're his. They're him.

JOHNNIE: I'll ask him for them - tomorrow - when you're gone - I'll tell him

HESTER: Are you mad?

JOHNNIE: He doesn't need them. I carry him

HESTER: You don't need them!

JOHNNIE: (anguish) I NEED SOMETHING! LOOK AT ME!
(Hester lets go of them and Johnnie goes on to them with feverish intensity.)
Aina! Aina!

1 Ibid, p. 121

HESTER: Then take them. Be cripple!

JOHNNIE: God's will be done¹

A little later Hester again offers him a fresh start in Johannesburg. He rejects that too. He is becoming a mental and spiritual cripple before our very eyes: the crutches are the symbol of this. God to him is also a crutch.

Hester does not need Johnnie to compel her towards the truth for she reveals her own truths, but Johnnie has to be coerced into being honest by his sister's stern cross-examination and scorn. Hester, in other words, faces the truth and admits harsh reality when she comes upon it. No one else has to lead her to it and force her to admit what is true. The unpacking of the past becomes the very play itself: memory, the means to the future, the means by which sister and brother reveal themselves as if under a microscope, emerges from the boxes and their contents. This emergence means that the physical unpacking of the boxes becomes far more: it becomes an unpacking of their lives for us to examine. The author provides a situation in which his protagonists, by trying to find themselves also reveal themselves: the past is probed by examining in the present, and before our eyes, the objects that formed a considerable part of their lives. The past is thus made part of the present, which also is probed: the spotlight (which becomes a searchlight) can swing in an arc lighting the past, then the present, revealing as it swings the dependence of one on the other.

1 Ibid, p. 154 - 155

Hester accuses Johnnie of wanting to be his father, and of wanting to creep right up his father's arse. Johnnie keeps on about God, while Hester is moved to deny God's existence. There is nothing but rubbish. At this point Hester 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 had moved her so deeply when she unpacked it and which she wishes to take away with her) and hurls it to the floor. This is ironic because it mirrors what had happened in their relationship earlier. She retrieves it, but now the smell has gone and it has become an empty rag: she is too late again. This incident is symbolic, in that Hester is abandoning or discarding an identity, almost a skin. It is a painful business, and provides one of the most moving moments in the play. Hester sees with the utmost clarity how she came to overlook her mother; how, amidst the rubbish and the hating she missed the opportunity to love her. She realises, and the realisation hurts, that her mother was clean, but that she is dirty:

HESTER: 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 ...
 (Amok among the contents of the boxes - picking up and throwing about whatever she can get her hands on.)
 second-hand poor-white junk!
 (Realizes too late that she has just hurled her mother's dress to the floor.)
 No, no! Look what I've done. Why didn't you stop me?
 (She retrieves it.)
 Mommie, not you. I forgot, not you.
 (Smelling it.)
 She's gone. The smell ... I can't ...
 It's gone.

Too late again. Just a rag. An empty rag. That's how it happened. 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.

(Smelling the dress.)

What was it? Mothballs and blue soap. Mothballs in the wardrobe, sixpence blue soap from the Chinaman on the corner. Washing always washing. 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.

JOHNNIE: Pain?

HESTER: It hurts.

JOHNNIE: Home ground!

HESTER: It hurts.

JOHNNIE: An ache or a throb?

HESTER: (intoning non-stop). Aina aina aina¹

At this moment Hester is sublime, a totally moral creature: her complete honesty is more eloquent than the denial of God with which the extract commences.

A critical moment has been reached. Johnnie tells Hester that there are no more suitcases or boxes to bring in for her to unpack. Hester accuses Johnnie of stealing the £500. He denies it. She storms into father's room, and discovers (while Johnnie awaits the exposure of his bluff in great trepidation) that father is not there. He is dead and buried and has been for some time. Hester hits Johnnie, then pulls the crutches out from under his arms so that he falls down. She then kicks him, and kneels down to beat him with clenched fists. Eventually she stops from sheer exhaustion. Johnnie remains on the floor, talking. He does not move

1 Ibid, p. 155 - 156

until after Hester has gone. The talk is all of his father. It turns out that he died in Johnnie's sleep. Johnnie gives all the details of how he discovered it. Hester goes out (Johnnie goes on talking) and when she returns she has her coat on and is carrying her suitcase. She is going. She asks why Johnnie lied to her about their father. He says that pretending like that helped. He rejects Hester's offer to start afresh in Johannesburg, positively his last chance, but he cannot change from what he has become - one of the living dead. By assuming instead the persona of his father he chooses yet again a form of death in life.¹ Hester goes back to her existence in Johannesburg; ironically, this is a choosing of life.

If Dickens had written this play it would perhaps have verged on the sentimental, for it has all the ingredients of a 'tear-jerker.' Fugard, however, has avoided this trap by making Hester without any self-pity, and with an astonishingly robust honesty when she examines her own life. The realities of a whore's life are closely examined without any flinching. Hester even has a certain grim sense of humour that keeps sentimentality firmly at bay. The themes of the play demand honesty, and this they get.

1 cf with James Joyce's living dead in 'The Dubliners'.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"BOESMAN AND LENA"

"We're whiteman's rubbish His rubbish is people." ¹

This play is the last that will be considered in this thesis. It is the high point of Fugard's dramatic art, and marks the end, not of his development as an artist, but of one stage (and that a major one) in that development. Although it appears to be a simple play, it is in fact one of his most complex dramatic structures.

At the simplest level it is the story of a man and a woman whose shack in Port Elizabeth, together with those of other Coloured people, has been demolished by European squatter removers. These two, Boesman and Lena, are therefore once again wanderers, a paradoxical Adam and Eve thrust violently into the wilderness by the white gods of South Africa. Their first night's resting place is in the mud at Swartkops, where they are fortuitously joined by a dying African, another one of life's outcasts. When he dies during that first night they pack up and return to the darkness from which they have emerged at the start of the play: in Outa's death Lena has seen Boesman's fate, and her own. They are walking towards the darkness of death. Most of the intervening time since we first met them has been spent restlessly in bitter recriminations. Why then do they stay together? Why do they not separate? For a while Lena has clung to the African, Outa, having rejected Boesman, but then Outa dies. She is

1 A. Fugard, Three Port Elizabeth Plays, 'Boesman and Lena', Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 205

bitterly disappointed at his premature departure, for now, once again, she has only Boesman to turn to. It is clear that it is life and the force of circumstances that tie them to each other. Although their union is bitter and violent, they have no one else to turn to. They need each other, even if it is only as a foil for fists or each other's verbal whiplashes.

Paradoxically there is a strange and tentative love in this hate, for their very unkindness to each other is a measure of their mutual need. His apparent hatred of Lena is a venting of his self-loathing on someone else. Neither has more than a limited awareness. As they plead, nag and threaten on in low-level specifics, they fulfill the playwright's overall design. They quarrel over the past and the present, apparently just conducting their lives in the style to which they are accustomed, but for the audience they are doing more: they are unpacking the details, circumstances and history of their lives, and this reveals not only their characters but also the white man's system which forces them to live as they do. However, more is suggested about this system than that it is imposed by Europeans and that it is iniquitous: the broader feature of the design says that it is life itself, the human condition itself, that is the iniquitous system.

As the action unfolds we become aware of Boesman's sadism: his pleasure in life comes from being mean to Lena. He lives without questioning, and without hope, since he thinks of himself as white man's rubbish in a pointless game of existence. In a very real sense he has become his belief - he is white

man's rubbish. He fawns and cringes before them, while being violent and brutal to those he regards as weaker or beneath him in status. In his prejudice against the 'kaffers' he reflects the feelings of the society that has spawned him: what the white man feels for him he passes on with interest to the 'kaffers'. Inevitably he and Lena drink to find oblivion, cessation of the pain of being alive and conscious of the ills that assail their flesh.¹

✓ The central issue of the play is the pain of life for Boesman and Lena: physically, mentally and spiritually they are impoverished. This pain is built into the presented world of the play. They arrive in the Swartkops' mud - the setting of the play - from a squatters' settlement which has just been bulldozed. They carry their few miserable possessions on their backs. The evening is cold, and rain threatens. Boesman erects a shelter out of white man's rubbish, while Lena makes a fire to heat the water for tea which, with dry bread, will be their meal. During these activities Lena is looking for company and compassion from Boesman, but he denies her, so there is no comfort in that direction:

LENA: Haai, Boesman! Why here? This place hasn't been good to us. All we've had next to the Modderspuit is hard times (A little laugh.) And wet ones.

1 Cf following quote from 'The Guest' by A. Fugard and R. Devenish, Ad. Donker, 1977, p. 71:

Visser: Yes. I would have like to have believed there was something I could do to

Marais: Remedy life.

Visser: I see. That is the name of the ailment now?

Marais: Yes. the very existence of life was founded on sorrow and pain, and that there was ultimately only one perfect remedy to put an end to one's existence.

LENA: Remember that night the water came up so high? When we woke up pap nat with all our things floating down to the bridge. You got such a skrik you ran the wrong way. (She laughs at the memory.)

BOESMAN: I didn't!

LENA: What were you doing in the deep water? Having a wash? (Another laugh.) It was almost up with you that night. Hey! When was that? Last time? (Pause Lena thinks.) Boesman! When was our last time here? I'm talking to you. (Boesman deliberately ignores her, and carries on sorting out the contents of his bundle.) Boesman!!! (Pause No reaction from him.) Don't be like that tonight, man. This is a lonely place. Just us two. Talk to me.

BOESMAN: I've got nothing left to say to you. Talk to yourself.

LENA: I'll go mad.

BOESMAN: What do you mean, 'go' mad? You've been talking to yourself since (Pause ... Lena waits, he remembers.) Ja! since our first walk.¹

Nor does she get any help when she tries to remember how she arrived where she is. There is only grim irony for we are made aware by Fugard of a deeper meaning to her question: how did she and Boesman come to be as they are? We are given no direct answer, but the one we get indirectly and very clearly from the play is that there is no answer. Lena discovers at the end the order of her physical progression to Swartkops and realises that it answers nothing: her search for meaning ends in frustration. We have been warned all along by the playwright that the answer she seeks will be useless, but were hoping there would be an answer to the bigger

1 Three Port Elizabeth Plays, 'Boesman and Lena', p. 173

question. There isn't. Their life is pointless, a perfect illustration of Hobbes's dictum that the life of a man is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

Yet this is not the whole complex story: Lena is not brutish, and there are moments when Boesman escapes briefly from being so. He does this when he is facing honestly the harsh realities of his life: he has no illusions about what he is - white man's rubbish. Lena too is touched with nobility. It is just the fact that she has not been brutalized by a life that should have rendered her so that lends her this dignity. Because she is capable of compassion for Outa, despite her prejudices against Africans, she grows in stature:

LENA: Maybe he's thirsty.

BOESMAN: And us?

LENA: Only water.

BOESMAN: It's scarce here.

LENA: I'll fetch from Swartkops tomorrow.

BOESMAN: To hell! He doesn't belong to us.
(Grabs the bottle away from her and together with the other one puts it inside the pondok.)

LENA: There was plenty of times his sort gave us water on the road.

BOESMAN: It's different now.

LENA: How?

BOESMAN: Because I say so.

LENA: Because this time you got the water, hey!
(Back to the old man.)
Does Outa come far?
(She stands and waits Nothing)

LENA: We're from Korsten. They kicked us out there this morning.
(Nothing.)
It's a hard life for us brown people, hey.

BOESMAN: He's not brown people, he's black people.

LENA: They got feelings too. Not so, Outa?

BOESMAN: You'll get some feelings if you don't watch that fire.
(Lena is waiting for a word from the old man with growing desperation and irritation.)

LENA: What's the matter? You sick? Where's it hurt?
(Nothing.)
Hey! I'm speaking to you.
(The old man murmurs in Xhosa.)
Stop that baboon language! Waar kry jy seer?¹

Lena is discomfited and disconsolate, much to Boesman's amusement, but a minute or two later she is back by Outa's side, immensely moved by his speaking of her name:

LENA: What's the matter with you? Kaffers laugh at it too. It's mos funny. Me!
Ou meid being donnered!
(Pause she moves away to some small chore at the fire. After this she looks up at the old man, and then goes slowly to him.)
Wasn't it funny?
(She moves closer.)
Hey, look at me?
(He looks at her.)
My name is Lena.
(She pats herself on the chest. Nothing happens. She tries again, but this time she pats him.)
Outa..... You (patting herself)
..... Lena me.

OLD MAN: Lena.

LENA: (Excited.) Ewe! Lena!

OLD MAN: Lena.

LENA: (softly.) My God!
(She looks around desperately, then after a quick look in the direction in which Boesman disappeared she goes to the half-finished shelter and fetches one of the bottles of water. She uncorks it and hurries back to the old man.)

LENA: (offering the bottle.) Water. Water!
Manzi!¹

She is further enlarged by her honesty in facing the truth about her life, by her search for meaning within the limits of her capabilities, and by her courage in accepting that her life is what it is, despite her desire to have life and have it more abundantly. She says two or three times during the course of the play that she wants her life. These cries are heartrending without being sentimental, since her life is so mean and hard and impoverished. Lena, however, is no saint. At times she is hard and savage. She uses Outa as a scourge with which to lash Boesman: there is no question of her being merely altruistic in her compassion. But although this is so there is no doubt that her feelings of pity for Outa are genuine.

What, then, is Lena's "meaning"? We see clearly that, despite the heartbreak, sorrow and disillusion, she has rich humanity. This is the only spiritual quality in her world, and it lifts her above Boesman, who has none and who, therefore, is a lost soul: it is a very little flame that illumines only a tiny part of the darkness of their lives, and the grimness of the winter mud of Swartkops.

Boesman does his best to extinguish this flame. He is frightened and lacking in confidence, and his only answer to his problems is to use his fists on them. Regularly he beats up Lena, and he does it thoroughly, particularly when it is he who has made the mistake.

1 Ibid p. 188 - 189

BOESMAN: (holding up a clenched fist.) Here!

LENA: Oppas! You'll go too far one day. Death penalty.

BOESMAN: For you? (Derisive laughter.) Not guilty and discharge.

LENA: Don't talk big. You're frightened of the rope. When you stop hitting it's not because you're moeg or had enough. You're frightened! Ja.

(Pause.)

Ja. That's when I feel it most. When you do it carefully. The last few when you aim. I count them. One another one wait for the next one! He's only resting.

(Pause.)¹

He seems to require no love, because there is a very real sense in which he has been killed as a person. Lena, however, because she is still 'alive', does need love and companionship. She tries to get it from Boesman, but he uses her need as a club with which to bruise her. When she defends herself successfully, and gives back better than she gets, he resorts to violence. Lena cannot win. The force of non-life is too much. The only time Lena triumphs over Boesman is near the end, when she succeeds in thoroughly frightening him about Outa's death. She is able to make him think he will get the blame for Outa's death, because he yielded to his penchant for violence and savagely beat up the dead body, which will show the bruises. Boesman could now easily kill Lena, but that would merely mean he had two dead bodies to account for. The whole situation is grimly humourous:

BOESMAN: Then the kaffer came. And you called him to the fire.

LENA: 'Siestoggies, my baas.'

1 Ibid, p. 181 - 182

BOESMAN: I didn't want him. I didn't touch him.

LENA: 'Boesman didn't want him, baas.'

BOESMAN: I hate kaffers.

LENA: 'He hates kaffers, baas.'

BOESMAN: NO!!

LENA: 'He loves kaffers, baas.'

BOESMAN: God, Lena!

(He grabs a vottle and moves violently towards her. He stops himself in time. Lena has made no move to escape or protect herself.)

LENA: Ja, got to be careful now. There's one already.
(Boesman is now very frightened. Lena watches him.)¹

The incident builds up into a flaming row. Boesman decides to go. Lena declares she is not going with him, but will sleep in the shelter he has built. He smashes the shelter with methodical and controlled violence. As he does so Lena prances round him shouting in exactly the same way Boesman had done that morning when the bulldozer was demolishing the pondoks at Korsten. There is a subtle irony here, for Boesman is doing the whiteman's work for him, which fact Lena's pantomime behaviour underlines. She urges him to take everything, as she wants nothing:

LENA: Everything! I want boggerall. It's my life but I don't want to feel it any more. I've held on tight too long. I want to let go. I want nothing!²

She becomes more angry as Boesman loads all their possessions on to his back, urging him to be away and to say goodbye to each other. But when her anger is at its height, and she has cursed Outa for dying too soon, her emotion suddenly ebbs

1 Ibid, p. 215 - 216

2 Ibid, p. 219

away and she returns to Boesman and starts to relieve him of part of his load. In the moment of her triumph the tie that binds them together reasserts itself, and they set off on their travels once more, but one feels she has the initiative, a moral ascendancy over him, since he is afraid and she is not. She is giving the orders, and is prepared to face his violence when it comes. Next time he must hit the lights out. Despite the realisation that the knowledge she sought explains nothing, there is the acceptance of her life as it is. Perhaps it is resignation rather than acceptance, and this too is a strength:

LENA: (Violently.) So what you waiting for? Can't we say goodbye? We'll have to do it one day. It's not for ever. Come on. Let's say it now. Goodbye! Okay, now go. Go!! Walk!!
 (Lena turns her back on him violently and walks away. Boesman stands motionless. She ends beside the old man.)
Outa, why the hell you do it so soon? There's things I didn't tell you, man. And now this as well. It's still happening! (Softly.) Moer moer moer. Can't throw yourself away before your time. Hey, Outa. Even you had to wait for it.
 (She gets up slowly and goes to Boesman.)
 Give!
 (He passes over the bucket.)
 Hasn't got a hole in it yet. Might be whiteman's rubbish, but I can still use it. (It goes on to her head.)
 Where we going? Better be far. Coegakop. That's our farthest. That's where we started.

BOESMAN: Coega to Veeplaas.

LENA: (slowly loading up the rest of her share.)
 First walk. I always remember that one. It's the others.

BOESMAN: (as Lena loads.) Veeplaas to Redhouse.
 On baas Robbie's place.

LENA: My God! Ou baas Robbie.

BOESMAN: Redhouse to Missionvale I worked on the saltpans. Missionvale to Bethelsdorp. Back again to Redhouse that's where the child died. Then to Kleinskool. Kleinskool to Veeplaas. Veeplaas to here. First time. After that, Redhouse, baas Robbie was dead, Bethelsdorp, Korsten, Veeplaas, back here the second time. Then Missionvale again, Veeplaas, Korsten, and then here, now.

LENA: (pause ... she is loaded.)
Is that the way it was? How I got here?

BOESMAN: Yes.

LENA: Truly?

BOESMAN: Yes.

(Pause.)

LENA: It doesn't explain anything.

BOESMAN: I know.

LENA: Anyway, somebody saw a little bit. Dog and a dead man.

(They are ready to go.)

I'm alive, Boesman. There's daylights left in me. You still got a chance. Don't lose it. Next time you want to kill me, do it. Really do it. When you hit, hit those lights out. Don't be too late. Do it yourself. Don't let the old bruises put the rope around your neck. Okay. But not so fast. It's dark.

(They look around for the last time, then turn and walk off into the darkness.)¹

The supreme irony of the play is illustrated by this incident: Boesman and Lena, who only have each other, give each other no love, but only blows and curses. Admittedly Lena would respond if Boesman were to offer kindness, but she is forced into nastiness to defend herself, so the relationship, while sustaining them at one level, is at a deeper level derisive and destructive. What should be life-giving becomes life-destroying. Life is preying upon itself:

1 Ibid, p. 220 - 221

they are in a hell like Dante's where the victims eat each other.

The play is a savage commentary on South African society which reduces people to such poverty and degradation. Here are unaccommodated man and woman, the nuclear human family, making shelters from rubbish found along the way, buying food by trading in old bottles or selling mud prawns caught when the tide is out: houseless poverty. Whites reject blacks and coloureds, and the coloureds reject blacks. Whites remain aloof and do not interfere unless something goes wrong or some one dies, then they begin to ask questions. In these circumstances Lena's question after Outa's death is a cry of anguish: "Why don't they ask some questions when we're alive?" The grim irony of the situation is accentuated by the fact that even Lena's first reaction to Outa is one of disappointment that he is an African, then anger when he doesn't respond to her questions. Her humanity and compassion triumph, however, over her prejudice, despite Boesman's mockery of her and the 'kaffers'.

Outa, although he only murmurs occasionally, plays an important part in this play. By his silence he is a most eloquent spokesman for the silent masses, the inarticulate and oppressed, and for the real answer of silence to all mankind's questions. He is a constant reminder that what we are seeing is only a very small part of the problem. His death, among strangers, so silent, so moving - he clutches Lena's finger and then lets go - raises many questions. How does a dying man come to be on the Swartkops mud? Why is he alone? How can things like this happen in the world? And

it is a foreshadowing of the deaths of Boesman and Lena, or perhaps only Lena who, like Outa, will simply let go. Outa gives the play universality.

There is another sense in which Outa is important in the action of the play. Because he is a human being who, for the most part, sits quietly on the stage, he does not distract attention from the main theme, which concerns Boesman and Lena. On the contrary, he adds to it, his presence clearly integral to it, for by sitting silent he enables the action to unfold all the quicker: Lena keeps talking to him, and in doing so reveals herself to us. Thus Outa serves both the action and the author's purpose, which is to get Lena to talk, and by so doing to unpack her past in a way that reveals not only their lives but their characters. He is, like God, a witness to Lena's life.

Lena sets the action in motion by recollecting and partially reliving what happened that morning. This is combined with talk relating to the present, the way they are feeling, and their weariness after the long walk. She keeps asking questions, and this annoys Boesman. She is searching for meaning by trying to discover how she had got to Swartkops. All the time they quarrel. This goes on until Outa arrives, but by now they have made progress: the fire is ready, the 'house' has been built, and the night is settling down. Outa improves the situation, for he broadens and deepens the conflict between Boesman and Lena. Also he gives Lena, by being there and being prepared to listen, an opportunity and excuse to indulge in the talk of all the things she needs to

get off her chest. In the ache of her loneliness it is luxury to have a willing listener. One is reminded of her dog, 'Hond', whose presence assuaged her loneliness:

LENA: He doesn't like dogs. They don't like him. But when he wasn't looking I threw food.
 (Laughs secretively.)
 I won, Outa! One night the dog came in when he was asleep came and sat and looked at me. When Boesman woke up, he moved out. So it was every night after that. We waited for Boesman to sleep, then he came and watched me. All the things I did - making the fire, cooking, counting bottles or bruises, even just sitting, you know, when it's too much ... he saw it. Hond! I called him Hond. But any name, he'd wag his tail if you said it nice. I'll tell you what it is. Eyes, Outa. Another pair of eyes. Something to see you.¹

'Hond', like Outa, is also a silent witness to Lena's life. What Lena says to Outa naturally concerns her life, so we hear far more than we would have done had Outa not been there. But he is more than just a passive audience, for he also precipitates action by arousing Boesman's jealousy and therefore heightening dramatic tension. Lena's recounting of her past relates it to the present by dove-tailing it into the action, which is thus given immediacy: the characters relive part of their past, and are compelled to act under the stresses of the present. In the process of doing so they reveal themselves and their dreams and aspirations, and their deepest fears. Lena's search for meaning is fitted into this pattern, and the whole becomes a searching examination of their lives and of the system that gave them birth. The value of all is weighed and found wanting.

1 Ibid, p. 190

Whereas 'The Blood Knot' over-uses the technique of game playing, in 'Boesman and Lena' there is only one game. It happens after the death of Outa when Lena pretends to be an official asking questions about what happened to the old African. Her cross-examination of the frightened Boesman is so good that she thoroughly rattles him, and this leads to their hasty departure from the scene. This game fits in so well with the requirements of the action at this moment that it seems perfectly natural. The game is now not such an obvious theatrical device as it was in 'The Blood Knot', it is now internalised and therefore more subtle.

Boesman and Lena is undoubtedly the first high-point of Fugard's dramatic art. It has unity of time, place and action, though this in itself is insufficient to account for its significance. The two hours (approximately) the play runs on the stage is the same as the length of time the action depicts, and it all happens on the Swartkops mud. Unity of action is defined by J. L. Styan¹ as follows: "The true unity of action is the unity possible to the imagination, and this is probably what Aristotle meant when he suggested that a play must represent a complete whole in which the incidents are so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them would dislocate it." This is true of 'Boesman and Lena': there is not a superfluous word or gesture or action, and the events that make up the action cling together to form a unified whole. These events in themselves are not important; very little actually happens, but in context they contribute to the whole

1 J. L. Styan, The Dramatic Experience: A Guide to the Reading of Plays, Cambridge University Press, 1975. p. 91

experience of the play, and to the tensions in the situation that grip the audience. But it is none of these things that make the play so powerful in its impact: the point is that Fugard has actually achieved, or got very near to achieving, his basic vision of theatre: that is, the combination of specifics with realism, poetry, pain, and silence. The specifics involved are the small things in which the larger can be seen - the universe in a grain of sand. Hence the language, the poetry of poverty, is rich in metaphor that makes the pain of existence a terrifying certainty. And the play is filled with silences that speak most eloquently: Outa, for example, says little more than Lena's name.

Fugard is of course bearing witness to the sufferings of the under-privileged in an alien environment: we are forced to face the question 'Why don't South Africans alleviate the pains suffered by the poor and the deprived?' We understand why Boesman is as he is, and we identify with Lena, not only when she suffers the pain inflicted by Boesman, and the elements, and the fatigue of the journey, but also in her search for meaning. What might appear unpromising grains of sand are transmuted by the playwright's alchemy into 'gold' theatre. The author's concern for the humanity of the world's castaways, and Lena's heroic acceptance of the pain and emptiness, imbue the whole with a complex moral purpose. Although Boesman, Lena, and Outa live their lives in an apparently meaningless and uncaring world, this is a profoundly meaningful play. In imagination we join Boesman and Lena on the pointless circuit of their lives, and all lonely, lost

people in their Sisyphus-like situation.

Boesman and Lena and Outa are all men and all women: unaccommodated Man and houseless poverty. Although 'Boesman and Lena' is specifically political, it is at the same time universal. The value of these people, their human worth, is being affirmed: Lena is a 'Hotnot meid', utterly impoverished, tyrannised, frustrated by, and left without hope in, a hostile universe, yet she is one of the great acts of creation. She is infinite worth housed in humble flesh. This point is clearly made in the relationship of Lena and Outa. Outa is a witness to Lena's life. Although she has the prejudices of her kind against Africans, she overcomes these and shares first the water with him, and later the bread and tea and blanket. The wine she foregoes as the price of not having to get rid of Outa, so that there is deprivation and sharing and sacrifice which gives their relationship a religious dimension: the sharing becomes a communion, with bread, and water and tea in place of the wine, which has been sacrificed. But Outa is a witness not only for Lena's humanity, but also for the voiceless poor. His silent suffering and death speak with frightening eloquence on his behalf:

LENA: It's a hard life for us brown people, hey.

BOESMAN: He's not brown people, he's black people.

LENA: They got feelings too. Not so, Outa?

BOESMAN: You'll get some feelings if you don't watch that fire.¹

1 Three Port Elizabeth Plays, 'Boesman and Lena', p. 186

Boesman rejects Outa and 'kaffers', and refuses Lena permission to give him even some of their water. It is clear that Boesman does not share in the communion: when Lena and Outa are sharing their bread and tea, having foregone the comfort of wine - 'Hotnot's forget-me-not' - Boesman is doing the very opposite, drinking wine and ironically leaving his bread and tea untouched and therefore unshared. The choice is his own, for he excludes himself. Boesman chooses the way of death: his feelings, his awareness of other people's sufferings, seem non-existent. However, Boesman, like Macbeth, wins our grudging admiration by his ruthless honesty about himself: he has no illusions about the realities of their situation. When their shacks have been bulldozed and they have picked up their things and started to walk, he has a wonderful feeling of freedom - there are new ways and new places. But he is trapped, he cannot escape, and the ways lead nowhere but back to where they have been before. They will go to Coega, to Veeplaas, Swartkops, Redhouse, Missionvale, Bethelsdorp, back to Redhouse, then Kleinskool, Veeplaas, Redhouse, Bethelsdorp, Korsten, Veeplaas, back to Swartkops, followed by Missionvale, Veeplaas, Korsten, and Swartkops, or some variation of this: it is a pointless circuit. There is a repetitive inevitability about their life:

BOESMAN: Whiteman's wasting his time trying to help us. Pushed it over this morning and here it is again. Push this one over and I'll do it somewhere else. Make another hole in the ground, crawl into it, and live my life crooked.

One push. That's all we need. Into gaol, out of your job. one push and it's pieces.

Must I tell you why? Listen! I'm thinking deep tonight. We're whiteman's rubbish.

That's why he's so beneukt with us.
 He can't get rid of his rubbish. He
 throws it away, we pick it up. Wear
 it. Sleep in it. Eat it. We're
 made of it now. His rubbish is people.

LENA: Throw yourself away and leave us alone.¹

We feel for Boesman now; in his realisation and acceptance of the way life has him trapped he is almost noble. It is at this moment that Lena is most cruel to him, rejecting him in favour of Outa. However, Boesman's moment passes, for he soon reverts to speaking with his fists again.

There is no sentimentalizing of the characters: both Lena and Boesman are painted 'warts and all'. This is important as a play of this nature could easily lapse into maudlin nonsense if it were treated as a 'tear-jerker'. Fugard looks at his characters without flinching, observing steadily their strong points and their weaknesses: there is no attempt to gloss over their frailties.

The play is a dramatic highpoint in Fugard's development because subject matter and the way it is handled are inseparable. There is nothing either improbable or impossible; on the contrary, there is a marvellous inevitability about the play: it has to happen just as it does. The play has a total unity that gives it power and impact - it adds up to a whole from which nothing can be taken away, and to which nothing can be added. It is a real happening in the lives of people, or so it seems. The play is built around a night in the lives of Boesman and Lena, and

1 Ibid, p. 204 - 205

consists mainly of the thrust and counterthrust of their talk as they batter and bruise each other. In the process they reveal details of their lives, and this is the theme of the play - the sort of life that people like Boesman and Lena and Outa are compelled to live by virtue of their colour, their poverty, and their ignorance. 'Boesman and Lena' is a living proof of Fugard's dictum: 'Show me, don't tell me,' for that is exactly what it does.

- As a play it carries instant and total conviction - so much so that it could be that we are actually eavesdropping on the lives of Lena and Boesman. Every colloquial idiom, every nuance of speech, is exactly right. The author knows his characters and creates them with an artist's fidelity. Time, place, and action cohere in a total unity. An indifferent universe, a metaphysically alien environment, is illumined by the worth and value of poor people who wish for life, and wish for it more abundantly, yet accept their lot with great fortitude. Their plight and their suffering are most moving. Like Sisyphus, they always find their burdens again. And Lena, one feels "teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks."¹

In 'Boesman and Lena' Fugard has achieved a poetry of the theatre. 'People Are Living There' is mostly exposition and there is no significant action. In 'Hello and Goodbye' the problem is two-fold: the presence of the rather is an improbability, while the exposition contained in the

1 Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, Translated by Justin O'Brien, Penguin, 1975, p. 111

introductory soliloquy - which is necessary to understand Johnnie - is clumsy. In 'Boesman and Lena', however, exposition is completely mastered, so that action and character unfold completely naturally. Form and content have at last become one - a long step from the clumsy beginning of 'No-Good Friday.'

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

'What you have experienced, no power on earth can take from you.' Not only our experiences, but all we have done, whatever great thoughts we may have had, and all we have suffered, all this is not lost, though it is past; we have brought it into being. Having been is also a kind of being, and perhaps the surest kind. ¹

Fugard's advance from novice to master craftsman can be made quite clear by comparing the quality of the writing in 'No-Good Friday' with that of 'Boesman and Lena'. The following is an extract from 'No-Good Friday':

WILLIE: What does that make him? God Almighty?

WATSON: Look, maybe I can help. I don't want to get involved in something that doesn't concern me I mean I wasn't here when this this

WILLIE: He called it self protection.

WATSON: Ja when this self protection happened. But I been a neighbour of all of you for a long time and what I'm trying to say is a what can these chaps do against a man like Shark?

WILLIE: I told you before that's their problem and I'm not trying to solve it, for anybody.

WATSON: Now that's just where I think I can clear up the whole business. I'm prepared to put forward a resolution at the next congress, deploring the high incidence of crime and calling for an immediate

PINKIE: Watson, why don't you go home. But he's right Willie. What can we do about Shark?

WILLIE: Let's get one thing straight. I haven't been having nightmares about what we can do or what we can't. I been waking up at

1 Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, translated by Ilse Lasch, Hodder and Stoughton, 1964, p. 82 - 83

night sweating with shame because of what we did Did! Here in this yard when Tobias went down. Can you remember what we did? Nothing.

PINKIE: But what could we have done?

WILLIE: Do you know what you've just said? In the space of one minute you've asked me what can we do and what could we have done. Don't you know what to do at all? Is there nothing you can do except be booted around by life until it looks like your skin was black from the bruises and from nothing else. Guy's right about the thinking I did in there for a week. That's a lot of thinking, but there was a lot to think about. You know one of the ideas I've come out with? The world I live in is the way it is not in spite of me but because of me. You think we're just poor suffering come-to-Jesus-at-the-end-of-it-all black men and that the world's all wrong and against us so what the hell. Well I'm not so sure of that any more. I'm not so sure because I think we helped make it, the way it is.

WATSON: Are you denying the oppression?

PINKIE: We don't like things the way they are Willie.

WILLIE: Nobody but a moron would like them. But there's a lot of it we make ourselves and a lot we accept.

PINKIE: Such as?

WILLIE: Such as Tobias' death and a character called Shark. Our handiwork. We've been good customers. Every Friday night on the dot five shillings for a long time. So when a man like Tobias walks in he's out in the cold if he doesn't pay and being a man he wouldn't want to pay. There's nothing that says we must surrender to what we don't like. There's no excuse like saying the world's a big place and I'm just a small little man. My world is as big as I am. Just big enough for me to do something about it. If I can't believe that, there's no point in living. Anyway this doesn't concern any of you and the sooner you leave me alone to solve it my way the better. Well? What are you waiting for or do you want to see how he does it a second time?

(THEY ALL EXIT EXCEPT WILLIE AND GUY)

- WILLIE: (To Guy) You'll be late for the show.
- GUY: I'm going but not like that. Are you going to wait for him Willie? (Pause) Willie the world was sweet the world was sweet
- WILLIE: It's the way we made it.
- GUY: (Turning to Willie) Then we made it all wrong all wrong and rotten. When I think back to what it was like just a week ago just a week and now. I walked in here with my sax and I found Rebecca. Right there! Taking the washing down. You know who I'm talking about don't you Willie, or have you forgotten her already?
- WILLIE: I won't forget her Guy.
- GUY: Pity you didn't tell her that when she went. It might have saved her a couple of tears even just a couple. Because you do know what you said don't you Willie? You said nothing! Christ, Reb, what happened? What has happened Willie? No, don't you tell me, don't say a thing. I couldn't take any more from you. Yes, I came home and there she was taking the washing down and talking. She got a little sad about you but she was here! Just a week ago. We even laughed about Old Sam. It was here I was here and Reb, and you were coming home. And it was life tough, hard but it was life, and I wasn't sorry to be part of it. And then Tobias walked in.
- WILLIE: If he hadn't someone else would have and it wouldn't have made any difference.
- GUY: Drop the big words and the clever reasons, Willie. Because it was him him Tobias. He walked in here and bugged up everything, bugged up life until I can't recognise it anymore. I don't know it I don't know myself I don't know you.

Willie is saying where he stands and why he stands there; the statements are flat, and quite free of figurative language. What is said comes off the top of the head, not having been transformed by the imagination. Fugard is writing about his characters from the outside, putting words

into their mouths, and struggling to make them real. But the words never take flight: they remain pedestrian and predictable. Willie talks in short sentences which give what he is saying a breathless quality. It would be difficult to imagine a sense of conviction emerging from the jerky rhythm of the following:

WILLIE: Such as Tobias' death and a character called Shark. Our handiwork. We've been good customers. Every Friday night on the dot five shillings for a long time My world is as big as I am. Just big enough for me to do something about it. If I don't believe that, there's no point in living!¹

This language is unequal to the load placed upon it: it is the statement of a man about to die, who is about to face the local gang of thugs who will knife him, yet what he says does not lead us to believe in him: ' well I've found something I been looking for for a long time. Peace, Guy, peace. Peace of mind peace of heart. You know the two old enemies they're not fighting any more' He says these words, but they are empty, hollow, meaningless, and impossible to believe because they come too easily. Fugard, in fact, is telling us, not showing us. This is what the author thinks Willie ought to be saying, so he puts the words into his mouth. Clearly the author's imagination is not deeply engaged, and he is endeavouring to justify the unjustifiable - Willie's futile gesture in letting a hoodlum knife him to death. The concept is flawed, and the language is shallow, even although the author's intention of witnessing for the underprivileged is admirable.

1 'Ibid', p. 55

Compare this with the following passage from 'Boesman and Lena'.

LENA: Yessus! It's so heavy now, Outa. Am I crooked? It feels that way when we stop and the bundles come down. What's so heavy? I walk and I think ... a blanket, a few things in a bucket ...
 Look! (Pointing to their possessions.) And even when they're down, when you've made your place and the fire is burning and you rest your legs, something stays heavy. Hey! Once you've put your life on your head and walked you never get light again. We've been walking a long time, Outa. Look at my feet. Those little paths on the veld Boesman and Lena helped write them.
 I meet the memory of myself on the old roads. Sometimes young. Sometimes old. Is she coming or going? From where to where? All mixed up. The right time on the wrong road, the right road leading to the wrong place.
 (A murmur from the old man.)
 He won't tell me. That's a sin, isn't it? He'll be punished. But he says there's no God for us. Do you know? Up there!
 (A vague gesture to the sky. No intelligible response from the old man.)
 Doesn't matter.
 (The old man murmurs loudly, urgently.)
 What's that now? Maybe
 (Straightening up at the fire.)
Yessus, Outa! You're asking things tonight. (Sharply.) Why do you want to know?
 (Pause.)
 It's a long story.
 (She moves over to him, sits down beside him.)
 One, Outa, that lived. For six months. The others were born dead.
 (Pause.)
 That all? Ja. Only a few words I know, but a long story if you lived it.
 (Murmuring from the old man.)
 That's all. That's all.
Nee, God, Outa! What more must I say? What you asking me about? Pain? Yes! Don't kaffers know what that means? One

night it was longer than a small piece of
 candle and then as big as darkness.
 Somewhere else a donkey looked at it. I
 crawled under the cart and they looked.
 Boesman was too far away to call. Just
 the sound of his axe as he chopped wood.
 I didn't even have rags!
 You asked me and now I've told you. Pain
 is a candle entjie and a donkey's face.
 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!
 My life is here tonight. Tomorrow or the
 next day that one out there will drag it
 somewhere else. But tonight I sit here.
 You interested in that?1

The flat, shallow prose of the earlier play has developed
 into what Dan Jacobson in his review of "Three Port Elizabeth
 Plays" calls 'a poetry of poverty'.² The language has
 become rich in metaphor: 'Once you've put your life on your
 head and walked you never get light again' and 'Those little
 paths on the veld Boesman and Lena helped write them.'
 These statements are alive and glittering with suggestions:
 they reveal a great depth of weariness and suffering. There
 is a very real sense in which the author is Lena so close is
 his identification with her, but the same cannot be said of
 Willie. The words he finds her speaking are rich with an
 imagination that illumines the dark places of suffering.
 Speaking of the pain of childbirth Lena says: "One night it
 was longer than a small piece of candle and then as big as
 darkness. Somewhere else a donkey looked at it
 Pain is a c
 identified
 and with th
 donkey. On also

1 A. Fugard, Three Port Elizabeth Plays, p. 192 - 194

2 Guardian Weekly, 10th August, 1974.

knows intimately of the circumstances of the birth of Lena's children: they were born in the open or under a wagon, by candlelight, with a donkey as witness. (This is reminiscent of the humbleness of Christ's birth in the stable). She is alone, and without even rags to wrap the child in or to tidy up herself. Thus in a few words we are richly informed. The candle itself is also a powerful symbol, but of goodness, of virtue illuminating the immense dark. Lena with her courage, her resignation and honesty, is a momentary flicker of light that reveals in a painful contrast the hugeness of an uncaring society and a meaningless world. It is an equation that says that life in these circumstances is a terrifying experiment. We are made to feel the truth of the situation: we are not merely told it. And the overriding irony of it all is that by examining the apparently meaningless so carefully, Fugard has generated an existential discovery of human meaning in a source where he least expected to find it - the human heart.

The language of 'Boesman and Lena' is more flexible, and capable of far greater subtleties: "I meet the memory of myself on the old roads. Sometimes young. Sometimes old. Is she coming or going? From where to where? All mixed up. The right time on the wrong road, the right road leading to the wrong place." In these few words are summed up all Lena's confusions about the meaning of her life, the repetitive nature of their comings and goings, the wrong roads taken, and the mystery of it all, and the futility. Her whole life is adumbrated. And here it should be noted that the thoughts being expressed are infinitely more complex.

In 'No-Good Friday' what is being said is not distinguished for its thought processes: in fact the thought is relevant though actually superficial, and the language reflects this just as the complexity of style in 'Boesman and Lena' is a reflection of the increasing complexity of Fugard's thought. In 'No-Good Friday' the points - such as they are - are laboriously spelt out, but in 'Boesman and Lena' they are made with clarity and a superb economy: a representation in outline is often sufficient to convey the whole picture, or as much of it as we need to know. One strains to achieve its effects, the other achieves them with consummate ease.

'No-Good Friday' has a plot which determines character: what is to happen has been pre-determined, and the characters in the play have to perform actions that will enable the plot to happen'. In 'Boesman and Lena' the plot is more inward: it enables us to see inside people, and character may be said to dictate plot. Willie, the chief protagonist of 'No-Good Friday', is a man without a past, as far as one can tell. He does noble things, but one does not get to know him. He never examines any part of the life he sacrifices with such courage. Willie remains a gallant, educated stranger. Lena is different. She considers her life, examines it closely in an effort to make sense of it. In the process she says things that are profound, or moving, or both, though she herself is unaware of these qualities. There is intended deliberate irony in this, and it shows the subtleties of a style that can suggest great depths to the audience without being incongruous in the mouth of an illiterate coloured woman. 'No-Good Friday' is seriously considering

township problems: it is examining the lives of two people and in the process putting under the microscope the whole political and social life of a country.

Fugard's earliest plays are structurally linear and sequential: they start at point x and move forward to point x + n via several intermediate stops. If we take 'No-Good Friday' as an example, we see these points and stops are predetermined, and in a straight line. As a result the play is straight-jacketed. Character development (such as it is) has to wait upon the exigencies of plot, which are all important: certain things have to happen so that the plot can arrive at the next point in its progress towards its destination. Similarly the protagonists are compelled to do certain things to achieve the same ends whether or not they are in character. By the time we get to 'Boesman and Lena' there has been a complete change: the construction is circular and 'static' in the sense that not a great deal happens or appears to happen. Boesman and Lena arrive at their chosen spot in the Swartkops mud; their arrival at this spot is the start of the play. The events that now happen are trivial, but they do show some forward movement. Small people cannot initiate great events - only ask for significant attention. Boesman builds a shelter from rubbish he happens to find in the neighbourhood, Lena makes a fire. What is done serves a number of purposes: the events not only starkly point up the emptiness of their lives, as well as their poverty and deprivation, but also set the scene for the backward journey into their past. While they are going about their chores, they relive their immediate past - the bulldozing of their shack at Korsten, and Lena begins to question the meaning of her life, leading herself

further back in time and laying bare the nature of her relationship with Boesman. Taken as a whole, the forward movement in time present, and the much larger backward movement in time past, lays bare far more. It lays bare also the evil nature of the social and political system that compels people to live in this way, but it also points to life itself as the culprit, the disease from which we suffer. Unlike 'No-Good Friday', the plot depends entirely on character, since what happens is determined by Boesman and Lena themselves: they impose their pattern on the play.

'No-Good Friday' is informed by a naive idealism. Fugard is making a conscious effort at social protest. At this stage he believes that the problem has only to be stated and understood for it to be solved. People only have to be made aware of the difficulties for them to disappear. The victims are vital and warm, and these qualities contrast with their squalid surroundings and the sufferings imposed by the corruption of the police and the laws they impose. The statement of the play is utterly sincere, but it never reaches below the surface to 'fury and the mire of human veins'. In 'Boesman and Lena', on the other hand, we have a difficult realism. This play, too, is a social protest, but cast in a very different mould. It is informed by a subtlety that was lacking in 'No-Good Friday'. This subtlety is broadened and deepened at the same time as the social protest is undermined by the deeper metaphysical realisation that the world itself is meaningless, and that we all suffer from the disease called life:

MARAIS: From the very beginnings of life we hear a chorus of anguish. Pain is a condition of existence. Escape from pain is the purpose in all striving.¹

¹ Athol Fugard and Ross Devenish, The Guest, Ad. Donker, 1977 p. 74

This meaninglessness is part of Fugard's technique, but it is not only technique: it is a genuinely realised metaphysic, and utterly essential to the situations depicted in 'Boesman and Lena' and 'Hello and Goodbye', not to mention 'The Blood Knot'.

Thus we see the abandonment of the deliberate stage machinery, with sets and setting, of the early plays, in favour of featureless settings (or what appear to be no settings at all), which enable the characters per se to dictate and create their own environment. We get away from a predetermined world to one which is equally (or perhaps even more) harsh but more spontaneous in that it creates the illusion that the characters are totally free, whereas in fact the only freedom they have is to search for meaning by examining their past. Only death will free them from the way of life of which they are prisoners. Furthermore, the language of the early plays, as I have endeavoured to show, is shallow because it is subservient to the moral purpose of the play: it is a language without metaphor, whereas the prose of 'Boesman and Lena' is transformed into poetry by its having to show us the suffering, the pain, and the poverty, whereas 'No-Good Friday' merely told us of these things. Language is all that the protagonists really have in 'Hello and Goodbye' and 'Boesman and Lena': it is the only way in which they are rich; even their silence is eloquent.

Thus the nature of language finally becomes part of Fugard's main theme. We are constantly surprised by the inventiveness of someone like Lena: her formulation of pain as a 'candle entjie and donkey's face', for example. Many of her

utterances have this quality of absolute rightness, of being totally apt. 'Hey! Once you've put your life on your head and walked you never get light again' conveys a great moral and physical weariness and an infinity of suffering. The language is tapping very deep roots and is a measure of Fugard's development. He has learned to see, and the depth of his 'seeing' requires an equivalent depth of language in which to be expressed.

In 'No-Good Friday' humans are the victims of laws, prejudice, the police, and all the vile apparatus of an authoritarian society. In 'Boesman and Lena' humans are still the victims, but now they are far more complex beings. The metaphysical universe they inhabit is also vastly more complex than in the early play. These facts alter the focus and draw attention to Fugard's main theme, which is compounded of four elements. Apart from the nature of language we have the mystery of being, the roots of consciousness, and the puzzle of human identity. The mystery of Being is unfathomable: we are, yet know not how we are. In an unfriendly, dank cosmos what sense do the minute particulars of our lives make? How, in the circumstances of Lena's life, and where, does she find her humanity? Perhaps it is the very improbability of her response that lends it sublimity. How utterly convincing, yet how unlikely and mysterious her life is.

The roots of consciousness are linked to language and one's response to life. What informs the nature of Lena's response to life? The answer lies in the fact that she has suffered,

and that she endeavours to make sense of her life. This endows her consciousness with an awareness that leads her to question in an effort to find the answers to who she is. The awareness that informs her life enriches her language; pain and misery have discovered telling metaphors that make the suffering come alive for us. Similarly we are made to feel the puzzle of who we are. What is Lena's identity? Boesman has no difficulty in answering the question, for he knows without any doubt that he is whiteman's rubbish. This is not an adequate reply for Lena. She has borne children, known not only the pains of childbirth, but also those of losing a child as well as the pain of Boesman's beatings. She longs for human contact, for love; she has not settled for a life without hope like Boesman, but tries to affirm sense in her existence. She is someone who wants her life, yet this is denied her. All her efforts come to nothing: she is aware only of frustration, yet ironically in her ignorance she achieves humanity and thus a profound human identity. But the mystery of Being remains: in the beginning there were words. Now, in every new beginning, the word is everything.

'Boesman and Lena' and 'Hello and Goodbye' have no precedents in South African drama, and even less so Fugard's later experimental drama. But it is the old story all over again: a dramatist has to learn to see, and he "sees" through the structures and techniques of his masters and models. This is where the major transformation of talent comes in. Koestler talks about humour resulting from the confrontation

of two different frames of reference.¹ Thus Fugard's models in 'No-Good Friday' were Arthur Miller with his social conscience, J. P. Sartre with his existentialism and cynicism, and Alan Paton with his sense of South Africa. Fugard was then concerned with social realism and a philosophy of doubt. Later he had learned from Chekhov and Brecht, and particularly Beckett, Pinter and Ionesco, who became his models. From them he learned to make use of the technique of deliberate meaninglessness which in 'Boesman and Lena' and 'Hello and Goodbye' strange as it may seem, says more about South Africa and Man than his earliest sequential and linear view of human action. These attack the problem directly, whereas the later plays apparently do not attack it at all and yet ironically are far more successful in their assault upon prejudice and poverty.

How does one account for the personal mystery of style? Simone Weil says: 'If we ask why such and such a word in a poem is in such and such a place and if there is an answer, either the poem is not of the highest order, or else the reader has understood nothing of it. If one can rightly say that the word is where it is in order to express a particular idea, or for the sake of a grammatical connection, or for the sake of the rhyme or alliteration, or to complete the line, or to give a certain colour, or even for a combination of several reasons of this kind, there has been a seeking for effect in the composition of the poem, there has not been true inspiration. In the case of a really beautiful poem

1 Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation, Pan Books, Danube Edition, 1970, p. 79

the only answer is that the word is there because it is suitable that it should be. The proof of this suitability is that it is there and that the poem is beautiful.² In the beginning Fugard unerringly selected the target for his plays, and the notion that he wants to look at the world's unloved and unwanted, the poor, the deprived and the homeless stays the same throughout. It is only when he begins to look with careful attention and with love at the things people make and live in and with that he begins to see how people invest the world with meaning. And it is this that makes his view of mankind more subtle and complex and true, and not that his politics or his sociology at the level of ideas becomes more difficult. Politically there is no change. Humanly there is a profound change. He has discovered, like William Blake, that one can in fact see the universe in a grain of sand.

1 Simone Weil, Waiting on God, translated by Emma Crauford, Fontana Books, 1974, p. 130

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APPENDIX A

'NO-GOOD FRIDAY'

SCENE 1

A backyard in Sophia Town, late Friday afternoon. Clustered about it are a few rusty corrugated-iron shacks. Rebecca, a young woman in her early twenties is taking down washing from a line strung between a fence and one of the houses. A few other women drift in and out of doors preparing for the return of their men. Guy, a young musician, carrying a saxophone case, enters.

GUY : Hi Reb.

REB : You're back early.

GUY : Doesn't feel like that. Feels like I've walked clean through to the soles of my feet.

REB : No luck?

GUY : Luck! You've sure got to have that to get a break in Goli. And I don't get the breaks. Ja, what I need is luck, lots of it, like old Sam. Remember him?

REB : He stayed with Lizzie.

GUY : That's him. Old bearded chap. We shared the same room for a time. Old Sam bought his luck small bottles of trash from one of those Herbalist quacks in Newclare. Every Friday night he'd trek out there with his paypacket and bring back the latest lucky charm. I argued like hell with him about that stuff. They picked him up just before they started selling the stuff to keep the police away. Poor old Sam. Wish I could believe in it like him.

REB : At the price they charge you've just got to believe.

GUY : Anyway, I couldn't buy it even if I did. I haven't even got enough for a second hand pair of shoes, and one more session like to-day and I'll need them.

REB : Patience, Guy, patience. You got the talent.

GUY : Patience! I knocked on the door of every recording shop in town, If I'd known how many chaps were playing the sax I would have stuck to a penny whistle. When my break comes, I won't have enough wind left to blow a false note.

REB : Did you try the place Willie mentioned?

GUY : You mean the hotel? That's the nearest I got to a job. They didn't need any musicians "But we've got an opening for a kitchen boy" 'Opening' mind you! I should have told him, his opening was my back door.

 Another bloke gives me a pat on the back after I've blown three bars and says, ever so nicely:

 "You boys is just born musicians ... born musicians I tell you. You got it in your soul." So I says:

 "But a job Mister?" And he says: "Nothing doing.

 Too many of you boys being born." You know something Reb? I should have settled down to book learning.

 That way you always eat. Like Willie. Now there's a smart Johnny.

REB : Willie's alright.

GUY : Alright! He's more than just right, he can't go wrong.

REB : He's just like any other fellow.

GUY : I didn't mean it that way. I know Willie can go wrong, if he does some stupid thing. What I mean is, its up to himself. But like me now ... I know I play well, everyone says so, even some of the top boys. But how does that help me? I still get buggered around. And the way I see it Willie won't make no mistakes. What's this latest thing he's up to?

REB : You mean the course?

GUY : Yes, that's it.

REB : First year B.A. Correspondent.

GUY : There you see. Now who but Willie would think of that.

(PAUSE.) Now ... actually ... where does that get him?

REB : If he passes, to his second year.

GUY : Well what do you know! (PAUSE) And then?

REB : The third year.

GUY : Doesn't it end sometime?

REB : If he passes that, he gets his degree. Bachelor of Arts.

GUY : He's a smart one that Willie. Now tell me Reb, what does Willie do with this bachelor when he gets him.

REB : (Laughs) A better job ... more pay.

GUY : Just like I thought. If there's a catch in it, Willie will find it. You're proud of him aren't you?

REB : He gave me a better word the other day. I said how we was all proud of him. He corrected me. The word was 'admire'.

GUY : Admire! Proud! What's the difference?

REB : Well, there is a difference. I looked it up in that book of his with all the words. You're proud of something you had a hand in, but you admire someone that went it all alone Guy. Not even his poor old canary in her rusty cage helped him. Sometimes I wonder if it was best that way.

GUY : You ~~guess~~ mean you don't think he's doing alright?

REB : No, course not. But it's made him ... independent. A big word isn't it? But he says its his ideal and he's getting there. Willie could snap his fingers at anyone ... walk out anytime. He just doesn't need anyone. Not you ... not even me.

GUY : When you put it that way it does add up. But then remember Reb, you can't always add up on paper what a man needs, like your instalments on the stove every month. I'm no book bug but I know that.

REB : Too bad that advice isn't in any of the books he reads.

GUY : He's no fool, Reb. He won't make that mistake.

REB : Let's hope you're right.

GUY : Course I am. Why the two of you'd been together for ..

REB : Four years.

GUY : Four years. That's a long time

(PAUSE)

REB : You ~~was~~ thinking something Guy?

GUY : Such as?

REB : Like four years, and he hasn't married her yet.

GUY : He's just waiting for his course to finish.

REB : Maybe he is. Anyway, we don't talk much about marrying no more.

GUY : You got nothing to worry about. You and Willie are fine. Just fine.

(REB EXITS INTO HOUSE. WATSON, WHO HAS BEEN SEATED ON THE STAGE SINCE THE OPENING OF THE SCENE IS ADDRESSED BY GUY.)

GUY : Ja, Watson, how's the politics?

WATSON : We're fighting, we're fighting.

GUY : You been fighting for our rights to-day Watson?

WATSON : Sort of. Been thinking about my speech for to-night.

GUY : Another meeting?

WATSON : Important one. We've got delegates coming from all the other branches.

GUY : Hey, sounds good. What you going to say?

WATSON : Not sure yet. Round about lunch time, I had an idea. A stirring call for action! "The time for sitting still

and submitting to every latest injustice is past. We gotta do something about it." But then I remembered that this was a meeting of the Organising Committees and they might not like that. Just now, I had another idea. "We must weld ourselves into a sharp spear-head for the liberatory movement." That'll have to do.

GUY : You been sitting here the whole day thinking that?

WATSON : The meeting's going to last all night, isn't it?

GUY : Watson, I want to ask you something.

WATSON : Sure, go ahead.

GUY : How do you earn a living?

WATSON : Living? What you mean living?

GUY : You don't get up every morning at six like Willie and old Moses. You don't walk the streets looking for a job like me.

WATSON : I make sacrifices for the cause.

GUY : That must be tough. Telling us guys not to work for three pounds a week.

WATSON : You too must make sacrifices for the cause otherwise the heavy boot of oppression will forever be on our backs! Hey that's good. (HE MAKES A NOTE.)

GUY : You know something else Watson, I've never seen you a single day in the streets when there's a riot.

WATSON : We can't all be leaders. Some must lead, some must follow. (MRS WATSON CALLS FROM OFFSTAGE IN A SHREWISH VOICE.)

WATSON : Coming dear. (HE EXITS.)

(REB APPEARS AT THE DOOR SHAKING A TABLECLOTH)

GUY : Say! Do you want to hear something?

REB : Anytime.

GUY : I got so fed up this morning I took out the old blow-pipe and blew ... and what do you know! A wonderful

sound comes out. Kind of sad. And this being Friday and every other sucker coming home with a pay-packet except me, I've decided to call it "Friday Night Blues."
(GUY PLAYS FRIDAY NIGHT BLUES. WILLIE ENTERS THE BACKYARD; STOPS AND LISTENS TO THE MUSIC.)

WILLIE : Say, that's alright.

GUY : Friday Night Blues. Inspired by an empty pocket.

WILLIE : No luck?

GUY : Nope. They've picked up all the gold on Eloff Street. No nuggets left for Guy.

WILLIE : Remember what I said. When you're down to the last notch on your belt come along with me. I can always find you something at the office.

GUY : That sounds like a pension scheme. Hold on man! I haven't even been given a chance yet.

WILLIE : Okay, so your old age is insured.

GUY : That's a comforting thought when you're twenty-two.

REB : Supper will be ready in twenty minutes.

WILLIE : No hurry.

REB : Aren't you hungry?

WILLIE : I'll eat when I see it.

REB : Anything go wrong at work?

WILLIE : Everything is fine, just fine.

REB : I wish you'd tell me Willie.

WILLIE : Tell you what?

REB : Whatever's bothering you.

WILLIE : Nothing's bothering me. Let's just say I'm a tired man, okay?

REB : Okay (SHE GOES INTO THE HOUSE)

WILLIE : (SHOUTING AT HER) Can you scrape three plates from the pot?

REB : Who's the extra?

WILLIE : Crazy musician. We'll make him sing for his supper.

GUY : Three cheers for the African Feeding scheme.

WILLIE : You dedicate Friday Night Blues to me boy.

GUY : It's sad music.

WILLIE : I get sad sometimes.

GUY : Sure, we all do. But this is real sad ... sort of ...
you know ... you got the words.

WILLIE : Melancholy, loneliness, despair. They all add up to the
same thing. (PAUSE) The bus queue was a mile long
tonight. That's a lot of people. A mile of sweating
shouting bastards, all happy because there was a little bit
of gold in their pockets. I've never been so lonely in
all my life. It's my song Guy.

GUY : If you want it okay. "To Willie."
(HE PLAYS 'FRIDAY NIGHT BLUES' A SECOND TIME. IN THE COURSE
OF IT FATHER HIGGINS ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY TOBIAS, A NEWCOMER
TO JOHANNESBURG.)

HIGGINS : Evening Willie ... Guy! We've missed you at the Jazz Club
Meetings.

GUY : I've been meaning to look in Father. Just that I've been
trying to get started as a professional and that takes time.
All of it.

HIGGINS : How far have you got?

GUY : I've reached the first stage. I'm blowing the sax on an
empty stomach.

HIGGINS : You'll be alright Guy. In fact I want to see you about
something. Come up to the Church on Sunday afternoon and
we'll talk about it. How's Willie?

WILLIE : Surprised. It's not often we see you here, Father.

HIGGINS : You should be grateful, it means there is no trouble.
You laugh, but it's true. Every time I leave a house here
in Sophiatown, I can see the neighbours putting their

heads together to discuss the troubles of the family I've just left.

WILLIE : Sophia Town is a fertile acre for troubles Father.

HIGGINS : Every garden has its weeds, even the white ones.

WILLIE : Yes, I've seen them. I was walking down a street the other day with neat white houses on each side and a well trained dog snarling at me behind every gate. Those gardens were neat alright, the grass so green I couldn't believe my eyes. And in one of them is a dear old lady with a fork looking for a weed which she finds dying among the flowers so she digs it out and everything is just fine and blooming nice again. Do you want to plant a daffodil in this yard?

HIGGINS : That's up to you. But I'll tell you what I do want. A little help for a friend. This is Tobias, Tobias Masala. He has just arrived here from the Eastern Transvaal. (WILLIE STARES AT THE NEWCOMER WITH LITTLE WARMTH). A simple man, Willie, like so many of our people.

I was wondering if you could help. He'll do anything provided there is enough in it for him to live and maybe save a little each month.

WILLIE : Why do they do it?

HIGGINS : Do what?

WILLIE : That! Why do they come here, like that!

HIGGINS : He only wants to live Willie. You know better than I do the stories they bring with them of sick women and hungry children.

WILLIE : When it rains over here we have to walk up to our ankles through muck to get into our shacks. There is another patch of muck we have to slosh through every day, the tears and sympathy for our innocent brothers.

HIGGINS : His life is a supreme gift. He must cherish it. He asks
for nothing but a chance to do that.

WILLIE : It's muck I tell you. This is Goli not a quiet reserve.
He wasn't made for this. They flounder, go wrong, and I
don't like seeing it.

HIGGINS : Then what was he made for?

WILLIE : His quiet reserve.

HIGGINS : That's what they say about all of us.

WILLIE : I'm no simple Kaffir!

HIGGINS : I'm sorry I didn't want it to end like this. Come
Tobias, we must go somewhere else.

(THEY START TO LEAVE)

GUY : Come on Willie, give old Blanket-boy a break.

WILLIE : Don't you understand Guy, the breaks usually break them.

GUY : He's going to be broken a lot quicker if he's picked up.
Have a heart man! What about that lift job you told me
about?

(TOBIAS MOVES UP TO WILLIE)

TOBIAS : I'm not frightened of work.

GUY : There, you see, old Blanket boy's got guts.

TOBIAS : At Machadadorp, I work eleven hours when harvest comes.

WILLIE : Why didn't you stay there?

TOBIAS : It's not my district so they say I must go back to my home.
But there is no work there and the soil is bad.

GUY : Can you work a lift?

TOBIAS : Lift? Yes, I have lift heavy grain bags onto the lorry.

GUY : (LAUGHING) You're alright Blanket Boy. What do you say
Willie?

WILLIE : I'm making no promises.

HIGGINS : Thanks.

WILLIE : No promises understand. If he sinks, he sinks.

HIGGINS : Stay here Tobias. They will try to help you. Goodnight.

(EXITS)

TOBIAS : What is it I must lift?

GUY : A building full of white people. Us blacks use the stairs.

TOBIAS : I don't understand.

GUY : That's not important. We're meant to be dumb. What's more important is a little lesson in grammar. Now, what did you call the white Induna on the farm where you worked?

TOBIAS : Mr. Higgerty.

GUY : No Toby. Over here it is 'Baas'. Do you understand? Just: yes baas, no baas, please baas, thank you baas ... even when he kicks you on the backside. Now take off your hat and grin, come on cock your head, that's it and say what I just told you.

TOBIAS : Yes baas, no baas, please baas, thank you baas, even when you kick me on the backside.

WILLIE : (JUMPING FORWARD AND STRIKING THE HAT OUT OF HIS HANDS)
Stop it, damn you!

C U R T A I N

SCENE TWO

The back yard about two hours later. It is now dark. The houses are nothing more than shadows, the yellow squares of windows throwing a dim light on the activity in the yard. Attention is focussed on a small group of men: Guy, Pinkie and Peter playing cards. Watching them is Tobias and seated a little to one side, warming his hands over an open brazier, is old Moses, a blind man. Guy shuffles a pack of cards.

PINKIE : It's like I said. I'm serving them tea every eleven o'clock I do it I take it around from the kitchen.

GUY : Pick up your cards.

PETER : Pass.

GUY : Pass.

PINKIE : Now this chap

GUY : What are you doing?

PINKIE : I was telling you, serving the tea. I'm the tea boy in the office.

GUY : The game Pinkie, the game. Peter passes, I pass. What do you do?

PINKIE : I'll take two. (HE THROWS OUT TWO CARDS AND GUY DEALS HIM ANOTHER TWO)

GUY : Three aces

PETER : I'm out.

PINKIE : Same here (THEY ALL THROW IN THEIR CARDS. GUY PICKS THEM UP AND SHUFFLES THE PACK.)

Now this chap ... van Rensburg ... he says he gave me the coupons for his tea, but I haven't got them! And I tell him, I tell him nicely. He starts swearing

at me what he doesn't call me!

(GUY STARTS DEALING.)

Every door opens, everybody sticks out their head to see who's started the riot and there I am with the tea tray and this chap shouting at me. What would you have done Guy?

GUY : Pick up your cards.

PINKIE : But he didn't give me a coupon.

GUY : I'll take two.

PETER : Three.

PINKIE : Then the big boss ... Mr. Cornell ... he call me in.

GUY : What are you doing?

PINKIE : Pass. This van Rensburg chap goes in first and has his say. Then I go in. But do I get a chance? You listening Guy?

GUY : Sure two pairs.

PETER : Full house.

GUY : What you got?

PINKIE : One pair.

(CARDS ARE THROWN IN AGAIN. GUY SHUFFLES).

PINKIE : So you see, I'm not even given a chance to tell my side of the story. Short and sweet: Cornell says I must apologise by twelve tomorrow morning or I'm sacked. Not even fired mind you, but sacked! Now what do I do?

GUY : Pick up your cards.

PINKIE : To hell with the cards. I'm asking you for advice and you haven't even heard a word I've said.

GUY : I've heard everything you said.

PINKIE : Then what would you do?

GUY : How much do you like your job?

PINKIE : But I tell you he never gave me the coupons for the tea.

GUY : You go and tell that to Watson. He's been sitting here the whole day looking for something to say to-night.
Go ask him to raise it in parliament.

PINKIE : You think that funny.

GUY : You playing or aren't you.

PINKIE : How can I play when I got my problem. Look Guy, do I or don't I apologise to Mr. van Rensburg? That's my problem see. They want me to apologise for something I never done.

GUY : Okay. If it hurts you so much, don't apologise. Now are you playing or aren't you.

PINKIE : But then I lose my job.

GUY : Let's try black lady. (PETER NODS HIS AGREEMENT. GUY DEALS FOR TWO.)

PINKIE : What would you do Peter?

PETER : It's like Guy said. Find what hurts you most. Apologising or losing your job. Then you got your answer.

PINKIE : That sounds nice and easy doesn't it! Well I don't want to lose my job and I don't want to apologise.

GUY : Sounds like you got to choose one or the other.

PINKIE : But which one Guy? Which one? What would you do?

GUY : Look Pinkie ...

PINKIE : I know ... but just suppose it was you ... just suppose. What would you do?

GUY : Well. I suppose it depends.

PINKIE : On what?

GUY : On how you are right now. You sober?

PINKIE : You bet. Smell.

GUY : Well, you're sober, you're calm, you got control of yourself. Now think. It's a good job. It's good pay. It's Friday night. You're going to have yourself a good time. Right?

PINKIE : Right.

GUY : So what! This van Rensburg's not in Sophias Town. You only see him for five minutes every morning and five minutes every afternoon. Why worry about him! Apologise and keep your job.

PINKIE : That makes sense. Guy, you've helped me. That paypacket was welcome you know, what with Shark coming around. I wouldn't like to be here without five bob when he comes. Of course! It's a job like you said, it's regular pay! That old van Rensburg, we know he was wrong don't we? So I say: "I'm sorry Mr. van Rensburg" and I laugh at him in the kitchen. You're right Guy!

(PINKIE MAKES A MOVE TO EXIT)

GUY : Where are you going?

PINKIE : Rosies. Just a quick one before Shark comes. I'm going to town tonight with something special!"
Boy, what a woman.

GUY : Go easy on the quickies Pinkie. Shark doesn't like to be kept waiting.

(GUY AND PETER CONTINUE A FEW HANDS OF BLACK LADY. THE DOOR OF WILLIE'S HOUSE OPENS AND HE APPEARS IN HIS SHIRT SLEEVES)

GUY : Reached the end of the Alphabet?

WILLIE : Couldn't get started. I begin with the A and the only word I can think of is ass. So I pass it up and go on to B and I get the adjective bloody. Bloody ass! That's what I think of a B.A.

GUY : So? We're all bums in our own way. But stick to your books and you'll be a big one.

WILLIE : What a future! Everybody wants a backside to kick in

this country.

GUY : (THROWING IN HIS CARDS) I've had enough.
(TO WILLIE) Forget the books to-night if they make you
feel so bad.

WILLIE : Forgetting is the problem.

GUY : I always just thought of it as a bad habit.

WILLIE : It is, the way most people do it. What I was getting
at was being able to forget just what you wanted to.
Learn to do that Guy and you'll be the most contented
man in the world. You got accounts? ... forget them!
They summons you? ... forget it! They jail you? ...
forget there's any better place to be.

GUY : I don't know about that.

WILLIE : Take me. Sometimes I forget to put my pen in my pocket
before I go to work. Now how does that help me! But
there are some things you can't forget. They won't
allow it. They'd call that bad memory high treason.

GUY : I don't see that Willie.

WILLIE : The moment you forgot you were black, they'd say you
were red.

MOSES : Willie's right.

GUY : What's this? Another brain specialist.

MOSES : About forgetting. Willie's right.

GUY : Come on Moses! You been blind so long you just can't
remember nothing no more.

MOSES : Who says? Who says just because my eyes are dark I
can't see nothing. I see things man. I see things all
day long.

GUY : What do you see?

MOSES : My home, my wife, my kiddies. I seen them man,
I tell you I seen them. Only its not like you seen
things, because with me they don't change. Like my

boy. You know my little boy? All to-day when I sat in the sun on the pavement I seen him, j. I seen him, only I seen him like he was ten years go. Now he must be a man.

TOBIAS : How long you been here?

MOSES : A long time.

TOBIAS : When you going home?

MOSES : Home? My boy's coming to fetch me.

TOBIAS : When?

MOSES : He's coming.

WILLIE : (TO GUY) What's the time.

GUY : Another half an hour to go.

WILLIE : (LOOKING AT EVERYBODY SITTING AND WAITING) He's sure got us trained hasn't he.

GUY : As Shark would put it: I've put a lot of money and time into training you boys. God help the chap that forgets.

WILLIE : I reckon he's about the only one God would want to help.

GUY : If he'd forgotten about Shark the only help God could give would be a free pass into heaven. You'd be finished with the good old earth if you ever forgot eight o'clock on Friday night.

WILLIE : You think we're scared Guy.

GUY : Sensible. Pay up and you'll at least have the seven days to next Friday,

(PINKIE APPEARS. A FEW DRINKS HAVE MADE HIM SLIGHTLY MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN WHEN WE LAST SAW HIM)

PINKIE : Hey Guy, how the hell can I apologise!

GUY : You back?

PINKIE : Listen man, I forgot that argument of yours that convinced me I should apologise. Come on Guy. How did it go?

GUY : It started with you being sober. You still sober
Pinkie?

PINKIE : I'm not that drunk. I just had a few
tots.

GUY : Okay. So now you don't apologise.

PINKIE : I tell you I'm not that drunk. It's a good job. Four
pounds a week. For a bachelor man that's good dough.
And he says I got to apologise that Cornell ... he
says I got to apologise. Ain't I got rights?

GUY : Go ask Watson.

PINKIE : Come on Guy. On the level. What would you do? But
remember he didn't give you a coupon for a cup of tea.
He swore at you for bugger all.

GUY : Oh shut up! I also got squeals. I been looking for a
job for three weeks. Just let each of us keep his
squeals to himself.

PINKIE : Well, when you get a job, I hope they tell you to apolo-
gise for something you never did. For something you
never did.

GUY : My only consolation is that by then you'll either be
fired or you'll still be working, and I can go to you
for advice.

PINKIE : As if I'll give it. You wait. Because it's a problem
you understand, a problem.

(AT THIS POINT PINKIE NOTICES TOBIAS WHO HAS BEEN
LISTENING CAREFULLY TO EVERYTHING SAID)

You been listening carefully, I seen you. You're
not like these bums.

TOBIAS : I been listening.

PINKIE : Yes, I seen you. Now what would you do? Wait!
Before you speak. He never gave you the coupon for the
tea. He never did. Because in every office they give

you the coupon for the tea and you put them next to the saucer with the biscuits, and then you give them the tea. But there was no coupon there! He never gave it to you. So you see he swore at you for bugger all and they're asking you to apologise for something you never did. Now tell me, what would you do?

TOBIAS : I (TOBIAS PAUSES NOT KNOWING WHAT TO SAY)

PINKIE : (Encouraging him) Ja, come on.

TOBIAS : I don't know.

PINKIE : You don't know. You don't know? Let me go ask Rosie.
(HE EXITS)

GUY : (SLAPPING PINKIE ON THE BACK AS HE PASSES). Cheer up Pinkie. Go ask old Van Rensburg for his advice. That man takes too much.

WILLIE : I don't blame him.

TOBIAS : (To Guy) You help me with my letter now.

GUY : Is it gonna be long or short.

TOBIAS : Just to my wife, to let her know I have arrived safely in Johannesburg.

GUY : Okay, but let's be quick. Shark doesn't like to be kept waiting and I'm on his list. You help me with the spelling Willie.

WILLIE : Sure.

TOBIAS : Who is this man Shark?

GUY : Insurance. He insures your paypacket. Every Friday night five bob and you get home safely.

(THEY EXIT. REBECCA, WHO HAD APPEARED ON STAGE A FEW MINUTES EARLIER, MOVES UP TO WILLIE.)

REBECCA : Couldn't you get started at all?

WILLIE : Start what?

REB : With the books.

WILLIE : Maybe later. You heard Guy, we're well trained in this yard. Life starts after eight o'clock.

REB : He always comes on time.

WILLIE : Yes, I suppose we could call that one o' his virtues.
(GUY'S HEAD APPEARS AT THE WINDOW. HE CALLS OUT 'MAXULU'. WILLIE SPELLS IT OUT.)

REB : It's true what Guy said.

WILLIE : What did he say?

REB : If you stick to your books you'll go places.

WILLIE : That's a sharp observation.

REB : Why do you get sore every time someone just mentions it.

WILLIE : I'm sick of hearing it.
(GUY'S HEAD APPEARS.)

GUY : I've got a big one Willie. Circumstances.

WILLIE : (SPELLING) C-I-R-C-U-M-S-T-A-N-C-E-S.
Sick of hearing it. Can you understand that.

REB : No.

WILLIE : I'm sick of being bright when I know it means nothing.
I'm sick of going places when I know there is no place to go.

REB : That wasn't what you used to say. When you first got the papers for the course you said it would mean a lot.
Extra pay, a better position.

WILLIE : (Impatiently) Oh ..

REB : Well, didn't you?

WILLIE : Yes, I said that, two years ago.

REB : Well, isn't it true.

WILLIE : Yes, it's true.

REB : Then why complain.

WILLIE : Complain. I'm not complaining. And if I was, what's wrong with it when everybody expects me to parcel up my life in the application form for a correspondence

course.

(GUY'S HEAD APPEARS AT THE WINDOW. THIS TIME THE WORD IS 'FRUSTRATED',

WILLIE SPELLS IT OUT.)

It's just possible that a man can get to thinking about other things than extra pay and a better position.

REB : Such as?

WILLIE : Such as himself. What's he doing? Where does he fit in?

(REB TURNS AWAY AND WALKS DEJECTEDLY BACK TO THE HOUSE)

I'm sorry Reb. There's nothing I can do about it.

When a man gets to thinking like that he doesn't stop

until he finds what he's looking for. Like I told

Guy it's one of those things you can't forget. If

I could, life would be simple again. But you've got

to know where you're going. I'm doubting what I used

to believe in. The shine has worn off. Life feels like

an old pair of shoes that everyone is trying to force me

into with me knowing I couldn't walk a block in them.

(GUY'S HEAD APPEARS AT THE WINDOW)

GUY : Last one. 'Yours faithfully'. One word or two words?

WILLIE : Two words.

REB : Does a man always find the thing he looks for?

WILLIE : If he doesn't he might as well be dead.

REB : I'm going to tidy up. Shall I leave your books out.

WILLIE : Yes, I'll try again.

(REB EXITS. GUY AND TOBIAS ENTER)

GUY : How's this for a letter. Toby provided the ideas and

I gave the English. Go on read it to him, Toby.

Show Willie he isn't the only bum around here with a bit of learning.

TOBIAS : Dear Maxulu,

I have arrive at Johburg. You do not know it. You cannot see it in your mind. They have buildings here like ten mission churches on top of one another, so high you cannot see the cross on the top. They make mountains by digging the gold and they tell me they dig the gold under the ground like moles. You do not know it Maxulu, it is not like anything you know. I have not seen one cow, one goat, or even one chicken but the motor cars are more in one street than the cows of the chief, and the people more than the biggest impi.

Here also I find Sophia Town where I stay with Mr. Guy Modise. I meet his friend, Mr. Willie Seopelo who will get me a job in one of the tall buildings, taking the whiteman to the top. They call it a lift. But I don't lift, I just press a knob and then the box takes us all to the top.

If everything goes right I will send some money this month, call in at the Post Office and buy another blanket. The red ones. If circumstances permit, I will get home on leave in a year. Wait for me. Get Mr. Mabuza to write to me about you, the children, and the cow. Also get him to read this letter to you. Yours faithfully, your husband, Tobias Masala.
It's a good letter.

WILLIE : Yeah, it's fine.

TOBIAS : (Pointing at Guy). He's clever. He writes. But there are things I do not say. If she was here, she would feel it in me tonight when we lie together, and

she would know. But for this letter I need words and a word is only a wind. If I must find a wind for this that I cannot speak, it would be long and soft like that which chases the shadows in the grass in summer when we wait for rain. Do you know? The grass is long, the oxen fat, the sun heavy. I remember. I took the oxen into the hills when I was small and I heard that wind and all I could say was, God is lonely. It spoke the thing for which I have no words. The words Maxulu, the words. You must know when you read that I have not got the words.

WILLIE : (GETTING UP QUICKLY AND MOVING TO GUY) Did you tell him old Moses has been writing those letters home for ten years.

GUY : Have a heart. Old Moses is fifty. No one finds work at that age. What's the point in discouraging him.

WILLIE : I wasn't thinking of discouragement. Just the truth.

GUY : The truth is Toby is not old, and you're going to help him get a job, and Toby will go back in a year.

WILLIE : A year in this place is like a stray bitch, it drops a litter of ~~at best~~ ten like itself before it moves on.

GUY : What are you trying to do Willie?

WILLIE : Stop him dreaming.

GUY : Suppose he is. What's wrong with that? Don't you dream?

WILLIE : I woke up a long time ago.

GUY : I don't get it Willie. You used to be the one sucker who always had time for a sad story. Any bum could come here and knock on your door and Willie would help.

WILLIE : Have you been talking to Rebecca?

GUY : How does she come into it?

WILLIE : She also found a better past, a better Willie that used to be.

GUY : Okay let's drop it. When you start getting suspicious about me talking to you like I always talk to you, it's time to shut up.

(PINKIE, THIS TIME QUITE DRUNK, APPEARS ON STAGE)

PINKIE : He's a bastard. That's what he is! A bloody Dutch bastard. Him and the boss, Mr. Cornell. I bet his mother was also a Van Rensburg. Well if they think I'm going to apologise they got another guess coming. Because I got right? They'll protect me.

GUY : Who?

PINKIE : They.

GUY : Who is they?

PINKIE : Them.

GUY : So you found your solution to the problem.

PINKIE : Solution? It's rights! And I got them. And I don't apologise because I didn't do nothing. I mean anything. I didn't do something! Anyway, he swore at me for bugger all and I don't apologise.

(AT THIS POINT, WATSON, SMARTLY DRESSED AND CARRYING A BRIEF CASE APPEARS ON THE STAGE) ~~AND ON HIS WAY TO~~

~~WATSON~~

GUY : Hey Pinkie, there goes Watson. Go and ask him to help you.

PINKIE : Watson, a word with you my friend. Watson I know you can help me because you fight for our rights.

WATSON : Try my best, but I'm in a bit of a hurry old man.

PINKIE : Wait, Watson, wait. The question is to apologise or not to apologise.

WATSON : Ja, it's a problem alright. I'll think about it.

PINKIE : No, Watson, no! Whatever you do don't think about it.
Because it's life and death to me.

WATSON : Well you see I'm in a bit of a hurry. There's a meeting
over at Freedom Square and I got to address the delegates.
(PINKIE AND WATSON WHO HAVE MOVED ACROSS THE STAGE NOW
FIND THEMSELVES SUDDENLY CONFRONTED BY SHARK AND TWO OF
HIS THUGS. WATSON TIPS HIS HAT AND DISAPPEARS. PINKIE
DROPS BACK FRIGHTENED TO THE OTHER MEN WHO HAVE ALL STOOD
UP AND ARE CLUSTERED TOGETHER)

SHARK : Well, isn't anyone glad to see me?

HARRY : Lot of dumb bastards. Come on, betaal jong!

SHARK : Don't be so vulgar Harry. You're always thinking
about money.

HARRY : That's what we come for.

SHARK : Yes, that is true. It is Friday night. All you boys
got paid?

HARRY : They wouldn't be here if they wasn't.

WILLIE : Here's your five shillings Shark. Take it and go.

SHARK : Don't rush me, Willie. You're as vulgar about money
as Harry.

I want to report to you chaps. After all you are en-
titled to something for your subscription. That is,
other than the protection we give you. Now you boys
have been paying very well and very regular. I reckon
this about the best yard in Sophia Town. Isn't that
so Harry?

HARRY : The very best. We've had no trouble from these bums.

SHARK : And for that reason you've had no trouble from us.
You travel home safely with your paypackets every Friday
night. My boys ARE all along the way keeping an eye
on you chaps. Nobody, but nobody elbows their way

into your hard earned cash. You know something, I reckon you boys got yourselves a bargain. Now some of my customers haven't been as appreciative as you boys. Yes, in fact I've had quite a bit of trouble. Especially down in Gold Street. Heard about Charlie? Poor Charlie. Tell them about Charlie, Harry.

HARRY : He didn't get off the train tonight.

SHARK : That is, not until they found him. Then they carried him off. Looks like foul play. The police are investigating. But hell, what can they do. I mean those trains are so crowded. It's a shame. They should give you boys a better service, really they should. Okay, Harry, collect.

(HARRY AND THE OTHER THUG MOVE FORWARD COLLECTING FROM THE MEN. THE SECOND THUG HAS A BIT OF TROUBLE WITH TOBIAS WHO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. HARRY MOVES OVER.)

HARRY : What are you waiting for?

TOBIAS : I'm waiting for nothing.

HARRY : Then give it.

TOBIAS : Give what?

HARRY : Vyf bob, five shillings. Betaal jong!

GUY : Lay off him. He's just come here.

SHARK : What's the trouble Harry?

HARRY : Another Charlie, here among the good boys.

GUY : Hang on Shark, this bloke's a stranger.

SHARK : A new arrival! They're always a bit of a risk.

WILLIE : He knows nothing about what's going on. Leave him alone.

SHARK : That's stupid advice coming from you Willie. I mean you got some brains. Aren't you a B.A. boy? A man works hard to get a little business organised,

you know, regular customers, and then along comes the stranger who doesn't want to buy. It's a bad example. Who knows, you might be the first one to follow his example.

WILLIE : You've got a monopoly. We all buy what you sell.

SHARK : Even the stranger. (TO TOBIAS) Will you buy what I sell?

TOBIAS : What do you sell?

SHARK : What do I sell? Protection! This is a bad place.

TOBIAS : (BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER) Protection. I'm not a baby.
(THE ATMOSPHERE IS SUDDENLY TENSE. THE OTHER MEN REALISE TOBIAS IS IN TROUBLE)

SHARK : What's your name?

TOBIAS : Tobias. Tobias Masala.

SHARK : Tobias? No, that's no good. We'll call you 'stupid'!
(THERE IS A PAUSE AND THEN SHARK'S VOICE IS ALMOST AT A SCREAM) Stupid! Because that's what you are. A dumb bloody ox. Okay Harry.

(HARRY AND THE OTHER TRUG MOVE LIKE LIGHTNING. A KNIFE FLASHES, IT IS QUICK AND SUDDEN. TOBIAS IS LEFT LYING ON THE FLOOR. SHARK TURNS AND LOOKS AT THE MEN, THEN SPITS ON THE BODY AND LEAVES. WILLIE MOVES FORWARD AND BENDS DOWN TO THE DEAD TOBIAS. HE WITHDRAWS INSTANTLY RUBBING THE PALMS OF HIS HANDS ON HIS TROUSERS)

C U R T A I N

SCENE III

(THE INTERIOR OF WILLIE'S ROOM. IT IS SUNDAY NIGHT. HE IS SITTING AT A TABLE WITH A NUMBER OF BOOKS OPEN IN FRONT OF HIM, BUT HE IS NOT GIVING THEM ANY ATTENTION. BEHIND HIM REBECCA IS CLEANING UP AFTER THE EVENING MEAL.)

REB : Oh yes, and something else. Betty and Solly is engaged. They want to get married in November. I met them on the street. He asked about you. Wants to know when you going to visit him. Says I must tell you to leave the books alone one evening and to go over. He's changed his job you know. In a lawyer's office now, getting much better pay. That's how they can get married. I'll be seeing her tomorrow. Shall I tell her we'll be over sometime this week? Willie!

WILLIE : Sorry. What's that you were saying?

REB : Am I disturbing you?

WILLIE : No, I wasn't reading.

REB : You wasn't listening either.

WILLIE : Just tired I guess.

REB : Been at it all afternoon.

WILLIE : At what?

REB : Books silly. You been learning all afternoon.

WILLIE : Yes ... yes that's it. I been learning all afternoon.

REB : Then give it a rest now. What you been doing. History?

WILLIE : You don't have to talk about it as if you were interested.

REB : But I am.

WILLIE : Alright. You are.

REB : Why always so suspicious. Everytime I try to understand you shut up, like you didn't want to share nything.

WILLIE : I share the money. (Pause) I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say it.

REB : You just got so many chances of saying a thing like that.

WILLIE : I didn't mean it.

REB : Then why did you say it.

WILLIE : I don't know.

REB : Maybe it's because you want to use up all your chances.

WILLIE : What are you getting at?

REB : That although I don't read as much as you I can understand simple language, so if you want to say 'get out' say it and I'll go.

WILLIE : What does that mean?

REB : We aren't married.

WILLIE : So?

REB : So there's nothing to stop you from saying it. But remember when you say it, that I'm not in here for the money.

WILLIE : I don't want to say it Reb.

REB : Then stop acting like you wanted to. I can't help it if it looks that way to me Willie. I haven't changed, I'm the same Rebecca. But you aren't like you used to be. We don't talk about things anymore.

WILLIE : Like getting married.

REB : Yes, that's one of them. Why don't we Willie. I mean talk, even just talk.

WILLIE : Maybe because you don't talk about that sort of thing in a voice as rusty as old junk in a back yard.

REB : Can't we change that?

WILLIE : Change what? My voice? Must I only start cooing like a turtle dove in the bluegum to have everything back cosy and warm again.

REB : What's wrong with having life cosy and warm?

WILLIE : Nothing, absolutely nothing if you're still up there in the bluegum. But something has shaken it and I've fallen out of the nest. It's not cosy and warm down here and I don't see how I can kid myself that it is.

REB : Okay Willie. You've said that so many different ways I can't count them no more. But please, just for once, try and tell me what's shaken you down.

WILLIE : 'A slow soft wind of loneliness'. That doesn't mean much to you does it?

REB : Not a thing. You couldn't have been very settled in your nest if a slow soft wind kicks you out.

WILLIE : I was a fool to have said it. I should have known you wouldn't understand.

REB : Understand? When all you give me is something about a wind that doesn't mean a thing to me. Try it simple Willie. Have you grown sick of me? Just say yes and I'll understand.

WILLIE : I'm sick of my whole life. Everything! Every single thing that I've done or believed in looks stupid. Is that clear enough for you.

(A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. GUY'S VOICE "Anybody home?")

REB : (PULLING HERSELF TOGETHER) Coming Guy (SHE OPENS THE DOOR)

GUY : (ENTERING) Willie at home? There you are. Where were you this afternoon? I knocked twice and got no answer.

(PAUSE)

REB : I thought you stayed home this afternoon.

GUY : Hey? Have I said anything I shouldn't?

WILLIE : It's okay Guy. (THERE IS ANOTHER PAUSE. WILLIE CAN FEEL REB'S EYES ON HIM) I went for a walk.

REB : Guy says he knocked twice.

GUY : (QUICK TO MAKE AMENDS) Yes, but they was very close together. I knocked on the door, went over to Old Moses to ask if he'd seen Willie, then I came straight back and knocked a second time, thinking maybe Willie was sleeping. Honest Reb.

WILLIE : I went for a walk.

GUY : (BREAKING THE UNEASY SILENCE) Tell you what I wanted to see you about. The big show they're putting on for the mission ... know about it? Top line talent. Well one of the boys ... plays the sax ... has fallen ill and I take his place. I get paid. (GUY LOOKS EXCITEDLY FROM WILLIE TO REB. THE EXCITEMENT IN HIS EYES FADES AT THEIR POOR RESPONSE) I just thought you might like to know.

WILLIE : It's a good break.

GUY : (RECOVERING) You think so? You really think so?

WILLIE : Of course, it's a big show. You'll be heard by the right people.

GUY : That's what I thought. But I haven't told you the best yet. I play a solo and you know what its going to be? 'Friday Night Blues!' How's that? I'm going to keep it just like I told you. "Inspired by an empty pocket." You'll be along won't you, to hear I mean. Being a soloist, I get my two seats and I want you and Reb to have them. And I'll see they're front row. Nothing but the best.

REB : Thanks Guy.

GUY : I couldn't have done a thing without you and Willie.

REB : Had any supper?

GUY : See what I mean?

REB : There's coffee, bread and jam.

GUY : I was so excited, I've forgotten to eat.

REB : Now's as good a time as any.

GUY : Let me buy something. I still got a few bob. Shark didn't take it all ... (HIS SENTENCE TRAILS OFF INTO SILENCE)

WILLIE : That's alright. I think we have all nearly forgotten by now.

GUY : I reckon so. A fellow gets all excited about something that has happened to him, and you forget about other things. (PAUSE) They buried him this afternoon.

WILLIE: Did they?

GUY : Why you always so tough about old Blanket Boy Willie?

WILLIE : Do you think a few tears can help him now?

GUY: Toby was alright Willie. There's a lot of those chaps about. They don't mean nothing wrong. It's like Father Higgins said, he just wanted to work.

WILLIE : And it all turned out like I told Father Higgins ... they come to the city and go wrong.

GUY : But Toby didn't go wrong.

WILLIE : What's right about being six feet underground!

GUY : I see what you mean. Yes, there's nothing right about that. I thought you meant wrong ... like Shark ... you know. Toby didn't have enough savvy to peddle dagga. He was a good chap. When we was writing that letter in my room on Friday night he told me about himself. What he was going to do with his cash when he got home.

WILLIE : Let's leave that for somebody who wants to write a sad story about a black skin.

GUY : (PLACATING) Sure ... sure.

(THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. REB OPENS IT. FATHER HIGGINS ENTERS)

HIGGINS : Hello Rebecca. Is Willie home?

REB : Yes, come in.

HIGGINS : Hello Willie, Guy.

GUY : I'm sorry I didn't get to the funeral this afternoon
Father, but I was jumping around getting organised for
the concert,

HIGGINS : I understand. Actually it went off alright, didn't it Willie.

GUY : Willie!

REB : Willie?

HIGGINS : Yes, Willie was there. Just the two of us and the diggers.

WILLIE : What do you want Father?

HIGGINS : Am I disturbing you?

WILLIE : Yes.

HIGGINS : It's about Tobias. There will have to be a letter home to
his people and this Death certificate.

GUY : There is also a few of his things in my room. Shall I
get them for you, Father?

HIGGINS : Please. I'll make up a parcel and send it all back.

GUY : Won't be a minute. (EXIT)

REB : Sit down Father. Can I give you some coffee?

HIGGINS : Don't go to any trouble.

REB : No trouble. It's ready.

HIGGINS : How are you keeping?

REB : So, so.

HIGGINS : So, so" Why are Sundays always so miserable in Sophia Town.

WILLIE : Nothing to do except sit around and think. And what we
got to think about ain't so good either.

HIGGINS : The Lord's Day.

HIGGINS : How can I Willie. You were at the graveside with me.

WILLIE : What was it you wanted to see me about?

HIGGINS : A letter home to Tobias' family. I only knew him from the few minutes he spent with me when he came for help. I was thinking that someone over here, maybe you, got to know him a little better and

WILLIE : And you want me to write the letter.

HIGGINS : Yes. I meant to speak to you about it this afternoon.

WILLIE : I can't very well say no.

HIGGINS : I don't want to force you. Don't force yourself.

WILLIE : I'll write it. Let's leave it at that.

HIGGINS : (TAKES UP THE BUNDLE OF CLOTHING HE BROUGHT IN WITH HIM. HE FEELS AROUND IN IT AND TAKES OUT THE LETTER GUY WROTE FOR TOBIAS) I suppose the address will be the same as on this. Do you think this letter should go with it?

WILLIE : No.

HIGGINS : It was his last letter home.

WILLIE : It's better they don't get it.

HIGGINS : Why?

WILLIE : Because it's full of dreams. Because it tells them what a wonderful place Johannesburg is and asks them to wait for him. If that letter goes I don't write.

HIGGINS : I leave it to you.

(GUY APPEARS. HE HAS A FEW OF TOBIAS' BELONGINGS WITH HIM)

GUY : This was all there was.

HIGGINS : I'll parcel it up with the rest. Not very much is it?

GUY : There's a little money here. (HE COUNTS) Five shillings.

(WILLIE AND GUY EXCHANGE A LOOK. HIGGINS SEES IT.)

HIGGINS : Five shillings. I've heard about that.

WILLIE : So have we.

HIGGINS : Yes, you must know a lot.

WILLIE : Over here you only know as much as is good for you.

HIGGINS : Even some one like yourself?

WILLIE : Why should I be different from the rest?

HIGGINS : I just thought you might be.

WILLIE : Say it straight.

HIGGINS : Alright. Tobias was an innocent man. A simple and a good man. He came to me on Friday looking for a chance to work and live. He asked for nothing more. This afternoon two days later I buried him. You know what it was like. You stood at the graveside with me. A fistful of flowers and a wooden cross. I buried others like that, Willie. It wasn't my first time even if it might have been yours. I know life is 'cheap' here; I've heard that sort of talk until I'm sick of it. But something inside me finds five shillings just a little too cheap. I was hoping you might have felt the same.

WILLIE : Nobody over here thinks five shillings expensive!

HIGGINS : Then why does it keep on happening? There are going to be others like Tobias. They'll walk in full of hope and be carried out in a coffin.

GUY : So?

HIGGINS : It doesn't have to be like that if only someone will do something about it.

GUY : Such as?

HIGGINS : Someone must have seen what happened out there on Friday night. Go along to the police and give a sworn statement. Get others to do the same. If only we can get as far as an official charge

GUY : Whew! You're not asking for courage you're asking for suicide. This character we're up against, he doesn't go to church. Maybe you don't know him like we do.

HIGGINS : Ask for police protection.

GUY : Don't you understand. He's got shares in the police station. If I go along like you said, they'd let me talk for fifteen minutes. Sure they'd listen to all I said. But when I was finished: "where's your pass" Now I haven't got a permit to stay in Sophia Town, so I'd be in for fourteen days. And when I come out? If you think Toby was cheap at five bob I wouldn't be able to sell myself for a sixpence. He'd be waiting and he'd get me. You can forget about the police. They protect a fellow like Shark. You see they're only interested in our passes. But a kaffir laying a charge against a criminal that would be a joke. We are all criminals. Look Father, don't be hard on us. You know what I've just said better than any other white.

HIGGINS : Sure. I'll leave this letter with you, Willie. Thanks for the coffee Rebecca. Good night.

GUY : Say, Father is it still alright for the show?

HIGGINS : Of course Guy. Practise hard (HE LEAVES WITH THE BUNDLE OF TOBIAS' CLOTHING. THERE IS A PAUSE AFTER HIS EXIT, GUY AND REB LOOK AT WILLIE)

REB : Why didn't you tell us you went to the funeral?

WILLIE : Why should I. Everybody has just about forgotten what happened on Friday night.

GUY : But not you.

WILLIE : Give me time, give me time.

GUY : It's your advice Willie. If you can forget, life will be easier. Remember saying that, on Friday Night?

WILLIE : I remember.

GUY : Those were true words. I mean if you can't forget,
you might...

WILLIE : What?

GUY : I don't know. That's why I say, try hard Willie.
Try real hard.

WILLIE : I said give me time didn't I?

GUY : Sure.

WILLIE : What's eating you Guy? Speak up.

GUY : You don't look as if it's going too easy.

WILLIE : Should it be easy? What are we saying? Easy! We make
a proud job of living don't we. Let's make it easy,
Let's make the whole thing easy. Easy come, easy go.

GUY : That's the way it is.

WILLIE : I know the way it is! Only it's not quite so easy
to take at times.

GUY : Life's hard enough for a bloke to want to soften it up
a little.

WILLIE : The only way we can soften life is by softening ourselves.

GUY : Like how?

WILLIE : Like forgetting a silly bastard was killed out there
and we stood around because that way life was easy.

GUY : Hey Willie! Look look at me. You know me,
Guy, the bum you always help. You owe me nothing
Willie so what I say now is on the level, see. Willie.
Forget it. Go back to your books, grab yourself a
hunk of living, get married do anything you like,
but forget Friday Night.

WILLIE : We make a proud job of living.

GUY : Do you want to end up dead?

WILLIE : How else does a man hope to end up?

GUY : Okay you're quick on the words. But how about next
Friday next Friday like Tobias out there in
the yard.

WILLIE : Will you forget that just as easily?

REB : Willie! What are you saying! You want to chase the whole world away from you? Guy speaks to you like a friend and what does he get? A kick in the backside.

WILLIE : I'm sorry Guy.

GUY : Skip it. Father Higgins made us all jumpy talking like that about doing something.

WILLIE : Guess so. That and the funeral. It's still close, you know, this afternoon. And now this letter he's asked me to write back to the woman. Let me get this off my chest and I'll feel better. The whole business is hanging around my neck. Yes, that's it. Let me get this off and I'll feel better.

GUY : Of course. You'll write a good letter. Nobody could ask for more.

(WILLIE SITS AT THE TABLE AND TAKES UP A PEN AND STARTS WRITING).

WILLIE : Dear Mrs. Masala (THE WORDS DRY UP. HE TEARS OFF THE PAPER AND TRIES AGAIN). Dear Mrs. Masala Dear Mrs. Masala. (AGAIN THE WORDS DRY UP. WILLIE LOOKS UP AND SEES GUY AND REB WATCHING HIM IN FASCINATION).

C U R T A I N .

SCENE IV

SETTING IS THE SAME AS THE LAST SCENE. IT IS FRIDAY NIGHT, FOUR DAYS LATER. THE TIME IS ABOUT SEVEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING. REBECCA IS ALONE IN THE ROOM, AND IS HURRIEDLY PACKING A SUITCASE, SHE IS OBVIOUSLY UPSET AND HAS A HARD TIME CONTROLLING HER EMOTIONS. THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR, SHE STARTS, LOOKS AROUND QUICKLY FOR SOME PLACE TO HIDE THE SUITCASE. THE KNOCK COMES A SECOND TIME AND SHE CALLS OUT

REB : Who's there?

GUY : Only me. Open up.

(REB OPENS THE DOOR AND GUY COMES IN. HE IS BREATHLESS AND LOOKS QUICKLY ROUND THE ROOM.)

GUY : Where is he?

REB : I don't know.

GUY : What's he doing Reb? Tell me. What does Willie think he's doing?

REB : I don't know.

GUY : He's asking for trouble like I've never seen any man ask for it and that's for sure. That's for damned sure. They're talking about it on every street corner. Willie Seopelo Willie Seopelo if Shark hasn't heard about it by now he must be stone deaf. Aren't you worried?

REB : worried?

GUY : Yes, worried. You know he went to the police station.

REB : Did he?

GUY : Cut it out Reb, this is no joke. The police station! To report Shark! And they laughed at him just like I said they would, and now everybody in Sophia Town knows he went. And that includes Shark. Willie's making it dangerous just to be a friend of his. Listen Reb,

do you realise what this means?

REB : Well what do you want me to do?

GUY : Look worried, get scared. Because it's Willie.

REB : It's always Willie.

GUY : Well this time it's for sure. Didn't you try to stop him?

REB : Have you ever tried arguing with Willie? ... when you don't even know half the words for the things you want to say?

GUY : Then why's he doing it Reb? There must be a reason.
(PAUSE) Didn't you ask him?

REB : I did. He said he wanted to be able to sleep at night.

GUY : That's all?

REB : That's all he said.

GUY : Is he coming back here?

REB : I suppose so.

GUY : Suppose? Look, what's going on here? Don't you know what Willie does anymore?

REB : He doesn't tell me and I stopped asking.

GUY : What's happening to the world!

REB : You been away too long Guy. You got a lot to catch up on.

GUY : Only four days I had to do my practising for to-night in town. It's only FOUR days. Things can't change as much as this in four days. Anyway I came as soon as I heard about it. Pinkie came round and told me about it this afternoon. But why, Reb, what's got into him?

REB : Stop asking me like that.

GUY : Then who must I ask?

REB : I don't know, but don't ask me because I don't know and I don't care.

GUY : Don't care!

REB : That's what I said, I don't care.

GUY : Hey easy Reb, easy. You don't mean that.

REB : Why shouldn't I mean it? I'll say it again! I don't care. I mean every word of it.

GUY : That means you not going to put a bunch of flowers on Willie's grave on Sunday. Yes! On his grave. Because if you think it's going to be any other way you're wrong. He hasn't got a snow ball's chance in hell against Shark. And if you don't care about it alright. What you doing Reb? What's this?

REB : A suitcase and I'm packing it.

GUY : You're getting out?

REB : Can you give me a good reason for staying.

GUY : Yes. Willie. Look Reb, let me explain very clearly: if we don't do something he's finished. Everybody's waiting to see what happens. Shark knows that. He knows that he, if he doesn't put Willie down hard, he might as well pack up and try his hand at a dagga racket. So he's going to put Willie down hard. We've got to stop that.

REB : How are you going to stop it?

GUY : I'll speak to Willie.

REB : What are you going to say that I haven't already said? Tell me Guy, what are you going to find in your friendship that I couldn't find in my love?

GUY : It can't be as bad as that.

REB : Tell me what you're going to say to him.

GUY : It can't be like you said Reb.

REB : Why can't it?

GUY : .Because Willie is sensible. He listens to reason.

REB : You can't reason with a mad man. You think I'm talking wild now, carried away by my emotions as Willie always said. Well this time it isn't true. I've been carried away nowhere. For four days I've lived in here with Willie and watched him change until I don't recognise him anymore. I've sat here and watched Willie's big brain get hold of him and destroy him. He sat here day and night for four days with one idea until it nearly drove me mad as well until it drove him to the police station.

GUY : What was this idea Reb?

REB : Tobias!

GUY : Toby. I should have known.

REB : But don't think he told me. Not Willie. Not anymore. I could be the doormat he wipes his feet on for all the notices he takes of me. (SHE DIPS HER HAND INTO A WASTE PAPER BASKET AND PULLS OUT A HANDFUL OF CRUMBLED PAPERS.)

REB : Do you see this. It's the letter Father Higgins asked him to write back to Tobias' wife. Well that's all he does and he can't even do it. Look at this. Do you see? Our address and then "Dear Mrs. Macala." He never gets any further.

GUY : But Willie was so damned good at letters.

REB : This one he can't write. He's been sitting with this letter ever since last Sunday.

GUY : So he couldn't forget. But why? Have you tried speaking to Willie, Reb. I mean really tried.

REB : Oh Guy! What you think I been doing here these four days. What? Do you think I just been sitting here

watching making coffee when he wanted it
cooking his food. I knowed with something inside me
that this was our last chance, and if you think
I've wasted it I'd call God down to give witness. If
he even heard half my prayers he would have a lot to
say. I've tried everything ---- everything a woman
can try I've tried in here. I've tried just being
with him, just being here so that if he wanted some-
thing he could ask. I've tried it on that bed at
night offered him the comfort only a woman can
offer a man. I would have let him take me like a
dog takes a bitch in the street if I thought it would
be comfort. Because I know that if I could have
given Willie that, in any way, there would still be
hope. (P.AUSE) I haven't been able to comfort, help
or do anything a woman should for her man.

GUY : And now you're clearing out?

REB : Clearing out or being kicked out. I don't know which
it is. I only know that I'm going, that I should have
been gone a long time ago. I've overstayed my time.

GUY : There was no time to you and Willie.

REB : Hearing you speak like that makes me realise what Willie
must have thought of the things I said. You sound
stupid Guy. It's over and you're still trying to kid
yourself it isn't, like I been doing. And all the
time Willie knew it was over. Only he was too much
of a gentleman to kick me out. He waited for me to
realise it was time to go.

GUY : Before you go Reb remember you still love him.

REB : Love him! I feel like I been to bed with one man and

woke up to find a stranger beside me. I might have loved the man I went to sleep with, but the man I found this morning fills me with shame. And it's so deep Guy, I just want to run away from what causes it.

GUY : He needs you Reb.

REB : He hasn't said it.

GUY : He's blind! He doesn't know what he's up against.

REB : Well, if he doesn't it's no use. Can't you see that Guy? Willie is a man and because of that you can't force a thing down his throat like a mother with a child that won't take medicine. He's a man Guy, so he lives his own life and if he doesn't want anything, he doesn't want it and this is how it is with me. It's over. You walked in at the end. Life isn't like a gramophone record where you can go back to the beginning.

GUY : Where you going?

REB : Back to my mother.

GUY : That's going to be tough Reb.

REB : Only place to go. Anyway it's easier than staying here.
(THE DOOR OPENS AND WILLIE ENTERS)

WILLIE : I thought you were practising in town.

GUY : I came as soon as I heard.

WILLIE : About me going to the police?

GUY : Yes. Well what are you waiting for?

WILLIE : What do you mean?

GUY : You're not going to sit here and wait for him are you?

WILLIE : You mean Shark.

GUY : Who else is going to visit you?

WILLIE : If he comes

GUY : If he comes! What do you think he's going to do? Run away? You think you've scared him? He's going to be

around here as certain as to-day's Friday, and it won't be a social call.

WILLIE : Do you want me to run away?

GUY : Yes. They're not nice words but that about describes it.

WILLIE : I'm sick of running away.

GUY : You've never run away from anything before Willie.

WILLIE : I've been running away my whole life.

REB : Willie

WILLIE : Don't try and tell me that's not true because it is.

REB : Listen to me

WILLIE : No! For once there is something I'm going to work out for myself. The way I want it, the way I feel it should be worked out, without advice or kind encouragement from anyone.

GUY : And we must sit around and watch you make a balls-up of everything.

WILLIE : If you can't take it, get out.

GUY : You coming Reb?

WILLIE : Guy! Guy, please. Turn off the pressure man. You're pushing me. I've been pushed so much I can't take it any more.

GUY : Whose pushing you?

WILLIE : Everybody.

GUY : Don't let it bother you no more. I've stopped as from right now.

WILLIE : Look Guy. I've got to live my life, not you.

GUY : Why do you think I asked you to clear out? Because I want you to live it not throw it away.

WILLIE : I'm not throwing it away.

GUY : Okay, okay. Now you tell me what you think Shark

is going to do when he comes around here looking for you. Pat you on the back, shake your hand? Sure they might do that before they put the knife into you like with Tobias. Willie you remember last Sunday, here in this room. Last Sunday, I said that the man who thought of trying to report Shark to the police wouldn't be worth a sixpense. You remember me saying that? You remember me saying that even if he did get as far as the police station it still wouldn't mean a thing because the police wouldn't be interested. You remember all that Willie you know it don't you.

WILLIE : Yes.

GUY : You know all that but you went alone to the police. Now forget the big words Willie I want you to tell me in short ones that I can understand why you went.

WILLIE : I went for myself. For Myself. Not to get Shark. Before I even start reckoning with him I've got myself to think about, the part I played in Tobias' death. The emotion inside me is shame, not anger, shame. You see Guy, I'm involved as surely as I stood there and watched him go down.

GUY : You had nothing to do with it. None of us did.

WILLIE : Didn't we?

GUY : No.

WILLIE : Then why can't I forget. Why? Why can't I write that letter.

GUY : You was always so good at letters.

WILLIE : Good at letters! How do you speak kindly of a man's death when the only truth about it is its stupidity? How do you tell a woman that her man died for bugger all and that his death means bugger all. Where's the comfort

Guy? Where? Go squeeze Tobias' blood out of the mud in the yard before you ask me to find it. Comfort Guy, not a cliché. Not a stupid "I'm sorry" or "He was a good man" but a sweetness as clean as his Mother's pain when she dropped him into the world. Tobias is dead, and all I can say is that there is a little more muck in our back yard.

GUY : And I thought you didn't like him.

WILLIE : Of course I didn't. I hated him. I hated him because I feared him. These 'simple men' with their innocence and dreams. How can we dream? When I was a child I used to lay awake at night in the room where my mother and us kids used to sleep. I used to lay awake and think. I'd say to myself "You're black". But hell it was so dark I couldn't see my own hand. I couldn't see my blackness, and I'd get to thinking that maybe the colour wasn't so important after all ... and because I'd think that I could dream a little. But there was always the next morning with its light and the truth. And the next morning used to come so regularly and make the dream so stupid that I gave up dreaming. Tobias reminded me of too much, Guy. He was going to make some money and live happily ever after. The cosy little dream like this: Willie and Rebecca lived happily ever after! That's how the fairy stories end and it's stupid because out there is life and it's not ending happily.

REB : Don't worry about that no more. You got your unhappy ending.

GUY : Hold it Reb. Look Willie, there's nothing wrong with a man trying to make a decent life for himself.

WILLIE : Yes there is, if he uses it as a fire exit every time
life gets a little hot.

GUY : So what must everybody do? Chuck up all they got and
live in rags.

WILLIE : I'm not talking about everybody. I'm talking about
myself. You can do a good thing for a wrong reason.....

REB : Shut up! I know it all. Every word he's going to
say I've heard it all before.

GUY : She's pulling out, Willie.

WILLIE : Leaving?

GUY : That's it. Reb is leaving, Willie. Say something!

REB : So at last I found it, Willie.

WILLIE : What?

REB : I found the thing that leaves you without words. We've
been in here four years I don't think there was
anything I done in those four years for which you didn't
have something to say. Is there really nothing Willie?
Not even "I don't want you to go". What about Good-
bye?

(REB LEAVES)

GUY : You let her go like that? You let Reb walk out like
she just come to sweep the floor? She's at the
steps Willie run man ... run. Willie, I'm
asking you!

WILLIE : I can't.

GUY : Did I see it end here, in front of me? Did I
see Reb leave, and you standing there saying nothing,
doing nothing?

(THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN, PINKIE RUSHES IN)

PINKIE : Willie! ... Shark's outside. He's asking for you.

C U R T A I N

SCENE V

(THE BACKYARD OF SCENE'S ONE AND TWO. THE VARIOUS CHARACTERS, WATSON, MOSES, ETC. ARE STANDING AROUND TENSELY, THEIR ATTENTION FOCUSSED ON SHARK AND HIS TWO THUGS. THE DOOR OF WILLIE'S HOME OPENS AND HE COMES OUT FOLLOWED BY GUY AND PINKIE.)

SHARK : Hi Willie. How's life treating you boy.

WILLIE : What do you want?

SHARK : What do I want? Did you hear that Harry?

HARRY : Ja. He asked what you want.

SHARK : What do I want?

HARRY : Five bob.

SHARK : There you go again. Always thinking about money. You're crude Harry, real crude. I wanted to chat with you Willie. A quiet talk just between you and me. This place is crowded, let's go into your room. Harry will see to the business. Okay Willie? I just want to talk boy.

WILLIE : Say it here if you're man enough. You don't go into my house.

SHARK : Why not?

WILLIE : It's clean.

PINKIE : ...a.....a... here's my five shillings Shark.

SHARK : Go away little man. Okay, I'll say it here. I was going to spare you the embarrassment, but I'll say it. You done me dirty Willie. You done me all wrong. You went along to the police like any cheap blabber-mouth to cause me trouble. Did you hear that all of you? To the police the bastards who lock us up for not carrying our passes. That's who Willie went

to see. You got to watch him. Because if you don't, he'll report you as well. Yes, he will. You Watson ... he'll report you to the Special Branch. He's ambitious this boy He'll do it. Now Willie, I reckon it's my public duty to tell you, to warn you that it's got to stop. Do you understand? S T O P I'm telling you, because these men pay me to protect them, and that's what I intend doing. It's your type that takes advantage of them. Like that little man over there he's just a little man. What can he do about a type like you? Or Watson. Good old Watson, who fights for our rights and fights so damned well, he hasn't realised how dangerous you are, a Government spy right under his nose. Now ... I'm prepared to give you a chance ...

WILLIE : Like Tobias.

FENKIE : Take it easy, Willie.

SHARK : What about him?

WILLIE : The 'chance' you gave him.

SHARK : He was getting rough with Harry. It was self-defence.

(TO HARRY) Wasn't it boy?

WILLIE : It was murder.

SHARK : I could sue you for that. For making incriminating statements against me. I got witnesses. Haven't I, boys?

(ADDRESSING THE OTHERS) I came here I just wanted to talk to Willie, but you heard the way he's been carrying on against me. He's asking for trouble. (TO WILLIE) You're lucky you got me to protect you against yourself.

WILLIE : I might have been.

SHARK : Might?

WILLIE : Past tense. The protection is finished. I don't buy any more.

SHARK : You're not going to pay?

WILLIE : That's what I said.

PINKIE : No, Willie.

SHARK : On my way down here I heard talk like that. Ain't you feeling well boy? You do look sort of pale. Strange that huh ... how pale a black skin can get when the man inside it is shit-scared of dying.

WILLIE : I don't scare that easily.

SHARK : Look boy, you went to the police station. Now that was a silly thing to do. But I can square that up. After all, you might have thought it your duty and I got no objection to a man doing his duty, even though I would have liked you to come and see me about it first. Anyway I can forget your little jaunt to the police station even though I know what you tried to tell them. Yes, I know Willie. I know everything! But I am willing to forget that. I can square it up with the boys. But I can't forget this talk about not paying. That's insulting. It's revolution! Haven't you bums had enough already.

WILLIE : Are you finished?

SHARK : Look Willie are you trying to scare me? With what? What you got that can scare me? These bums? Is that it? You going to organise a vigilance committee?

WILLIE : They got nothing to do with this.

SHARK : They'd better not if they know what's good for them.

WILLIE : Is that the lot?

SHARK : The lot! I haven't even started with you yet. And when I do you'll wish you'd stuck to the sample I gave you last



Friday night. Listen Willie, let's talk this over sensible like. What's worrying you? old Stoopid? Is that it? Okay. Here's a pound. One pound of the money I've sweated for. Send it to the woman in the kraal. Tell her it comes from a sympathiser. Now how's that?

WILLIE : Go stick that on the nail in your lavatory.

SHARK : Is that's the way you want it, okay. Now you listen to me. Two hours Willie two hours. You be here with your five bob waiting in two hours time, or clear out. Talk big then. Because I'll be coming around for you just for you.

HARRY : Why wait?

SHARK : No, this is business. Serious business and I want Willie to think about my proposition (HE MOVES OFF WITH HIS THUGS JUST BEFORE HIS EXIT HE TURNS) Two hours Willie! (SHARK'S EXIT LEAVES BEHIND A DEAD SILENCE.)

PINKIE : Don't you think you'd better start packing Willie?

WILLIE : Packing?

PINKIE : Ja. He's only given you two hours. Aren't you going Willie?

GUY : How can you ask Willie such a stupid question Pinkie? Willie here is going to show us how to live how to live really big aren't you Willie? You are going to show what miserable bums we are and how a man really behaves how a man really throws his life away. Ain't I right Willie? But there's something I've left out. Why don't you say it?

WILLIE : Say what?

GUY : Why don't you ask who's going to keep you company in two hours' time?

PINKIE : Don't talk like that. It make me nervous.

GUY : (STILL AT WILLIE) Because that's what you're thinking isn't it?

WILLIE : I'm not thinking anything.

GUY : You bet you aren't, because I've never seen anything so Goddam stupid in all my life. And you are the clever one remember, the Thinker!

WILLIE : Am I?

GUY : That's a good question. Maybe I should have said 'was', Because you been sitting in there the whole week thinking and this is the result. Anyway you'd better start again, start thinking quick because you got a lot to think about and only two hours to do it.

PINKIE : Hey Willie, you want to borrow five bob. I got paid today. I can manage it. You want it? Because you see Willie I got a good job. Four pounds a week that's good dough for a bachelor man huh? I don't want to lose the job Willie maybe I should say I don't want the job to lose me.

WILLIE : This doesn't involve you Pinkie or anybody else.

PINKIE : I wasn't just thinking of myself.

WILLIE : No?

PINKIE : No what I mean is we had one killing in here that was all a bad mistake. Let's not have another. Death is kind of infectious you know. It's like a disease it spreads. Look at old Tobins he went and now you maybe we follow.

WILLIE : Whatever happens you just carry on like nothing had happened. Like we all did last Saturday.

PINKIE : But you don't have to he's given you a chance a chance to live.

- WILLIE : What does that make him? God Almighty?
- WATSON : Look, maybe I can help. I don't want to get involved in something that doesn't concern me I mean I wasn't here when this this
- WILLIE : He called it self protection,
- WATSON : Ja, when this self protection happened. But I been a neighbour of all of you for a long time and, what I'm trying to say is a what can these chaps do against a man like Shark?
- WILLIE : I told you before that's their problem and I'm not trying to solve it, for anybody.
- WATSON : Now that's just where I think I can clear up the whole business. I'm prepared to put forward a resolution at the next congress, deploring the high incidence of crime and calling for an immediate
- PINKIE : Watson, why don't you go home. But he's right Willie. What can we do about Shark?
- WILLIE : Let's get one thing straight. I haven't been having nightmares about what we can do or what we can't. I been waking up at night sweating with shame because of what we did Did!... Here in this yard when Tobias went down. Can you remember what we did? Nothing.
- PINKIE : But what could we have done?
- WILLIE : Do you know what you've just said? In the space of one minute you've asked me what can we do and what could we have done. Don't you know what to do at all? Is there nothing you can do except be booted around by life until it looks like your skin was black from the bruises and from nothing else. Guy's right about the thinking I did in there for a week. That's a lot of thinking, but there was a lot to think about. You know one of the ideas I've come out with? The world I live in

is the way it is not in spite of me but because of me. You think we're just poor suffering come - to - Jesus - at - the - end - of - it - all black men and that the world's all wrong and against us so what the hell. Well I'm not so sure of that any more. I'm not so sure because I think we helped make it, the way it is.

WATSON : Are you deaying the oppression?

PINKIE : We don't like things the way they are Willie.

WILLIE : Nobody but a moron would like them. But there's a lot of it we make ourselves and a lot we accept.

PINKIE : Such as?

WILLIE : Such as Tobias' death and a character called Stark. Our handiwork. We've been good customers. Every Friday night on the dot five shillings ... for a long time. So when a man like Tobias walks in he's out in the cold if he doesn't pay and being a man he wouldn't want to pay. There's nothing that says we must surrender to what we don't like. There's no excuse like saying the world's a big place and I'm just a small little man. My world is as big as I am. Just big enough for me to do something about it. If I can't believe that, there's no point in living. Anyway this doesn't concern any of you and the sooner you leave me alone to solve it my way the better. Well? What are you waiting for or do you want to see how he does it a second time?

(THEY ALL EXIT EXCEPT WILLIE AND GUY)

WILLIE : (TO GUY) You'll be late for the show.

GUY : I'm going but not like that. Are you going to wait for him Willie? (PAUSE) Willie the world was

sweet the world was sweet

WILLIE : It's the way we made it.

GUY : (TURNING TO WILLIE) Then we made it all wrong
all wrong and rotten. When I think back to what it
was like just a week ago just a week and now.
I walked in here with my sax and I found Rebecca.
Right there! Taking the washing down. You know
who I'm talking about don't you Willie, or have you
forgotten her already?

WILLIE : I won't forget her Guy.

GUY : Pity you didn't tell her that when she went. It might
have saved her a couple of tears even just a couple.
Because you do know what you said don't you Willie? You
said nothing! Christ, Reb, what happened? What has
happened Willie? No, don't you tell me, don't say
a thing. I couldn't take any more from you. Yes, I
came home and there she was taking the washing down and
talking. She got a little sad about you but she
was here! Just a week ago. We even laughed about
Old Sam. It was here I was here and Reb, and you
were coming home. And it was life tough, hard but
it was life, and I wasn't sorry to be part of it. And
then Tobias walked in.

WILLIE : If he hadn't someone else would have and it wouldn't
have made any difference.

GUY : Drop the big words and the clever reasons, Willie. Because
it was him him Tobias. He walked in here and
buggered up everything, buggered up life until I can't
recognise it anymore. I don't know it I don't
know myself I don't know you. You know what
Reb said to me this afternoon? She said it was like
she went to sleep with one man and woke up to find a

stranger beside her in the morning. She meant you. Why did you have to do it? Anything else but why did you have to do that to her, to the two of you. You and Reb was one of the things a fellow could believe in. Whatever else happened you two were there. They could kick me around, Moses could be on the bum but there was always Willie and Reb and they were going places. A good man and a good woman. Now? I can't call you a good man Willie. I can't believe in what you done.

WILLIE : Stop trying. There's nothing to believe in.

GUY : What about Willie Seopelo's one-man crusade against crime?

WILLIE : There's no crusade. Just something I had to do, and I'm trying to do it.

GUY : I'm wasting my time arguing with you.

WILLIE : Why must you argue?

GUY : What do you want me to do? Pat you on the back and say "Good boy"?

WILLIE : What you think you been doing all these years? You, Rebecca, everybody. Good boy Willie, you passed another exam! Good boy Willie, you got a rise! Don't you think I'm sick of it? Anyway, that's finished now.

GUY : Are you doing this just because you want to stop that?

WILLIE : No, but it ties up. It was part of everything. It's a long story.

GUY : Too long for two hours.

WILLIE : It's taken me my whole life to live it.

GUY : Your whole life Willie, the future could be just as long. Why make it two hours?

WILLIE : Because those two hours well I've found something I been looking for for a long time. Peace, Guy, peace. Peace of mind peace of heart. You know the two

old enemies ... they're not fighting any more
this is the first time in a long time. But don't
think I'm not scared shit scared as Shark would
say. I'm scared boy. But there are lots of things
to think about and if I try hard enough I can forget

GUY : Do you want to? Why? Look, Willie what are
you trying to do hide away from what's coming,
pretend it's just another Friday night. Shark's
coming around for you in two hours time,
are you going to wait? Answer boy because if
you can't, start running. (PAUSE) Are you going
to wait.

WILLIE : Yes.

GUY : You're scared Willie run

WILLIE : No.

GUY : Remember Tobias ... they'll do it that way. For the
last time, are you going to wait?

WILLIE : It's no use Guy. I'm scared all right. But then that's
human isn't it? A man's got a right to be scared about
a thing like that. Anyway, it's not too bad. I can
swallow hard and keep it down and hope it will stay down.

GUY : It's not easy to walk out you know just walk
out with you standing there.

WILLIE : You'll be late for the show Guy. It's your big
break.

GUY : Help me Willie it's hard.

WILLIE : Rebecca. Knock on her door tomorrow. She'll need
you. And to-night, play sweet. It's my song.
Play sweet boy.

- (GUY -

(GUY EXITS AND WILLIE IS LEFT ALONE FOR A FEW SECONDS
BEFORE MOSES, THE BLIND MAN, ENTERS)

MOSES : Is that you Willie?

WILLIE : Yes.

MOSES : Pinkie's locked the room and gone to the show and I
got nowhere to go. So I'll just sit here if it's
okay with you Willie. It won't make no difference ...
being blind I don't see nothing. He knows that ...
he knows I can't say nothing in court.

WILLIE : Moses, is it true what they say about blind men, can you
hear better than those that see?

MOSES : Yes.

WILLIE : Moses

MOSES : I know Willie I'll tell you when I hear them coming.
(WILLIE MOVES BACK TO THE HOUSE. GUY'S SAXOPHONE MUSIC
IS HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND. THE MUSIC INCREASES IN
VOLUME, AND WE RECOGNISE THE THEME "FRIDAY NIGHT BLUES".
AS THE MUSIC RISES THE LIGHTS DIM. AT A CERTAIN POINT
WHEN THE MUSIC DROPS SLIGHTLY, MOSES LIFTS HIS HEAD
SHARPLY AND SPEAKS)

MOSES : They're coming Willie.

(FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD. WILLIE STANDS UPRIGHT. HIS EYES
FOCUSSED ON THE ENTRANCE WHERE SHARK IS ABOUT TO APPEAR.
THE MUSIC RISES TO CRESCENDO.)

C U R T A I N

APPENDIX B'NONGOGO'

N O N G O G O

A play in two acts by

Athol Fugard.

Characters: JOHNNY ... A Young African Salesman
QUEENY ... A shebeen proprietress
BLACKIE ... A hanger-on
SAM ... A friend of QUEENY'S
PATRICK ... One of her customers

ACT ONE

Queeny's Shebeen in one of the townships around Johannesburg. The time is late Friday afternoon. It is a small room with two doors - one at the back leading onto the street, the other on the O.P. side leading into a small kitchen, which is not seen. There is one window looking out onto the street.

The furniture includes a divan at the back which is curtained off to suggest an alcove. There are also a table, chairs, a sideboard and a dressing table.

The furniture is expensive by township standards but nevertheless there is a suggestion of slovenliness about the room. The window curtains, for example are nondescript, while those separating the divan from the rest of the room have a few rings missing and hang askew. There is no order or pattern to the ornaments and oddments in the room.

Odd articles of female clothing are scattered about.

As the scene opens the room appears empty - the curtains surrounding the divan are drawn. Street noises are heard from outside.

Then someone knocks at the door and gets no answer. The door, pushed slightly from outside swings open and JOHNNY comes in. He is a young man, neatly but quietly dressed. An open collar and loose tie suggest a hot day. He is carrying a suitcase. He looks around; sees nobody and is just about to leave when something about the room attracts his attention. He comes back and looks at the table, runs a finger along it, and whistles approvingly. He is examining the sideboard when one of the curtains round the divan is drawn roughly and QUEENY sticks out her head. She is in her forties; a woman of powerful personality; what must have been tremendous beauty in her youth now shows the signs of age. She is a personification of the room: the very best but neglected.

QUEENY : (RUDELY) What do you want?

JOHNNY : Sorry the door was open and

QUEENY : And you just walked in!

JOHNNY : Yes but I did knock.

QUEENY : Okay. Now walk out just as quietly. I only start selling at seven.

JOHNNY : (BEWILDERED) Selling?

QUEENY : You heard me. Seven. Either stay thirsty until then or find some other place there's enough of them.

JOHNNY : (RECOGNISING THE ROOM) I see. A shebeen.

QUEENY : I said seven o'clock.

JOHNNY : I don't want a drink.

QUEENY : Get out!

JOHNNY : (TRYING TO CALM HER DOWN) Look let me explain

QUEENY : (GOING TO THE WINDOW AND CALLING INTO THE STREET)

Blackie! Blackie!

JOHNNY : Who's Blackie?

QUEENY : You'll find out.

JOHNNY : (BENDING DOWN TO HIS SUITCASE) All I wanted

(HE GETS NO FURTHER. THE DOOR OPENS AND BLACKIE COMES IN.

AN UGLY HUNCHBACK, ABOUT TWENTY THREE, HIS ARMS HANG LOOSE
AT HIS SIDE LIKE THOSE OF A LARGE APE)

BLACKIE : What's the matter?

QUEENY : (POINTS AT JOHNNY AND THEN TURNS HER BACK) Him!

JOHNNY : (RETREATING BEFORE THE MENACING FIGURE OF BLACKIE WHO COMES
TOWARDS HIM) I didn't know this was a shebeen and I
don't drink all I wanted to do is try and sell you a
table cloth.

QUEENY : (ASTONISHED) A what?

JOHNNY : A table cloth. I sell table cloths.

QUEENY : (SUSPICIOUS) Are you fooling?

BLACKIE : (THREATENING) Get out.

(JOHNNY TURNS TO QUEENY IMPLORINGLY BLACKIE HESITATES

QUEENY PAUSES FOR A SECOND, LOOKS CAREFULLY AT JOHNNY, THEN
GESTURES TO BLACKIE TO LEAVE)

BLACKIE : (PAUSING AT THE DOOR AND LOOKING SUSPICIOUSLY AT JOHNNY)

I'll be outside. (HE EXITS)

JOHNNY : What was that?

QUEENY : A friend.

JOHNNY : (INCREDULOUS) A friend you mean a watchdog. Just like
the whites. Only you don't have a notice on your door.

QUEENY : You shouldn't frighten people.

JOHNNY : Frighten?

QUEENY : Coming in here like you was up to no good.

JOHNNY : (SHAKING HIS HEAD) Me? ... frightening people ... up to

no good. All I do is sell table cloths. Which reminds me it's not a very big range, only red and blue, but the colours don't run.

QUEENY : What do I want with a table cloth.

JOHNNY : For your table. Look, that's good wood. (HE EXAMINES THE TABLE CLOSELY) ... and here, see! Stains! I say, it's essential for a respectable shebeen with a good table like this to have one of my table cloths.

(QUEENY HAS BEEN WATCHING HIM CAREFULLY. SHE STARTS SMILING AND AT THE END OF HIS LITTLE SALES TALK BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER. HER PERSONALITY CHANGES ... THE MOODY AGGRESSIVE PERSON IS GONE)

JOHNNY : (RESPONDING IMMEDIATELY) You don't laugh very often do you?

QUEENY : (STOPPING ABRUPTLY) Why do you say that?

JOHNNY : I never expected it.

QUEENY : (THE AGRESSION RETURNS) Why don't you go sell your table cloths.

JOHNNY : (WEARILY) Ja, I suppose I'd better. Where's the best part to try?

QUEENY : You mean has anybody got any money? (JOHNNY NODS)
Nobody's got any money over here.

JOHNNY : Except you ... and you got it all.

QUEENY : Look

JOHNNY : It's true isn't it?

QUEENY : Better watch your tongue if you want to stay out of trouble.

JOHNNY : I'm always getting that advice ... and quite often the trouble. But I can't help it. It's what you see that starts you talking and I see just the same as other folks, don't I? (GESTURING TOWARDS THE ROOM) But then maybe I don't ... like your laugh. Maybe other people never seen that.

QUEENY : (TURNING AWAY) Maybe not. (PAUSE) No, not many people have seen that.

JOHNNY : You should show it off. It's good. (QUEENY TURNS AND LOOKS AT JOHNNY. IT IS A SPLIT SECOND OF EMBARRASSMENT. JOHNNY PICKS UP HIS SUITCASE) Anyways

QUEENY : Look, maybe I like the way you speak. Have a drink on the house.

JOHNNY : I don't drink.

QUEENY : Cup of coffee?

JOHNNY : Thanks ... but I'd better try selling or I won't be able to buy myself one to-night.

QUEENY : That's right ... I forgot ... you sell tablecloths. You know maybe I do need one after all.

JOHNNY : (HOPEFULLY) You think so?

QUEENY : Ja, a blue one.

JOHNNY : No!

QUEENY : What do you mean no?

JOHNNY : The red one.

QUEENY : (BEWILDERED) The red one?

JOHNNY : Yes. It suits this room much better.

QUEENY : You think so?

JOHNNY : (ENTHUSIASTIC) Of course. It's a good strong colour ... it matches you. These things go together you know. (EXPLAINING) Look if you were buying a scarf or something you'd match it wouldn't you ... see that it goes with your best dress or something like that. (QUEENY NODS IN AGREEMENT) Well same thing in the house and this red is your colour.

QUEENY : Allright, a red one. How much?

JOHNNY : Five bob.

QUEENY : There.

JOHNNY : My first sale to-day.

QUEENY : Maybe you'll sell four in the next street.

JOHNNY : Maybe. Anyway thanks.

QUEENY : Okay ... now don't go frightening people or you won't sell any. (SHE IS TRYING TO DELAY HIS DEPARTURE) Hey look ... when you finish to-night come around and have that cup of coffee.

JOHNNY : Don't know if I can. I gotta catch the bus back to Alex.

QUEENY : Tomorrow?

JOHNNY : I won't be back after to-night. Looks like nobody wants table cloths except you. Anyway thanks.

(JOHNNY EXITS. QUEENY LOOKS BLANKLY AT THE DOOR THAT HAS CLOSED IN HER FACE. SHE IS ALONE. SHE IS ALONE AGAIN. SHE SITS DOWN

ON THE BED, TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE, LIGHTS IT, AND PUFFS AWAY
THOUGHTFULLY FOR A FEW MINUTES. THEN SHE GETS UP AND GOES ACROSS
TO A MIRROR AND EXAMINES HER FACE CAREFULLY, RUNNING A FINGER OVER
A FEW LINES. SHE STUBBS OUT HER CIGARETTE IN DISGUST AND RETURNS
TO THE BED, ONLY TO LIGHT ANOTHER AND SURRENDER HERSELF TO THE
BOREDOM WHICH JOHNNY'S ENTRANCE AND EXIT HAS NOW HIGHLIGHTED. THE
DOOR OPENS AND BLACKIE COMES IN. HE STANDS THERE. LOOKING AT
HER, WAITING FOR A WORD. HE GETS NONE. HE HOBBLES A LITTLE CLOSER)

- BLACKIE : He's gone. (QUEENY NODS HER HEAD.) I saw him go down the street.
(PAUSE) I followed him a little way to make sure he wasn't coming back.
- QUEENY : (SHARPLY) I told you to leave him alone.
- BLACKIE : (HURT) You said nothing.
- QUEENY : (IRRITABLE) Well I'm telling you now.
- BLACKIE : (SEES THE RED TABLE CLOTH AND PICKS IT UP) Why'd you buy this?
- QUEENY : (JUMPS UP AND TAKES IT AWAY FROM HIM) Because I wanted it, that's why.
- BLACKIE : (TRYING TO PLEASE) I can get you better.
- QUEENY : I wanted this one. It matches the room.
- BLACKIE : He said that.
- QUEENY : (ANGRY) You been listening at the door again!
- BLACKIE : You was speaking loudly.
- QUEENY : Your mind is like your body. (HE STARTS WHIMPERING LIKE A DOG)
Shut up. Anyway if he said it or I said it makes no difference.
It does sort of fit in with everything.
- BLACKIE : I'll bring you a better one tonight. I got a job at Houghton.
I'll bring you the best cloths they got in the house.
- QUEENY : All you'll ever bring me is trouble. They'll catch you one day.
- BLACKIE : I'll bring you something nice.
- QUEENY : If I want anything I can buy it. There are people that do that
you know; who earn what they get and buy what they want. Not like
me and you ... or Sam over there. This fellow (THE TABLE CLOTH) ...
he's living honest.
- BLACKIE : (GLOOMILY) He'll die poor.
- QUEENY : You think that worries him?
- BLACKIE : Why do you like him?

QUEENY : (SHARPLY) Who said anything about liking. A man comes in here selling table cloths and I buy one. Is that so strange. (BLACKIE LOOKS AT HER). Anyway he's not like everything else. He made me laugh. Have you ever made me laugh?

BLACKIE : I'll bring you something good to-night.

QUEENY : (IGNORING HIM) I liked talking to him (SHE IS HOLDING THE CLOTH THINKING, PREPARED TO PUT IT ONTO THE TABLE)

BLACKIE : He said he's not coming back.

(QUEENY STOPS ARRANGING THE CLOTH. THE TRUTH OF THE WORDS HIT HER, SHE PULLS THE CLOTH OFF AND THROWS IT INTO ONE CORNER. SHE GOES BACK TO THE BED, TAKES ANOTHER CIGARETTE.)

BLACKIE : I seen the house we doing to-night. The girl there is a friend. She let me in the other day. They got lots of things; a big clock like the Church that sings the time. You want that? Or pictures ... just so big ... I'll bring it to you. Just tell me what you want.

QUEENY : (WITH PITY) It's not your fault is it Blackie?

BLACKIE : What you mean?

QUEENY : That you're the way you are.

BLACKIE : I'm strong, in my arms.

QUEENY : (IGNORING WHAT HE HAS SAID) And the same for me. I don't suppose it's my fault, or even Sam's. (PAUSE) Then who ... who the hell do you swear at and hate.

(THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

QUEENY : Who's there?

SAM : Me.

QUEENY : It's open.

(SAM COMES IN. ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS QUEENY, BUT METICULOUSLY DRESSED WHERE SHE IS INCLINED TO BE SLOVENLY. HE IS A LARGE AND SELF-ASSURED MAN FULL OF THE SORT OF CONFIDENCE THAT A LITTLE MONEY BREEDS. WE SEE HIM MOPPING HIS FACE WITH A WHITE HANDKERCHIEF. IN HIS MOVEMENTS ABOUT THE ROOM HE FREQUENTLY STOPS IN FRONT OF A MIRROR FOR INSPECTION AND SMALL ADJUSTMENTS TO HIS CLOTHING)

SAM : They'll be thirsty tomorrow.

QUEENY : They're always thirsty.

SAM : Ja, but this weather and pay day will make a difference. You got enough.

QUEENY : No such thing as enough in the townships. If there was I'd be out of business.

SAM : But I mean for tomorrow. (QUEENY LIFTS HER SHOULDERS IN AN INDIFFERENT GESTURE) I got a case out in the car.

QUEENY : What's it?

SAM : Half and half ... gin and brandy.

QUEENY : What's your profit Sam?

SAM : Come on, I give it to you cheap. If it was somebody else they'd pay allright, but with you it's different.

QUEENY : (LAUGHS BITTERLY) I been with you too long Sam to believe that. Still it's nice to hear you say it.

SAM : I like doing business with you Queeny.

QUEENY : I don't like bargaining.

SAM : That's because you know you always get your bargain from me.

QUEENY : Okay, bring it in.

SAM : (TURNING TO BLACKIE WHO HAS BEEN SITTING IN ONE CORNER) Hey! Get it out of the car.

QUEENY : (COMING TO BLACKIE'S DEFENCE) His name is Blackie, just like yours is Sam and mine is Queeny.

SAM : Get it out of the car Blackie ... please! (THE LAST WORD FOR QUEENY'S BENEFIT. BLACKIE GOES OUT) Satisfied?

QUEENY : Ask him. You were speaking to him.

SAM : How long are you going to keep him hanging around?

QUEENY : Why shouldn't I?

SAM : Why? Because he's going to get us into trouble one day that's why. Every time I see him he's fighting. He'll kill somebody one day.

QUEENY : He won't if they leave him alone.

SAM : Leave him alone! ... and him looking like God had the shakes when he made it.

QUEENY : Okay! Let's just say I need him.

SAM : You need him? That's a new one.

QUEENY : Sure ... need him.

SAM : What for?

QUEENY : Protection.

SAM : And what about me?

QUEENY : What about you?

SAM : Don't I protect you?

QUEENY : Do you?

SAM : All those years when we was together. Did any man ever get rough with you or beat you up?

QUEENY : No, they never did that.

SAM : So?

QUEENY : So those years are past and better forgotten, and Blackie stays around because it's nice to have a man around.

SAM : (BURSTING INTO LAUGHTER) A man!

QUEENY : (QUIETLY) He'll hear you one day Sam.

SAM : You think I'm frightened.

(BLACKIE COMES IN WITH THE CASE OF LIQUOR FROM THE CAR. HE PUTS IT DOWN AND SAM TAKES OVER PACKING AWAY THE BOTTLES)

BLACKIE : (SHUFFLING UP TO QUEENY) I'm going.

QUEENY : Okay.

BLACKIE : It's a good job.

QUEENY : You said that already.

BLACKIE : Don't you want the clock?

QUEENY : If I did I would buy one.

BLACKIE : But I can get this for nothing.

QUEENY : You don't get anything for nothing in this world ... even if you steal it you don't get it for nothing.

BLACKIE : They won't catch me.

QUEENY : (CONTEMPTUOUSLY) They? Who are they? Anyway if they do catch you tell them to go to hell with my regards.

(BLACKIE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND. HE WAITS UNCERTAINLY FOR QUEENY TO SAY SOMETHING ELSE ... SOMETHING HE WILL UNDERSTAND. WHEN SHE DOESN'T HE LEAVES. SAM HAS FINISHED PACKING AWAY THE LIQUOR. HE POURS ANOTHER DRINK AND THEN JOINS QUEENY)

SAM : Did I say enough? You know you got enough there to start an off-sales. Don't you keep no record of the stuff you get in and what

you sell? (QUEENY DOESN'T THINK THE QUESTION WORTH REPLYING TO).

You know, Queeny, it's all wrong. It goes right against my sense ...

QUEENY : ... of good business.

SAM : Ja, that's. Like I told you ...

QUEENY : You told me once too often Sam.

SAM : But that's because you won't listen. Now take me and my shop.

It's all down in the books. If I want to know how much I'm making

I take up the books and there it is ... in black and white.

(SAM HAS GOT QUITE EXCITED ABOUT THE SUBJECT OF GOOD BUSINESS.

QUEENY IS LOOKING AT HIM DIRECTLY)

QUEENY : You like your shop Sam.

SAM : I waited for it a long time Queeny. You know that. Like you
waited for this.

QUEENY : Ja, but it's different. You and your shop and me and this.

SAM : Nonsense. In the old days when we were ... you know what I mean ...

I used to talk about the shop and you used to talk about having
your own shebeen. It was just the same. And we both got what we
wanted. I bet if you kept books you'd find you was making more
than me.

QUEENY : That only means I'm making good money. It doesn't make anything
else the same.

SAM : What else is important?

QUEENY : You haven't changed Sam.

SAM : If you mean I still believe in this ... (RUBBING HIS THUMB AND
FOREFINGER TOGETHER TO INDICATE MONEY) ... you're right. That's
the only difference between the full belly I got now and an empty
one, between these clothes and rags. And look at you. You got this.
What did you have in the old days? This is what we worked for and
this is what we got. So let's be happy.

QUEENY : Is it as easy as that?

SAM : What more do you want? Show me another woman around here with half
of what you got.

QUEENY : What about the things they got that I haven't?

SAM : Such as?

QUEENY : A man.

SAM : (BURSTS INTO RUDE LAUGHTER) Didn't you have enough ...?
(A DEADLY LOOK FROM QUEENY KILLS THE LAUGH) Well you know what I mean. What's the matter with you? A man. You'll be saying a home next, with kids ... and then you've had it. We got no complaints Queeny. We live comfortable ... no attachments ... we're free ...

QUEENY : Free!

SAM : Yes, free. Who is telling you what to do or where to go? Nobody.

QUEENY : I might even like that for a change.

SAM : A change?

QUEENY : Yes ... a change from this. You think this is so very different from the old days? Well let me tell you it's not. You just seen the outside. You don't know what it's really like. I still sit around waiting for the night; I still spend the whole day painting my nails, only now it's not so nice any more 'cause my hands are getting fat ... fat and a little more money. But what else? Nothin'. Just wait for the night and the usual crowd so I can take their money off them and get a little more rich and a little more fat. You never thought of it like that have you Sam? But you wouldn't know. Even in the old days you didn't know.

SAM : I looked after the money. If it hadn't been for me where would you have been?

QUEENY : In the gutter most likely ... but who cares? Ja, that's something else ... who cares? Who cares a damn?

SAM : I would.

QUEENY : Sure! You'd shake your head for five minutes and then put somebody else in here cause you like your drinks nice and handy.

SAM : You believe that?

QUEENY : Am I wrong?

SAM : After all we been through together?

QUEENY : You been through? You didn't know half of it. You still don't and you're not getting any wiser.

(NOW AT THE WINDOW) When I stand here during the day I can see you in the shop, talking like hell to somebody, getting all excited cause there's a chance of selling something. And inside here it's

quiet and empty and everything is waiting for the night. When I look at you and think: He's forgotten. Maybe there wasn't so much for him to forget. I almost hate you when I think that Sam, I almost hate you.

SAM : You got the blues bad Queeny.

QUEENY : Blues? You think I'm going to wake up when tomorrow comes and think life's any better. Anyway, what's it like out there, are they still asking questions?

SAM : You know people, what's her real name? Where does she come from? But they're not getting any wiser.

(THEIR CONVERSATION IS INTERRUPTED BY A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. SAM OPENS AND LETS IN PATRICK. THE NEWCOMER IS ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS SAM BUT HAS A FALSE FRIENDLY MANNER AND IS OVER-EAGER TO PLEASE. THE TRUE 'LITTLE MAN'. HE IS SHABBILY DRESSED)

PATRICK : Hello Sam ... Queeny.

SAM : How's the wife?

PATRICK : (THE EXPANSIVE SMILE FADES) Okay ... okay ... it's started.

QUEENY : (MAKING NO ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL HER DISLIKE OF THE MAN) Shouldn't you be with her?

SAM : Leave him alone. Don't you know what a man's like when his wife is having a baby?

QUEENY : If he's the man, the answer is going to be drunk.

SAM : It's a big thing for a man. Patrick just wants a tot to steady his nerves.

PATRICK : Ja, that's it. A tot to steady my nerves.

QUEENY : What you got to be nervous about?

SAM : It's his baby.

QUEENY : It's her fifth.

PATRICK : (COMING FORWARD HOPEFULLY) I got a bit of work today Queeny. I can pay. (HE HOLDS OUT A FEW COINS IN HIS HAND. QUEENY TURNS AWAY IN DISGUST AT THE INTERPRETATION HE HAS PLACED ON HER RELUCTANCE TO SELL. PATRICK IS LEFT BEWILDERED. SAM IS NOT SO SLOW. HE DIPS INTO THE OUT-STRETCHED HAND AND PUSHES PATRICK DOWN INTO A CHAIR)

SAM : Sure you got money. The usual?

PATRICK : Ja.

(SAM SERVES HIM WITH A DRINK AND THEN JOINS QUEENY)

SAM : What's the matter with you? He paid.

QUEENY : And his wife?

SAM : He said one drink.

QUEENY : One drink!

SAM : It's not your fault if he doesn't know when to stop.

QUEENY : I'm selling it.

SAM : So you don't sell it? He just goes three houses down and gets it there. You at least sell it to him straight from the bottle. You know how she dilutes. (PAUSE) It's about time you started as well.

QUEENY : What?

SAM : Diluting. Everybody in this line knows it's legitimate business to dilute a little. These new taxes is making it impossible to give your customers a decent drink at a low price. So you don't want to use water ... methyated spirits! That's got a kick and I can get you as much as you want through the shop. Even I been forced to start. That cheap line of coffee ... any case when you're down to buying that you expect it.

(A FEW MEMORIES COME BACK TO SAM. HE SMILED AND SHAKES HIS HEAD)

Water in the liquor! Pea-flour in the coffee! Times have changed.

QUEENY : People were doing that long before we started.

SAM : I mean us. Me and you. We sure got innocent. Because we scorched this town. We made them feel like they was in hell.

QUEENY : I wasn't so far from feeling that myself at times.

SAM : You don't play with fire without picking up a few blisters. You know I read somewhere that when the world ends it's going to be with fire. If that's true you must have been the prophet of bad times.

QUEENY : Why me?

SAM : You made it hot for a lot of men.

QUEENY : I wasn't the only one.

SAM : I never met another woman that made men sweat like you did. Anyway, they can always say they had their taste of hell before dying.

QUEENY : What about me? Do you think it was my taste of heaven?

SAM : I'm not saying you liked it.

QUEENY : I'm telling you I hated it.

SAM : We went through it together Queeny. There's no need to tell me.

QUEENY : I'm not so sure about that anymore.

SAM : You're not trying to say I wasn't there with you?

QUEENY : You were there alright. But I haven't learnt how to laugh it off and call it the good old days, or how to forget it.

PATRICK : (BREAKING INTO THE CONVERSATION) Say ... how about another tot before I go?

(SAM GETS UP AND FILLS UP PATRICK'S GLASS. IN THE ENSUING CONVERSATION QUEENY GOES BACK TO HER DIVAN, LIGHTS A CIGARETTE, SITS DOWN AND BROODS)

SAM : What you going to call the kid, Patrick?

PATRICK : You know I been sitting here thinking about that.

SAM : (TAKING A TOT FOR HIMSELF AND SITTING DOWN). Well let's hear the ideas. I never had no kids myself but I got good ideas.

PATRICK : Well I given it a lot of thought. I'm pretty fussy about names. Take mine now ... you know I'm named after one of the disciples?

SAM : Patrick?

PATRICK : Ja, the disciple of Ireland. That's what they told me up at the Church cause they gave me the name.

SAM : I was wondering how you got such a good name.

PATRICK : Well now you know.

SAM : Hey! I got a good idea. Why not call it Patrick ... after yourself.

PATRICK : And suppose it's a girl. (SAM SMILES AND LAUGHS BACK QUIETLY AND FLATTERINGLY AT THE OTHER MAN'S WISDOM)

SAM : You old

PATRICK : You see you gotta think. Listen give me another ... it helps me think.

SAM : (PASSING THE BOTTLE) Of course.

QUEENY : (BREAKING INTO THE CONVERSATION) You've had enough.

SAM : Look, the man's thinking! There's going to be something out there just now that's going to want a name and Patrick here is finding it. Aren't you?

PATRICK : Just like that.

SAM : So he can go home and walk right in and say hello ... whatever its name is going to be ... isn't that so?

PATRICK : Just so.

SAM : (POURING ANOTHER TOT AND TAKING MONEY) So we can't call it Patrick.

PATRICK : Nuh. But I think I got one ... Augustine.

SAM : What's that?

PATRICK : Another disciple.

SAM : You can't have a whole family of disciples ... and suppose it's a girl?

PATRICK : I'm prepared. Augustinia!

SAM : (A WRY FACE AND SCEPTICALLY) Augustinia? That's a mouthful.

PATRICK : (THE LOOK OF TRIUMPH FADING; UNCERTAINLY) You think so?

SAM : Of course. Go on try it ... go on ... try calling August ... what ever it is aloud. Go on.

PATRICK : (OPENING HIS MOUTH, THEN ABANDONING THE ATTEMPT) Ja, maybe you are right.

SAM : You want something short and snappy ... cause that's modern. You take the names of things today ... like ... let me see ... JIK ... (REPEATS IT)... JIK.

PATRICK : (INCREPULOUS) JIK?

SAM : Ja ... that stuff that cleans ... or COKE ... there's another one. I'm not suggesting you call the kid after a cold drink, but think along those lines. This Augustinia stuff is out.

(A KNOCK AT THE DOOR INTERRUPTS THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE TWO MEN. SAM GETS UP AND GOES TO THE DOOR, OPENS IT AND PEERS OUT. A FEW WORDS ARE SPOKEN, INCLUDING A VERY LOUD "WHAT" FROM SAM, WHO TURNS BACK TO QUEENY)

SAM : Will you please come and tell somebody that we don't serve coffee? (QUEENY LOOKS UP, FOR A MOMENT NOT REALISING WHO IS OUTSIDE. WHEN SHE DOES, SHE STANDS UP, UNBELIEVINGLY, ALL TRACE OF THE BOREDOM HAS VANISHED. SAM GOES BACK TO HIS CHAIR AND WATCHES THE NEXT FEW MINUTES FROM THAT POSITION. QUEENY LETS JOHNNY IN.)

JOHNNY : I missed my bus, so I thought I'd take that cup of coffee after all.

QUEENY : Sure ... sure ... sit down I'll put the kettle on. (MOVES TO THE DOOR, PAUSES) How did it go?

JOHNNY : (CALLING AFTER HER) You was right. I didn't sell any more.

SAM : What?

JOHNNY : Table cloths.

SAM : Table cloths!

JOHNNY : I sell table cloths. (SEEING THE TABLE IS UNCOVERED, HE LOOKS FOR THE ONE HE SOLD QUEENY) Where's the one I sold her.
(HE FINDS IT IN A CORNER)

SAM : (SURPRISE TURNING INTO VEILED RESENTMENT AND DISLIKE. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THESE TWO ARE NOT GOING TO LIKE EACH OTHER) What do you think you are going to do with that?

JOHNNY : (IGNORING THE TONE) Put it on the table. I sold it to her cause this table was getting marks from all the glasses.

SAM : (SARCASTIC) Now isn't that a pity.

JOHNNY : It is. It's a good table.

SAM : (TURNING BACK TO PATRICK, DELIBERATELY IGNORING JOHNNY) Well, we're having a private conversation.

JOHNNY : (REFUSING TO BE IGNORED) Aren't you used to table cloths or something?

SAM : (NETTLED) Look, I don't know who you are, where you come from or what you do ...

JOHNNY : Name's Johnny, I come from Alex and I sell table cloths. And you?

SAM : A friend... a very good friend.

JOHNNY : In that case I don't see how you can mind me putting this on the table.

(THERE IS A DANGEROUS LITTLE MOMENT THAT COULD EASILY BECOME NASTY BUT FOR QUEENY'S ENTRANCE INTO THE ROOM. SEEING JOHNNY WITH THE RED TABLE CLOTH IN HIS HAND SHE COMES UP APOLOGETICALLY)

QUEENY : Oh yes the table cloth ... I hadn't put it on cause I wanted to clean the table proper first. But I'll do it now. (SHE TAKES A CLOTH, FORCES THE MEN TO LIFT THEIR GLASSES, WIPES THE TABLE OFF AND THEN PUTS THE CLOTH DOWN)

JOHNNY : Looks good doesn't it?

SAM : Looks like any other table cloth to me ... and not such a good line at that.

JOHNNY : I never said it cost much ... I don't charge much.

QUEENY : Who says that's important? It matches in with everything else like you said.

SAM : Sounds like you two had a long talk about table cloths.

(QUEENY DOESN'T ANSWER, BUT THE LOOK SHE GIVES HIM IS WARNING ENOUGH. HE SHUTS UP, POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER TOT. PATRICK ALSO GETS A DRINK. QUEENY TURNS HER ATTENTION TO JOHNNY. THERE IS A SMALL EMBARRASSED PAUSE)

QUEENY : Sit down while you're waiting for the coffee. It won't be long ...
(JOHNNY SITS) ... or maybe you're in a hurry to get home.

JOHNNY : Should I be?

QUEENY : Folks waiting for you ... wife maybe.

JOHNNY : I got nobody.

QUEENY : You look the sort.

JOHNNY : What sort is that?

QUEENY : Wife and kids ... maybe a home.

JOHNNY : Why do you say that?

QUEENY : You just do. I seen them before ... people trying to do something with their lives.

JOHNNY : Aren't you?

QUEENY : (LAUGHING) You say the damndest things.

JOHNNY : Well

QUEENY : Let's say, I'm hanging on to what I got.

JOHNNY : Maybe making it a bit bigger as well.

QUEENY : (LAUGHING QUIETLY) Ja. That's not much is it?

JOHNNY : Depends. I knew a fellow once ... had a horse and an old cart ... people used to laugh at him cause he didn't make much and what he had he always spent on the horse and the cart. Sometimes he went without supper just so the horse could eat! Everyone thought he was mad but he carried on like they wasn't there. One day I asked him: Joe why don't you sell that horse and buy yourself some good clothes and eat well for a month. He looked at me: what do I do after the month? Get a job I said, like everybody else. He shook his head: Johnny you're asking me to sell my freedom for a good meal and clothes. I thought a lot about what he said. That horse meant nobody could call him 'boy', or say do this or that. He was his own boss. Maybe it's like that with you.

QUEENY : (THOUGHTFULLY) I got a little money. That's all I'm hanging onto.

JOHNNY : That's a big word.

QUEENY : What?

JOHNNY : Money. It could mean security, three meals a day, a roof over your head and independence ... like Joe.

QUEENY : And you?

JOHNNY : Me?

QUEENY : Ja, you. What you doing?

JOHNNY : Same as Joe.

QUEENY : Horse and cart.

JOHNNY : No, my own boss.

QUEENY : How long you been like that?

JOHNNY : Off and on. I'd hope these table cloths would be my real break. If I'd made some money I was going to try something good.

QUEENY : What was that?

JOHNNY : What's the use. (GESTURING TOWARDS THE SUITCASE) They haven't sold. I'll be looking for a job on Monday.

QUEENY : You're not going to like that.

JOHNNY : Would you? Get a couple of quid a month so that somebody can kick you around and feel like a white man. Old Joe was right.

SAM : (WHO HAS BEEN LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION, BREAKS IN) What's old Joe going to do when the horse dies? Make biltong (LAUGHTER)

QUEENY : (ANNOYED) Can't you keep your mouth shut Sam?

SAM : I'm just interested in old Joe. No harm in asking.

JOHNNY : Joe died before the horse.

SAM : Too bad, too bad ... would have been nice to know what he would have done. It's also bad about old Joe dying of course. But that's not exactly progress is it? Dying with only a horse and cart, and maybe just dying before the horse 'cause that was also getting old.

QUEENY : What you trying to do Sam?

SAM : Just joining in a conversation Queeny. Of course if it was private

QUEENY : Maybe it is.

SAM : Okay. I'll be back when it's not so crowded.
(SAM LEAVES)

QUEENY : Don't pay no attention to him.

JOHNNY : Me pay attention to him? It was the other way around. Is he your partner?

QUEENY : Just a friend. He's got the shop across the street. Comes in here for his drinks.

JOHNNY : And that chap I saw this afternoon. The hunchbak.

QUEENY : You mean Blackie.

JOHNNY : That's the name.

QUEENY : Also a friend. (JOHNNY JUST NODS HIS HEAD) You're thinking I got strange friends.

JOHNNY : Maybe. I don't know much about shebeens.

QUEENY : Blackie's not the same as Sam. He's ugly alright ... but then he was born that way. He didn't choose it. If he was straight I think he would have been a good man. But being crooked like that nobody has given him a chance.

JOHNNY : He's got a good friend.

QUEENY : Me? I don't know. A lot of kids was teasing him one day, I watched it through the window. What got me was the big people standing around doing nothing ... some of them was smiling, they thought it funny. I went out and swore the whole lot of them into hell. I just wanted them to stop, that's all. But Blackie hung around. For two days he just sat outside there on the pavement watching me come and go. Every time I looked out of the window he was sitting there. So I called him in and gave him some food ... he's been hanging around ever since.
I'll get that coffee.

(QUEENY GOES TO HER KITCHEN. PATRICK DISTURBED BY THE SUDDEN SILENCE LOOKS UP FROM HIS GLASS AND SEES JOHNNY. PATRICK IS DRUNK)

PATRICK : Edward.

JOHNNY : What?

PATRICK : And if it's a girl ... Edwina.

JOHNNY : Who's that?

PATRICK : My kid.

JOHNNY : You got a kid.

PATRICK : (AN EDGE OF DESPAIR AND CYNICISM TO HIS WORDS) Have I got a kid!
(LIFTING HIS GLASS) This is my fifth ... Kid I mean. This is

This is my fifth kid and it should be here by now. I been sitting here trying to find a decent name for it cause that's all I'm ever likely to give it. That's not much huh?

JOHNNY : Why don't you go back to your wife?

PATRICK : You think I'm drunk. Maybe I am. But I only meant to have one. You see this is my fifth ... child I mean, it's my fifth child. When you already got four and another comes along ... I dunno ... it's sort of too much. You sort of sit here and wish it wasn't coming and that is a hell of a start for it isn't it. I only wanted one drink but when I got to thinking like that, I had another to try and stop myself. And now I'm saying I wish it wasn't coming. You got kids?

JOHNNY : No.

PATRICK : Don't.

JOHNNY : Why?

PATRICK : It's hell. In every way it's hell. You know they should make it that we blacks can't have babies ... cause hell they made it so we can't give them no chances when they come. They just about made it so we can't live. But with babies it's hell! They cry, you don't get no sleep, they need things ... and they suck the old woman dry. God she's a wreck. And she was a woman. I mean I wouldn't have married her if she wasn't. You see what I mean don't you,
(PATRICK ACCIDENTALLY SPILLS DRINK OVER JOHNNY.)

PATRICK : How did that happen?

JOHNNY : It's okay.

PATRICK : Hell ... I'm sorry ...

JOHNNY : Forget it.

(QUEENY COMES IN WITH COFFEE)

QUEENY : What happened?

JOHNNY : Just an accident.

QUEENY : Him?

JOHNNY : Forget it.

QUEENY : (TO PATRICK) You messy little bastard.

PATRICK : We was just having a chat and I ...

QUEENY : And as usual you didn't know when to stop.

JOHNNY : Forget it Queeny. It's an old jacket.

QUEENY : First you mess up your own life and then you want to make a mess of everybody else's.

PATRICK : I paid you.

QUEENY : Get the hell out of here.

PATRICK : Okay.

QUEENY : Get out.

JOHNNY : Easy Queeny, it was just an accident.

QUEENY : Keep out of this Johnny.

JOHNNY : I don't see why I must. He spilt it over me.

QUEENY : Are you standing up for him?

JOHNNY : I'm standing up for nobody.

QUEENY : Then keep out of it. (TO PATRICK) I said get out.

JOHNNY : Have a heart Queeny.

QUEENY : With trash like him?

JOHNNY : His money was allright wasn't it?

SAM : One of your kids outside, Patrick. Says the baby's arrived. They want you over at your place.

(PATRICK STANDS UP UNSTEADILY. SAM HAVING POURED HIMSELF A DRINK TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO PATRICK)

SAM : What you going to call it?

PATRICK : (A GLASS IN ONE HAND THE OTHER IN HIS POCKET. HE TAKES OUT THE LATTER AND LOOKS AT IT. IT HOLDS THE LAST OF THE MONEY HE BROUGHT IN WITH HIM ... A SIXPENCE) Sixpence

SAM : Sixpence! Hey that's good.

(PATRICK LIFTS HIS GLASS TO HIS LIPS. HE DOESN'T DRINK. SAM'S LAUGH RELEASES HIS PENT UP BITTERNESS. HE SMASHES THE GLASS TO THE FLOOR AND MOVES TO THE DOOR)

QUEENY : Wait!

(PATRICK STOPS, TURNS. QUEENY IS SORTING OUT THE MONEY ON THE TABLE)

Here is every penny you spent here to-night. (SHE THROWS A HANDFUL OF COINS AT PATRICK'S FEET. HE BENDS DOWN AND PICKS THEM UP)

Take it and get out ... and don't come back.

(PATRICK EXITS)

SAM : (WHO HAS WATCHED QUEENY'S LAST ACTIONS WITH DISBELIEF) What's this?

Hand-out time at the mission?

(QUEENY DOESN'T ANSWER)

You going mad or something? He didn't give you back the drinks
he bought.

QUEENY : (TO JOHNNY) You satisfied?

JOHNNY : Why ask me?

QUEENY : You made me do it.

JOHNNY : I didn't say anything.

QUEENY : Okay, you didn't say anything, but you made me do it. I could see it
written all over your face, the 'good' looking at the 'bad'. I lived
with that look too long not to know it.

JOHNNY : Shall I go?

QUEENY : No! Please ... I don't know what's got into me.

SAM : And neither do I. If that's how you're going to carry on we might
as well ...

QUEENY : It was my money Sam, and this is my place. It's got nothing to do
with you.

(THESE WORDS STOP SAM. IT IS THE FIRST TIME QUEENY HAS EVER THROWN
HIS WORDS BACK IN HIS FACE. HE DROPS BACK TO A CHAIR AGAINST THE
WALL AND WATCHES THE DEVELOPMENTS)

QUEENY : (TO JOHNNY) I been getting sick of it lately. It's not much of
life is it?

JOHNNY : You know.

QUEENY : (SHE FETCHES A BROOM AND SWEEPS UP THE PIECES OF BROKEN GLASS) Well
it's not. I'm telling you it's not. It doesn't mean anything when
you get your money from bums like him ... not if that's the only way
you've ever got money ... selling something that he's ashamed of or ...
you're ashamed of. I know what he felt like when he smashed that
glass. "If only it was my life lying in pieces on the floor." Just
sweep them away and start all over again. But you're stuck with it ...
him, me ... Blackie ... there's somebody else who wouldn't mind taking
it apart and putting it together again, with a few improvements. But
where do you start? You think I'm mad?

JOHNNY : Just never heard a woman talk like that before.

QUEENY : And it sounds crazy.

JOHNNY : It sounds like sense.

QUEENY : Ja?

JOHNNY : I know what you mean. I also felt like that.

QUEENY : You?

JOHNNY : I'm no different.

QUEENY : You're not like Patrick.

JOHNNY : I'm younger that's all. When he was my age ...

QUEENY : No, Johnny, when you're his age you'll be different.

It's like I said, you're trying to do something with your life. Me?

I'm in business because I got some money and there's plenty of bums like Patrick. But what else could I do?

JOHNNY : Sell table cloths.

QUEENY : You're laughing at yourself.

JOHNNY : It's a joke isn't it. I'm the man who's doing something with his life and the first thing I try ... nothing doing. My own boss but I'll be looking for a job on Monday.

QUEENY : No use talking like that. So the first thing you tried didn't work.

You just got to try something else.

JOHNNY : Such as?

QUEENY : Medicines! There's something everybody buys. Try selling that.

JOHNNY : It wouldn't be the same. It's not just a question of selling something. I ... never mind.

QUEENY : Go on.

JOHNNY : It's another funny story.

QUEENY : I didn't laugh at the last one.

JOHNNY : Well you see I just don't want to sell. I'm not a salesman. In fact it's hard for me to sell ... you saw that yourself this morning. I want to start my own business.

QUEENY : Doing what?

JOHNNY : I worked with a white chap who was an interior decorator. You know what that is? (QUEENY SHAKES HER HEAD) It's got to do with the way you fix-up your house. The Interior Decorator gives you ideas about what you must buy, and how you must match things. Like this table cloth ... remember me saying the red one? ... that it's your colour ...

well that's interior decorating on a sort of small scale. I mean I would only operate on a small scale 'cause our people just don't have the money to do it in a big way. I was actually going to concentrate on one line, materials ... you know curtains, bedspreads, cushion covers ... that sort of thing.

QUEENY : Sounds like you'd need a bit of money to get started.

JOHNNY : No. I thought of a great idea. The big factories that make materials sell a lot of bits and pieces cheap .. sometimes there's something small wrong with it or maybe it's just a piece left over. But they let it go cheap. I was going to buy a lot of that and sell it with my ideas. You see I got a feeling for matching things ... the white chap told me. I'd come to a house and give the woman ideas. Like ... take this room. You see that window. Yellow curtains! What that window needs is yellow curtains. This is a dark room and that colour would liven things up. It would match your table cloth ... and next month when I come around again you take something with yellow and red for your bed ... and cushions with red in them. Can you see the difference?

QUEENY : (GENUINELY PLEASED) You got good ideas Johnny.

JOHNNY : You see it's important Queeny ... trying to make life better. I'm not saying my idea is going to change the world, but maybe it will give us a bit more guts, and make waking up tomorrow a little bit easier. You said you were getting sick of life the way it is ... so why don't you start changing things. You could start with this room.

QUEENY : What's wrong with it?

JOHNNY : Nothing ... if you got no complaints. But you sounded like you had plenty. So you put up those yellow curtains ... a vase with some flowers on this table ... a little mat at the door so that nobody starts tramping mud into the room.

QUEENY : I think I'd like that.

JOHNNY : Of course you would. And you'd start getting proud ... and then let anybody try leaving marks on your table, or on your cloth, or messing up your floor.

QUEENY : I'm your first customer, Johnny. When do you start?

JOHNNY : When? Looks like never. The table cloths. Remember the table cloths? I sold one to-day ... to you. They were supposed to be my start. If I'd sold them I would have had ten quid ..

QUEENY : Ten pounds? Is that enough.

JOHNNY : I tell you I checked. I went down to the factory and I saw what I could have bought with ten quid. There was more than I could have carried away. But they haven't sold.

QUEENY : You're not going to let that stop you.

JOHNNY : They didn't sell. There's nothing I can do about that.

QUEENY : Get your money somewhere else.

JOHNNY : Where?

QUEENY : (AFTER A PAUSE) Me.

JOHNNY : You?

QUEENY : Why not?

JOHNNY : Why? ... Why? Because it's just silly, that's why.

QUEENY : Why is it silly?

JOHNNY : Look, don't you be silly as well.

QUEENY : Well, tell me why you can't borrow ten quid from me.

JOHNNY : Because it's ten quid.

QUEENY : I take that much in here on a bad night.

JOHNNY : Because you never saw me before to-day.

QUEENY : I trust you.

JOHNNY : Because you don't know if the idea is worth anything at all.

QUEENY : We'll never answer that one without first trying.

JOHNNY : Look Queeny, just drop it. I didn't come in here for that.

QUEENY : I'm not saying you did. You didn't ask me. I offered.

JOHNNY : No.

QUEENY : Johnny ... suppose I want to. Suppose I really want to.

JOHNNY : But why? You're making better money here than I will ever get from selling rags.

QUEENY : You saw how. Did you like what you saw? Answer me.

JOHNNY : (PAUSE) No.

QUEENY : And you talked a lot about changing things. Give me a chance.

JOHNNY : But if it doesn't work ... I can't pay you back.

QUEENY : Ten pounds isn't going to break me Johnny. In any case I want to be your partner ... I want to be part of it. You got the idea, I give the money. That's fair isn't it? (JOHNNY IS BEGINNING TO WAVER)

JOHNNY : It might work.

QUEENY : Of course it would. When I heard your ideas I thought they was good. I would have bought. Other women will be the same.

JOHNNY : I've worked it out at fifty per cent profit.

QUEENY : That's good legitimate business.

JOHNNY : And there's big possibilities ... I mean for expansion.

QUEENY : Ja?

JOHNNY : Sure. To begin with, I'd sell the material myself, going from door to door. But if it catches on and the profit is like I said ... well we'd build up a big stock and that could mean a shop.

QUEENY : With them coming to us.

JOHNNY : You've got the idea.

QUEENY : A shop ... with counters, and all the stuff behind ... And a name? We got to have a name for the shop.

JOHNNY : We'd find one.

(AT THIS POINT THE DOOR OPENS QUIETLY AND BLACKIE COMES IN. HE IS HOLDING A CLOCK. DURING THE ENSUING SCENE HE TRIES WITH SMALL FURTIVE GESTURES TO CATCH QUEENY'S ATTENTION. IT IS OBVIOUSLY HER CLOCK, BUT IN THE EXCITEMENT OF HER TALK WITH JOHNNY SHE DOES NOT SEE HIM)

QUEENY : We'd open it up at nine in the morning. That's the time any decent shop opens, and we'd be busy with all the customers coming and going and at five o'clock we'd close up, count up our money and think about tomorrow. You know something?

JOHNNY : What?

QUEENY : We'd be respectable.

JOHNNY : There's nothing to be ashamed of.

QUEENY : Johnny it's the best thing I've ever heard of. When do we start?

JOHNNY : Well ... look Queeny, don't you want to think about it for a day or so

QUEENY : (HER ANSWER IS TO TAKE OUT HER MONEY BOX, COUNT OUT TEN NOTES AND PUT THEM ON THE TABLE IN FRONT OF JOHNNY) There. I thought about it and that's my answer.

JOHNNY : Right now?

QUEENY : Take advice from somebody who knows ... don't waste time or chances.
Now. Tomorrow's pay-day around here. Get your material in the morning
and sell in the afternoon. That's when the women get back with their
men's pay. (JOHNNY STILL HESITATES) Take it! If we don't start
now maybe we will never.

JOHNNY : I can be down at the factory first thing and then come here when I
got the material.

QUEENY : I'll be waiting.

JOHNNY : I can't believe it.

QUEENY : Do you think I can? Nothing like this has happened to me before.

JOHNNY : I'm going. (TAKES HIS SUITCASE) I'll leave these cloths and try
and sell them as well, but the suitcase I need for the material.

QUEENY : Buy big, Johnny.

JOHNNY : You leave that to me (HE IS AT THE DOOR) Thanks Queeny.

QUEENY : Till to-morrow.

(JOHNNY EXITS. SHE WATCHES THE DOOR CLOSE BEHIND HIM, HER FACE
SHINING AND HAPPY)

QUEENY : Sam ...

SAM : You gone mad or something?

QUEENY : (IGNORING THE REMARK) Sam, you got yellow material?

SAM : Look, I don't know what was in that coffee, but sober up will you!
You just let ten quid walk out of your life without even a farewell
tear.

QUEENY : It will be back. Now how about that yellow material?

SAM : Look Queeny, I'm being serious. That was ten quid we worked for.

QUEENY : I worked for.

SAM : Okay! So I just don't like seeing a friend lose it. You think
you going to see it or that rag-bag man again?

QUEENY : Tomorrow.

SAM : Queeny! I've also tried that racket.

QUEENY : That was you. This is Johnny.

SAM : Will you wake up!!

QUEENY : I have! And for the first time in my life. I've woken up to
something that looks like it might be fun and nice and clean. And

don't shout at me Sam. Material ... yellow material. You got some?

SAM : Okay, if you don't mind making a fool of yourself and losing ten quid ...

QUEENY : Yellow material !!!

SAM : (IRRITABLE) Sure I got yellow material. I got everything.

QUEENY : I want some. Enough for curtains.

SAM : I'll send it over in the morning.

QUEENY : I want it now.

SAM : Now ...?

QUEENY : Yes, now! Fetch it. I'll use as much as I want and give you back the rest. Well, what are you waiting for?

(SAM LEAVES. QUEENY HAS IN THE MEANTIME MANAGED TO GET DOWN THE CURTAINS. BLACKIE, ALONE WITH HER AT LAST, COMES FORWARD. SHE BUMPS INTO HIM)

QUEENY : Blackie! What you got there?

(BLACKIE SAYS NOTHING. JUST HOLDS UP THE CLOCK.)

QUEENY : I told you I didn't want it. Go give it to Sam to sell.

(BLACKIE STILL HOLDING THE CLOCK OUTSTRETCHED AS QUEENY RETURNS TO HER WORK AT THE CURTAINS. SHE IS HUMMING SOFTLY. THE CLOCK IN BLACKIE'S HAND BEGINS TO CHIME THE HOUR OF TWELVE.)

C U R T A I N

(QUEENY'S SHEBEEBEN THE NEXT MORNING. IT IS EMPTY. THE ROOM HAS CHANGED... YELLOW CURTAINS, TABLE CLOTH, AND A VASE OF FLOWERS. AFTER A FEW SECONDS BLACKIE, STILL CARRYING HIS CLOCK, COMES IN THROUGH THE STREET DOOR.)

QUEENY : That you Johnny? (QUEENY ENTERS FROM THE BACK ROOM. HER EXCITEMENT DIES WHEN SHE SEES THAT IT IS ONLY BLACKIE)

BLACKIE : Nobody else got one what sings like the church. Listen! (HE MOVES THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK AND IT BEGINS TO CHIME)

QUEENY : Which way did you come?

BLACKIE : Along the street.

QUEENY : Did you see the chap who was here last night?

BLACKIE : Him.

QUEENY : Yes, him. Did you see him?

BLACKIE : No. Sam said he wasn't going to come.

QUEENY : Sam says everything.

BLACKIE : Sam says

QUEENY : I'm sick of hearing what Sam says. What's the time? (BLACKIE LIFTS UP THE CLOCK FOR HER TO SEE) That thing's crazy. Why do you carry it around if it don't tell the time.

BLACKIE : But you don't listen. (HE MOVES THE HANDS AGAIN)

QUEENY : (IMPATIENTLY) I've heard it once and it doesn't change it's tune.

BLACKIE : Why you shouting at me? I done nothing.

QUEENY : (COLLECTING HERSELF) I'm jumpy this morning.

BLACKIE : You remember what I said! I do anything for you if you don't shout or laugh at me.

QUEENY : Okay Blackie! (PAUSE DURING WHICH SHE LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM DESPERATELY) Let's do something. These curtains ... ja ... maybe there's still time for that. Give me a hand. (WITH BLACKIE'S ASSISTANCE SHE GETS DOWN THE OLD CURTAINS AROUND THE BED. SHE PROCEEDS TO SEW ON EXTRA RINGS.)

QUEENY : Why you staring at me like that?

BLACKIE : You doing that for him.

QUEENY : What's so strange about sewing a few rings onto a curtain?

BLACKIE : You never done it before.

QUEENY : So I'm doing it now.

BLACKIE : You never done no sewing or fixing up like this before.

QUEENY : You said that already. Don't always repeat yourself. It's a bad habit you got. My hearing's alright.

BLACKIE : This chap ... is he going to make you like other women?

QUEENY : What do you mean? I am a woman.

(SAM ENTERS FROM THE STREET.)

QUEENY : What's the time Sam?

SAM : (CHUCKLING) So you're getting worried.

QUEENY : The time Sam.

SAM : (SPEAKING VERY DELIBERATELY) He's half an hour late already ... accord: to my reckoning. And I've been generous. I got him out of bed at eight ... which you must admit is not too early for a man starting off on a new business venture ... I gave him half an hour from Alex to town ... might have missed the first bus ... half an hour choosing his goods and half an hour coming out here and another half just in case he stopped over somewhere. That makes ten ... which it was half an hour ago. Of course there could, as they say, be a weak link in the chain. And according to my acquaintance with human nature the weak link in this case is the first one. That getting out of bed at eight part. Do you really think he's going to get out of bed at eight to swap a crisp ten quid for a heap of rags. If you do you're not the same woman that cleaned up this town with me. Ten quid on rags! Like I told you, it's an old racket.

More likely than not he's lying nice and comfortable in bed right now thinking about spending that money. Don't forget it's not every day that you can pick up ten quid like that.

(CLICKING HIS FINGERS)

However, old Sam never deserts a friend. When you get around to waking up, send this yellow stuff back and I'll sell it for you ... make it a fancy line and double the price. That way we should get your loss down to about nine quid.

QUEENY : If you so much as touch those curtains you'll never come in here again.

SAM : I was only trying to do you a favour. Of course they don't look

too bad now that you come to think of it. Maybe he did have a few good ideas after all. Pity he wasn't straight.

QUEENY : What I said about touching those curtains goes for your mouth as well ... say something else like that ...

SAM : When are you going to wake up Queeny?

QUEENY : I woke up last night Sam, and don't ask too many questions, otherwise I'm going to tell you what some things look like now that I got my eyes open.

SAM : Okay, I'll shut up. (PICKS A FLOWER FOR HIS BUTTON HOLE). Anyway, what is ten quid on payday? Maybe I'm being a little tight.

QUEENY : With my money.

SAM : You're my friend. I just don't want you to turn around and say I let you down. I never done it in the old days.

QUEENY : The only reason you never let me down is because we were already at the bottom. Anyway I don't want no more talk about the old days ... not to me or anybody else.

SAM : I get you (TURNING TO GO. HE PAUSES AT THE DOOR) But don't forget them.

QUEENY : Why?

SAM : So you don't expect what you didn't buy. None of our customers thought they was getting a wife for our price. You paid ten quid last night for a small kick and nothing else.

BLACKIE : (SHUFFLING FORWARD TO QUEENY. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT SHE IS UPSET) You want me to go to Alex and get your money. I'll find him and bring it back. Okay?

QUEENY : Get out.

BLACKIE : Tonight I'll ...

QUEENY : Just leave me alone.

(BLACKIE TAKES UP HIS CLOCK AND GOES. A FEW SECONDS LATER THE DOOR WHICH WAS LEFT SLIGHTLY AJAR SWINGS OPEN AND JOHNNY COMES IN CARRYING HIS SUITCASE)

QUEENY : (NOT LOOKING AROUND) I told you to get out!

JOHNNY : It wasn't me you told.

QUEENY : Johnny!

JOHNNY : That's your man, plus the finest selection of material any township has ever seen.

QUEENY : Johnny!!

JOHNNY : You been crying or something?

QUEENY : I thought you wasn't coming.

JOHNNY : And you cried? Well you can stop 'cause I'm here and just take a look at this.

(HE OPENS HIS SUITCASE. A FLOOD OF COLOURED MATERIAL SPILLS OUT ONTO THE FLOOR. FOR QUEENY IT IS A MOMENT OF RELEASE WHICH STARTS WITH A GASP OF SURPRISE.)

JOHNNY : And you wanted to know if ten pounds was enough? Well there's all this and I still got two quid in my pocket. But take a good look at the colours. Red ...

QUEENY : Blue ... green ...

JOHNNY : Yellow ... purple ...

QUEENY : You brought in the rainbow, man.

JOHNNY : And the sizes ... see this one.

QUEENY : (TAKING A LARGE LENGTH OF RED FROM HIS HANDS AND DRAPING IT AROUND HER.)
My colour Johnny .

JOHNNY : That's a curtain you're wearing ... and what about this for a bed?
And cushions to match!

QUEENY : I never seen so much colour.

JOHNNY : How does it make you feel?

QUEENY : Excited.

JOHNNY : Well don't be scared. Come on, touch it ... get the feel of it,
you'll be handling a lot.

QUEENY : You really think so Johnny?

JOHNNY : Now that I actually see it I say we can't go wrong. You know when I was walking up the street with this material the women came out of their houses to see what I had. They wanted to buy it there and then. I got two names already. I got to be there this afternoon when they get back with their men's pay ... and let me tell you they are going to buy. I got scared last night when you offered me the money so suddenly. But now! This is what I've been waiting for, Queeny. I got so many ideas up here my head is bursting. Number one. The place that sold me this

also sells feathers and fluff for cushions, you buy it by the box. So we are going to make the cushions complete ourselves. You got a sewing machine?

QUEENY : No. But I can buy one.

JOHNNY : No. You've given your share. The machine comes out of the profits ... maybe in a month or so. Then you can do some stitching while I'm out selling.

QUEENY : I don't know how to sew.

JOHNNY : So you learn. Other women can, you can. You're the same as them.

QUEENY : Say that again.

JOHNNY : I said you're like the other women. Anything wrong?

QUEENY : Nothing. Nothing at all. I just wanted to hear you say it.

JOHNNY : Now to work.

QUEENY : But you just come in. Aren't you tired? Carrying all that?

JOHNNY : Tired to-day?

QUEENY : But breakfast. I got something cooking.

JOHNNY : Okay. Bring it in.

(QUEENY GOES TO THE BACK TO FETCH HIS BREAKFAST. JOHNNY STARTS SORTING OUT HIS MATERIAL)

QUEENY : When you going to start.

JOHNNY : Straight after I've eaten. This is make-or-break day for me, and I want to know which it is.

QUEENY : Nothing could break to-day Johnny. Even if you came home with nothing sold.

JOHNNY : Hey, don't say that!

QUEENY : It's just that I'm so happy.

JOHNNY : We might have something to celebrate to-night.

QUEENY : I got to think about that.

JOHNNY : What?

QUEENY : Our celebration.

JOHNNY : Here?

QUEENY : Of course.

JOHNNY : But isn't this your big night? Pay-day?

QUEENY : What do you mean.

JOHNNY : The shebeen.

QUEENY : I'd forgotten.

JOHNNY : There's big money in it. You said so yourself last night.

QUEENY : Big money. (WITH BITTERNESS) Did you have to remind me?

JOHNNY : We can celebrate tomorrow.

QUEENY : No. This is our day, and I'm not going to let a lot of bums bugger it up. You saw what it was like last night. To-night's going to be worse. The whole place full of them! ... moaning and slobbering until it drives you mad.

JOHNNY : Take it easy.

QUEENY : Take it easy! I've taken it for too long and it hasn't been easy. And I'm not taking it tonight. Johnny, the shebeen can go to hell tonight.

JOHNNY : These fellows are your customers. That's not good business.

QUEENY : Don't talk like Sam.

JOHNNY : Sam's got a point there if you want to keep the shebeen.

QUEENY : And what if I don't.

(JOHNNY IS STUCK FOR WORDS. QUEENY COMES UP TO HIM. SHE PICKS UP A PIECE OF HIS MATERIAL TO EMPHASISE HER NEXT POINT)

We've started this haven't we. Maybe ...

JOHNNY : Maybe it doesn't work.

QUEENY : It will.

JOHNNY : But suppose

QUEENY : It's going to Johnny.

JOHNNY : Please! I'm asking you to give me a chance. I'll go out there just now and do my damnedest to sell ... but don't make me scared to come back. Let's just see how it goes.

QUEENY : But this is our day Johnny. Look, just for tonight. I'll tell them the police raided me. If I got to start selling again tomorrow, okay. But I can't tonight. Please Johnny.

JOHNNY : It's your business Queeny.

QUEENY : You sell those and leave the rest to me.

(JOHNNY CANNOT ARGUE. SHE LAYS OUT HIS FOOD ON THE TABLE)

QUEENY : Okay.

JOHNNY : You know, I am hungry. When you're excited like this you don't get time to think about food.

QUEENY : That's my job.

JOHNNY : Cooking for me?

QUEENY : I like it. You know I never cooked for any man before.

JOHNNY : Nobody has done any cooking for me.

QUEENY : No one?

JOHNNY : That's what I said.

QUEENY : Your girl friend.

JOHNNY : Never had one.

QUEENY : You're joking.

JOHNNY : I'm not.

QUEENY : Why?

JOHNNY : I've never looked for one.

QUEENY : When you get around to it, what are you going to look for?

JOHNNY : Lots of things.

QUEENY : Tell me.

JOHNNY : She's going to be clean.

QUEENY : (LAUGHING) Clean.

JOHNNY : Live and think clean! You can always wash your hands, or your face or your feet. But your mind? Could you wash that if you got to thinking dirt or living like it. I touched real filth once ... never again!

QUEENY : You had it tough Johnny?

JOHNNY : No more nor less than anybody else with a black skin. The trouble is a little means so damned much if you think and feel a lot. But there I go talking about my troubles. Tell me about yourself Queeny. You know I don't even know your real name.

QUEENY : Rose.

JOHNNY : Why do you run away from it?

QUEENY : Who said anything about running away?

JOHNNY : Well, why did you drop it?

QUEENY : People started calling me Queeny. It stuck.

JOHNNY : I'm going to call you Rose.

QUEENY : Don't.

JOHNNY : It's as good as Queeny.

QUEENY : Please Johnny, don't.

JOHNNY : Okay.

QUEENY : Just let's say I like Queeny better.

JOHNNY : You been here long?

QUEENY : Couple of years. Does that sound long? Maybe it is. But there's been nothing in it ... nothing I couldn't tell you in one minute. I got fatter, certainly richer, but there's nothing else. You know what's the secret of keeping alive?

JOHNNY : You tell me.

QUEENY : It's to keep wanting things.

JOHNNY : Then I got a long life ahead of me.

QUEENY : That's what I mean. You'll always be doing things, thinking up new ideas, and that's going to keep you going. Me? I just rolled over and died.

JOHNNY : Isn't there anything you want, Queeny?

QUEENY : There is now. But there was a time I thought I had all I wanted when I got this. But when I had it, that was the end. There's been times I never knew what day it was in here ... and I never needed to know. I'd wake up and think is it Monday or Tuesday, maybe Friday? It didn't make any difference. Giving it a name didn't make it any different from the rest.

I worked too hard and waited too long for this. That is where I made my mistake. Since I was a kid and my father used to drink his pay-packet down on a Friday night while we waited hungry at home ... since those days I said to myself, 'One day you'll have a shebeen and get fat.' Strange the things kids think, huh?

JOHNNY : How many in the family?

QUEENY : Six of us when my mother died. It might have been different if she's stayed alive. She was one of those people who ... well, like you say, lived clean. We was so poor we didn't even have any rubbish, but she swept out that room as if it was filthy. When she died I got out.

JOHNNY : The others?

QUEENY : I don't know. I still ask myself that one. You see I was the oldest, the youngest was still drinking from my mother. I should have stayed and tried to help them ... I mean you know what kids are like, small, helpless, hungry. Now you know something about me. Not so good is it?

JOHNNY : You mean running away?

QUEENY : And leaving the others.

JOHNNY : You was a kid.

QUEENY : I try to tell myself that, but it doesn't always work. Like you said, you can't wash your mind as easily as your hands. (PAUSE) But if somebody tried hard enough, could they? ... wash off something from the past?

JOHNNY : Depends on the person I guess.

QUEENY : And other people.

JOHNNY : Why them?

QUEENY : If you were trying to forget something, but others kept reminding you of it ... wouldn't work would it.

JOHNNY : (PAUSE) You may have had it rough Queeny, but I had my face rubbed in dirt. I know what it smells like, what it tastes like. That's how close I was to it and that's why I hate it.

I was a kid. Seventeen years old. It was the big story about the mines. The good food, the clean rooms, the money. My parents bought that one alright. Money! So I came here, ten years ago. I stood just one year in that place. A fellow can't take more. Did you hear what I said. I said a fellow can't take more.

QUEENY : Okay Johnny, I heard you.

JOHNNY : You might have heard me okay, but do you know what I mean? There's no women in those compounds and they don't let you out. There's big bursting men in those compounds and there's no women. So they take the boys, the young ones, like me. That's what they take.

QUEENY : Okay Johnny.

JOHNNY : Stop saying that because it's not okay. It's like dogs see.

QUEENY : Johnny!

JOHNNY : Yes, dogs, or something else that crawls around the garbage cans or the gutter. Something dirty! I've tried to wash it off Queeny. I've tried. Every day, I try. But there is always something around that brings it back. Like that bus ride in from Alex this morning. It was hell. It was crowded with men, big men. I could feel the violence in their bodies. Like the nights in the compound when they sat around and spoke about women and got all worked up until (PAUSE. HE

MOVES TO THE SUITCASE AND MATERIALS.) So here we go.

QUEENY : It's the start Johnny ... the clean start. Yours as well as mine.
And I still say they look like the rainbow.

JOHNNY : (PICKING UP ONE PIECE OF MATERIAL) The colours are good ...

QUEENY : (MIMICKING HIS SALES TALK) And they won't run.

JOHNNY : (LAUGHING) Maybe you should also sell.

QUEENY : Not to-day ... I got to prepare for our celebration.

JOHNNY : I'd better start selling and give us something to celebrate. (AS
THEY GET DOWN TO BUSINESS, THE OLD ENTHUSIASM COMES BACK SLOWLY) I'm
not going to take it all ... just a few pieces. We'll see how it goes
with them. If I need the others I'll come back.

QUEENY : You got the address of the two women?

JOHNNY : Right here.

QUEENY : What time do you think you'll be back?

JOHNNY : About five.

QUEENY : If I'm not here just make yourself at home.

JOHNNY : While you're about it, get the price of a good sewing machine ... who
knows.

(THE DOOR OPENS AND SAM COMES IN)

QUEENY : (WATCHING HIM INSPECT THE MATERIALS. A NOTE OF TRIUMPH IN HER VOICE)
Well?

SAM : (GIVING QUEENY A QUICK LOOK BUT DIRECTING HIS ATTENTION TO JOHNNY)
So you mean to try it?

QUEENY : (POINTING TO MATERIALS) Would that be here if we wasn't?

JOHNNY : That's about it. You look doubtful.

QUEENY : It's a bad habit Sam's got. He doubts everything.

SAM : What you reckon you're going to make on that?

JOHNNY : About fifty per cent if I'm lucky.

SAM : Not much is it?

QUEENY : It's not a racket Sam, it's legitimate business.

SAM : (IGNORING QUEENY) Are you lucky?

JOHNNY : No more than anybody else.

SAM : Looks to me like you got a lot of luck.

JOHNNY : We'll see at the end of to-day.

SAM : We seen a lot already. Yesterday you didn't even know Queeny and to-day you're in business with her! Ten quids' worth of business. I call that luck.

JOHNNY : Maybe I am.

SAM : You bet you are.

JOHNNY : Anyway I got to be off now ... see if my luck still holds good. See you later Queeny.

QUEENY : Give o'clock Johnny.

(JOHNNY EXITS CARRYING HIS SUITCASE. SAM HELPS HIMSELF TO A DRINK AND THEN SITS DOWN.)

SAM : So I was wrong.

QUEENY : Looks like it doesn't it?

SAM : Maybe he's playing for more than even I thought.

QUEENY : Meaning?

SAM : You're worth a lot more than ten pounds.

QUEENY : (COMING FORWARD) Sam I want you to listen carefully, cause I never said anything I meant so much ... he can have it ... he can have every penny I got.

SAM : Is it that bad?

QUEENY : Bad? That I found somebody who's worth giving to. It's good Sam. It feels good. I'm going to enjoy waking up in the morning.

SAM : I do that for nothing.

QUEENY : For nothing or the cheapest! That's you, that's been you ever since I can remember. And now I feel sorry for you. Ja, I actually feel sorry. Yesterday I said I envied you cause you had the shop and I just sat around and did nothing. It's changed Sam, in one day it's changed, and you know how? You've got nobody ...

SAM : And you've got Johnny.

QUEENY : That's it.

SAM : It's not much if you have a good look at it.

QUEENY : Why you scared Sam?

SAM : Me?

QUEENY : There's only me and you and I'm not talking to myself. Yes, scared. You're working on him like a man that's scared.

SAM : You're talking nonsense.

QUEENY : You didn't laugh Sam. If I was wrong you would have laughed.

SAM : What have I got to be scared about?

QUEENY : I don't know and I'm not interested in finding out. You just look scared. I know I'm not.

SAM : We'll see how long it lasts.

QUEENY : It will last as long as it's got to.

SAM : He might not be the selling-down type Queeny.

QUEENY : Could be, but I'll try and make it that he wants. But like you said we don't know. I do know this though, if anybody tries to interfere they'll wish they was never born.

SAM : Don't look at me. If you get a kick out of it good luck to you. All I'm saying is he might decide to drift and when he does you'll be glad you still got the shebeen going.

QUEENY : That's finished.

SAM : What do you mean?

QUEENY : What I said. The shebeen is finished. I'm in a legitimate business and it's going to stay that way.

SAM : Are you mad?

QUEENY : Don't shout.

SAM : Legitimate business? Selling rags?

QUEENY : That's how we're starting.

SAM : Starting what? You think you'll ever pick up two hundred per cent profit selling rags because that's what you get from the shebeen. And you don't have to work for it.

QUEENY : That's just what I don't like.

SAM : Then keep your rag-bag as a side line.

QUEENY : I'm keeping it, don't worry about that, but it's all I'm keeping.

SAM : So you mean to wreck everything.

QUEENY : What is there to wreck Sam? You just show me one decent thing that I got to wreck.

SAM : The best shebeen in town ... the best customers ...

QUEENY : (CUTTING HIM SHORT) I said 'decent'. Go read somewhere what that word means. You're the one that's been to school remember, you just picked me up in the gutter.

SAM : And I'll be doing that again if you carry on like this. That boy's going to take a powder with all you got and then you'll be back there looking for Sam to pick you up.

QUEENY : Don't.

SAM : Wait till the boys hear about this to-night.

QUEENY : They won't. I'm not selling. I said it's finished and I'm starting from now.

SAM : And that liquor I got?

QUEENY : The liquor I bought. I don't give a damn. It can stay here for the rest of my life as far as I'm concerned. To-night we're going to celebrate.

SAM : Celebrate?

QUEENY : Yes celebrate! Me and Johnny, right here. 'The boys' can go somewhere else, go moan and vomit on somebody else's floor cause I'm finished with it. I'm going to start to live Sam.

SAM : That's funny ... coming from you.

QUEENY : Meaning?

SAM : Nothing.

QUEENY : Don't be scared. I got a lot to remember and one of the things is that no one ever really treated me like a woman, took their hats off when they came in here, said please or thank you or said they liked my smile. I remember that allright, and I remember you. You got fat and rich and smooth on me. You worked me like men work horses and it lasted a long time, so long that I forgot I was a woman. I took this whole goddam city to bed with me so that you could get fat and rich. I also made money out of it ... I remember that too, but it's money I don't like the feel of. It's a greasy coin that stinks of dirty sheets and unwashed men. So if I want to give it away, if I want to give away every penny I got, I don't think I should be ashamed. (PAUSE) I'm going out now Sam. When I come back it's going to be my home cause that's what it is and that's the way you and everybody else is going to treat it. (QUEENY LEAVES. SAM SITS MEDITATIVELY WITH HIS GLASS FOR A TIME, THEN THE DOOR OPENS AND BLACKIE COMES IN)

BLACKIE : (STILL CARRYING HIS CLOCK) Where's Queeny?

SAM : How the hell must I know.

BLACKIE : (SEEING THE MATERIALS) This chap come?

SAM : Do you think that walked in here by itself?

BLACKIE : (SPEAKING TO HIMSELF) It's no good.

SAM : What do you say?

BLACKIE : It's no good.

SAM : (ON THE POINT OF MAKING ANOTHER CUTTING REMARK WHEN HE STOPS AND PICKS HIS WORDS CAREFULLY) What do you mean?

BLACKIE : This fellow.

SAM : Don't you like him?

BLACKIE : If he comes, I must go.

SAM : You're right and it's all wrong. He doesn't mean any good. He only wants Queeny's money.

BLACKIE : He's no good.

SAM : It would be better if he went.

BLACKIE : Queeny likes him.

SAM : I know but she doesn't see him the way we do. (PAUSE) You want to get rid of him Blackie.

BLACKIE : Queeny would be angry.

SAM : I don't mean you must get rough with him. You needn't touch him at all.

BLACKIE : No?

SAM : You needn't lay a hand on him.

BLACKIE : How?

SAM : (GOES TO DOOR AND SEES NOBODY IS LISTENING. CLOSSES IT AND JOINS BLACKIE AT TABLE) Listen carefully ...

C U R T A I N.

SCENE II

QUEENY'S SHEBEEEN LATER THAT AFTERNOON. SAM IS SITTING AT THE TABLE DEEP IN THOUGHT. BLACKIE IS PROWLING AROUND AT THE BACK, OBVIOUSLY NERVOUS. HE GOES TO THE WINDOW EVERY FEW SECONDS AND LOOKS OUT INTO THE STREET.

SAM : (LOOKING UP IRRITABLY) Why don't you sit down?

BLACKIE : I can't.

SAM : Then do something. Wind your clock if you want to hear the damn thing again. But stop crawling around. It gets on my nerves.

BLACKIE : I don't like it.

SAM : What you worrying about? I fixed it so that she will never know it was us.

BLACKIE : Yes.

SAM : Patrick does the dirty work.

BLACKIE : Maybe he will tell Queeny.

SAM : Tell her what. Don't be a fool. I paid him and I said I'll help him get a job. So Queeny never sells to him again. He can get his liquor somewhere else. And she won't worry about doing Patrick if I tell her you beat him up. So make it look good. But remember it's only got to look good. Go easy on Patrick. He's doing this because we asked him.

BLACKIE : (AFTER A FEW SECONDS OF PACING ANOTHER THOUGHT HAS STRUCK HIM) She'll want to know how Patrick found out about her.

SAM : (EXPLAINING VERY CAREFULLY) That woman took on more men in her day than you'll ever know. So one of them saw Queeny around and tells Patrick, one of her old customers. Isn't that possible.

(BLACKIE NODS HIS HEAD IN GRUDGING AGREEMENT. SAM SETTLES BACK COMFORTABLY TO ENJOY THE CUNNING OF HIS PLAN)

I must give it to myself, it's tidy. Not a loophole. I used what they call psychology. That for your benefit is the head and I been using mine. I could have got somebody to take him down a dark street ... you might have done it for a price. But that's messy and the police could get round to asking questions. But this way it's me and you and Patrick and each of us got a good reason to shut up.

BLACKIE : Maybe it doesn't work. Maybe this fellow won't care about what Queeny was,

SAM : He will. He's the type. The fastidious kind, that don't like chewing on a bone after all the other dogs taken the meat off.

BLACKIE : I don't like you Sam.

SAM : (SARCASM) Don't let that worry you. All that's important is that we don't like him.

BLACKIE : (SHOWING HIS RELUCTANCE TO IMPLEMENT SAM'S PLAN) Maybe I'm wrong, about this chap. Queeny said he was alright.

SAM : (QUICK TO REACT) You mad or something? I explained to you how this chap is going to steal Queeny's cash, didn't I? How you was going to be kicked out because he's come?

(BLACKIE IS NOT COMPLETELY CONVINCED)

Look, if I had told you yesterday, just yesterday, that Queeny was going to close up this shebeen, would you have believed me? No. But she has. In one day this Johnny bloke has got her so wrapped up that she's done that.

Queeny uses you around the shebeen. You fetch liquor, you throw out the drunks. But what are you going to do in this cloth business? Sew on curtain rings? And remember we are doing this to protect Queeny.

(BLACKIE PACES AGAIN).

So take it easy. This chap is no fool and he'll quickly smell a rat. You got nothing to be nervous about. You're not going to hurt him. Queeny won't be home till late so we got plenty of time. When he comes I'll go across and give Patrick the word. If everything goes right to-night will be the last we'll see of that bastard.

BLACKIE : Why don't you like him?

SAM : I don't like him cause he's going to steal Queeny's cash.

(THAT WAS FOR BLACKIE'S BENEFIT. THE NEXT FEW WORDS IN A MORE INTROSPECTIVE MOOD)

And because he's a fancy boy. A straight man that makes like everything else is crooked. Wait till he hears about Queeny.

BLACKIE : Here he comes.

SAM : (JOINING HIM AT THE WINDOW) He looks happy.

BLACKIE : Must have sold the lot.

SAM : So he was lucky to-day. That is where it ends. Keep him busy till I come back.

(SAM HURRIEDLY EXITS THROUGH THE BACK DOOR. BLACKIE LEFT ALONE SHOWS A MOMENT OF PANIC. HE LOOKS AROUND UNCERTAINLY FOR SOMETHING TO DO. HE SEES HIS CLOCK, GOES OVER TO IT AND STARTS WINDING. THE FRONT DOOR OPENS AND JOHNNY COMES IN)

JOHNNY : Hello! Where's Queeny.

BLACKIE : Be here just now.

(JOHNNY SITS DOWN. HE IS OBVIOUSLY EXCITED AND ELATED)

JOHNNY : I sold everything I had with me.

BLACKIE : Ja.

JOHNNY : I reckon that's pretty good going.

BLACKIE : Maybe.

JOHNNY : I think so. I mean it's not something that people got to buy. Like soap or medicine. But they bought it. Rags or not they bought every piece I had. And you know I could have sold the lot ... I mean the stuff I left behind as well. Hey ... what about you?

BLACKIE : What about me?

JOHNNY : Wouldn't you like to come out with me next time and give a hand with the selling? You'd get paid. You do sort of help Queeny with things don't you? It's her money that started this. It's her business as well.

BLACKIE : Me?

JOHNNY : Why not? Looks like I'm going to need somebody. Might as well keep it in the family.

BLACKIE : (CONFUSED) I don't know nothing about selling.

JOHNNY : I didn't when I started this morning. It's what you want to do Blackie

...

BLACKIE : (TRYING TO KILL THE DOUBTS IN HIS MIND) No!

JOHNNY : Of course you can if you try.

BLACKIE : I said no. I don't even want to try.

JOHNNY : (MISINTERPRETING BLACKIE'S REFUSAL) Look, I bet ...

BLACKIE : (TURNING ON HIM) I don't want to sell your bloody rags. So shut up.

(BLACKIE MOVES TO THE DOOR BUT IS A FEW SECONDS TOO LATE. SAM IS THERE.)

SAM : (SAUNTERING OVER AND DROPPING INTO A CHAIR BESIDE JOHNNY)
How did it go?

JOHNNY : Okay.

SAM : Just okay or okay fine?

JOHNNY : I sold the lot.

SAM : The lot. That's good going.

JOHNNY : I'm glad, for Queeny's sake. She took a chance giving me ten quid like that.

SAM : Chance?

JOHNNY : The material.

SAM : Oh, that.

JOHNNY : (DETECTING AN UNDERCURRENT IN SAM'S WORDS) Well didn't she?

SAM : Sure, but don't get all worked up about it. Ten pounds is small change to that woman. I don't think she worried too much about that.

JOHNNY : Meaning?

SAM : Maybe she has other ideas. That's all. What did you take?

JOHNNY : The eight pounds I spent on the material and four pounds profit.

SAM : Not bad. What do you say Blackie? Don't tell me, I know. Queeny's not interested in chicken feed.

JOHNNY : I think she will be.

SAM : (WINKING AT HIM) I get you.

JOHNNY : What do you mean? ..

SAM : Nothing. Maybe I know Queeny a little longer than you.
(THERE IS A VIGOROUS KNOCK AT THE DOOR.)

SAM : See who it is Blackie. And remember what Queeny said. She's not selling to-night. (HE TURNS TO JOHNNY) That's right isn't it?
(BLACKIE GOES TO THE DOOR AND TALKS TO SOMEONE OUTSIDE. VOICES GET LOUD AND THEN PATRICK COMES IN)

PATRICK : (TO SAM) Tell him I don't want credit. I got money. (HE SITS DOWN)
How's everybody?

SAM : (IGNORING THE GREETING) Blackie wasn't talking about credit. Queeny's not selling.

PATRICK : Look, where is she?

SAM : Not in.

PATRICK : I'm sorry about last night. I didn't mean to mess up her place.

SAM : It's got nothing to do with last night. (TURNING TO JOHNNY) Isn't that so?

PATRICK : Well then why isn't she selling?

SAM : She said something about celebrating. Anyway it's not your business.

PATRICK : With all the cash she's taken from me it could be.

SAM : Be a good boy and take your few pennies elsewhere huh.

PATRICK : Few pennies. So my money's not good enough for her any more.

SAM : I just said she's not selling.

PATRICK : It was good enough for her when she first came here. My few pennies were alright then. I bet they were. Because I earned my money honest. Not like some people I know.

SAM : Don't say anything you're going to regret.

PATRICK : I got no regrets. I got nothing to hide.

JOHNNY : What do you mean by that?

PATRICK : Hell, you must be new here to ask questions like that. Go ask Queeny.

JOHNNY : I'm asking you.

SAM : Look, let's just forget what has been said ...

JOHNNY : (TO PATRICK) I'm asking you what has Queeny got to hide?

SAM : You'll be sorry Patrick.

PATRICK : Sorry? Sorry for what. I've got nothing to be ashamed of. I lived my life clean and decent.

SAM : Blackie!

(THE HUNCHBACK RUSHES FORWARD AND LIFTING HIS CLENCHED FISTS CRACKS THEM INTO PATRICK'S BACK. SAM SEES THAT BLACKIE IS NOT BLUFFING, THAT HE HAS EVERY INTENTION OF KILLING PATRICK. HE RUSHES IN AND PULLS BLACKIE OFF. JOHNNY IS RIVETED TO HIS CHAIR BY PATRICK'S INSINUATIONS.)

SAM : You fool. You bloody crooked fool. Do you want to kill him?

BLACKIE : Yes.

SAM : Listen! That's enough. That's enough. Do you hear?

(BLACKIE IS BROUGHT TO HIS SENSES. HE GIVES UP THE STRUGGLE WITH PATRICK AND RUSHES OUT OF THE ROOM. SAM JOINS PATRICK)

You alright?

(PATRICK NODS HIS HEAD. HE IS SHAKEN AND SAM HELPS HIM TO THE DOOR

AND SLIPS SOMETHING INTO HIS HAND BEFORE HE GOES. SAM TAKES OUT A HANDKERCHIEF AND MOPS HIS BROW BEFORE TURNING HIS ATTENTION TO JOHNNY)

SAM : Thanks for the help.

JOHNNY : (IGNORING THE SARCASM) What did he mean?

SAM : How must I know? You saw him last night. Drinks a lot. Must have had a few tots somewhere else before coming here.

JOHNNY : He was sober. You've known Queeny a long time. What did she do before ...?

SAM : Look, I told you I don't know. And even if I did what sort of friend goes talking behind a back? If Queeny wants you to know, let her tell you.

JOHNNY : Know what?

SAM : I know nothing, absolutely nothing. Does that make you understand? I'm keeping my mouth shut. Anyway here she comes now. And if you want my advice don't ask questions.

(SAM EXITS QUIETLY THROUGH THE BACK DOOR, JOHNNY WAITS NERVOUSLY FOR QUEENY'S ENTRANCE.)

QUEENY : (LOADED WITH PARCELS) Can we celebrate?

JOHNNY : Hello Queeny.

QUEENY : How did it go?

JOHNNY : It was good.

QUEENY : (HER EXCITEMENT GETTING THE BETTER OF HER) No!

JOHNNY : Yep, the lot.

QUEENY : Everything you took out?

JOHNNY : Everything.

QUEENY : We've done it! We can celebrate ... and I mean celebrate. (HER PARCELS) Fancy candles for the table ... a new set of knives and forks ... a chicken ... got to see if I can still cook one. And you know what this is? Champagne ... the real thing. I even bought myself a new dress.

(QUEENY PAUSES)

Don't look at me like that. Am I making a fool of myself?

JOHNNY : No, Queeny.

QUEENY : What if I was! I got a good reason to stand in the door there and

laugh at this damn street till the dogs get tired of barking.

Aren't you happy?

JOHNNY : Tired, I guess.

QUEENY : Of course. It must have been hard work. I'll put the kettle on. Don't fiddle with the parcels. There's a surprise for you. Johnny, it's hard for me to believe this has been a day in my life ... shopping, arguing prices. You know I argued with an Indian about the price of potatoes. And this was the one I hated most of all. Pay-day. The big money day. When life started at night and sobered up two hangovers and a hundred brandies later on Monday. Fifteen years is a long time.

JOHNNY : Fifteen? This morning you said five.

QUEENY : Five of course. What's the matter with me.

(PICKS UP ONE OF THE PARCELS.)

Look the other way.

(A NEW DRESS COMES OUT OF THE PARCEL. SHE STARTS TO PUT IT ON.)

JOHNNY : What did you do before this Queeny?

QUEENY : Just knocked about. Odd jobs.

JOHNNY : Queeny.

QUEENY : Ja.

JOHNNY : I need a drink.

QUEENY : Shall we open the champagne now?

JOHNNY : Let's keep that for later. What about brandy?

QUEENY : You asking for brandy.

JOHNNY : I'm all jumpy inside.

QUEENY : I understand. It's in the kitchen in the drawer. Help yourself.

(JOHNNY, STILL NOT LOOKING AT QUEENY GOES TO THE BACK AND FINDS A BOTTLE. HE OPENS IT AND POURS HIMSELF A DRINK WHICH HE DRINKS DOWN THERE. THEN ANOTHER WHICH HE BRINGS INTO THE ROOM WITH THE BOTTLE. QUEENY HAS NOW FINISHED PUTTING ON THE NEW DRESS.)

QUEENY : Well, how do you like it?

JOHNNY : It looks good.

QUEENY : Now tell me. Tell me everything that happened to you from the moment you left this morning.

JOHNNY : Well, it's hard. Everything is mixed up. I went to those women I

told you about. After that I just kept on going and when I looked again my suitcase was empty. Here, see for yourself. The eight pounds I spent on the material plus four pounds profit. That's not bad. Even Sam said so.

QUEENY : I can laugh at him to-day. Let's call him over.

JOHNNY : No. Leave him alone. I don't like his company, or his talk.

QUEENY : You haven't told me all. Did they buy like you suggested? Table cloths to match the curtains and so on?

JOHNNY : Ja, I reckon so.

QUEENY : What's the matter, Johnny? You're not burning up the world like you did this morning.

JOHNNY : Somebody threw cold water on the fire.

QUEENY : I don't get you.

JOHNNY : Well, you know, selling and arguing about prices. It makes you tired.

QUEENY : You look more than just tired.

JOHNNY : (COVERING UP) Don't worry, I'll have the fire burning bright again.
(POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER DRINK)

QUEENY : I'll get the coffee. You might really need it.

(THE LAST REMARK AS A JOKE WITH A GESTURE TOWARDS THE BRANDY. QUEENY GOES TO THE BACK. JOHNNY DOWNS THE TOT. WITH HIS FACE SCREWED UP AND HIS THROAT BURNING HE PUTS OUT HIS HAND FOR THE BOTTLE AND POURS ANOTHER)

QUEENY : What do we do now?

JOHNNY : We said celebrate, didn't we?

QUEENY : You're sounding like your old self again. Maybe that brandy was a good idea. But I meant the business. What do we do now? Buy some more?

JOHNNY : We expand.

QUEENY : Expand?

JOHNNY : We get big. It's when you're small and need people that you get buggered around. We've got to be so big we don't need anybody.

QUEENY : Except each other.

JOHNNY : Except each other? Maybe we'll still be buggered around, by each other. I suppose the only time you're really safe is when you can

tell the rest of the world to go to hell.

QUEENY : That's not true. Remember me when you say that. Nothing buggers you up like yourself. It's good to need someone. (TRYING TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT) Tell me about our expansion.

JOHNNY : We'll buy more, sell more, and make more money. Then maybe you'll start taking it serious.

QUEENY : (NOT UNDERSTANDING HIS LAST REMARK) Johnny?

JOHNNY : Four pounds is chicken feed isn't it?

QUEENY : Who said that?

JOHNNY : Blackie.

QUEENY : He said that ... about me?

JOHNNY : Let's forget it.

QUEENY : No! Not if you're going to believe everything you hear ...

JOHNNY : I didn't say I believed it.

QUEENY : What else did he say?

JOHNNY : Queeny, please.

QUEENY : So that is what I get after all I did for him ...

JOHNNY : He's not ungrateful Queeny.

QUEENY : I should have known it.

JOHNNY : I offered him a job.

QUEENY : Doing what?

JOHNNY : Helping me.

QUEENY : Well drop that idea.

JOHNNY : Why?

QUEENY : Because I don't think it's a good idea to have him around.

JOHNNY : So you'll just get rid of him like that.

QUEENY : Just like that. That's how he came and that's how he can go.

JOHNNY : And when you get tired of selling rags will I also go just like that?

(QUEENY IS DISTURBED)

QUEENY : Johnny, we're going wrong.

JOHNNY : You're right. (PULLING HIMSELF TOGETHER)

(HE TAKES THE BOTTLE AND POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER DRINK)

QUEENY : Easy on that stuff, Johnny. You're not used to it.

JOHNNY : You want me to burn again don't you?

QUEENY : We got the future to burn up. Tomorrow and the day after and our plans for those days. That stuff will only burn you up.

JOHNNY : The fire needs a spark. That's all this is giving me.

Now about these plans. They got to be big. We got to get away from a world that is small. We got to build big so that one of these days we can stand in the street and have a damned good laughing session at the world. We'll laugh ourselves sick 'cause there's nothing so goddam funny only we take it serious.

QUEENY : (TRYING HARD TO BRING HIM BACK TO REALITY) The plans, Johnny.

JOHNNY : Plans?

QUEENY : You started off saying you wanted to talk about our plans for the future.

JOHNNY : The future! It's a waste of time talking about that. The only future we've got is tomorrow if we're unlucky enough to wake up.

QUEENY : (STILL TRYING) I got the prices of sewing machines. I was thinking that for us ...

JOHNNY : Sewing Machines!

QUEENY : You said we got to get a sewing machine Johnny. I got the prices in my bag.

JOHNNY : Forget the sewing machine. That's a small thought.

QUEENY : I heard big talkers all my life, but I never seen one that was happy. And you were happy this morning, Johnny.

JOHNNY : I'm happy now.

QUEENY : Are you?

JOHNNY : (PASSING A HAND OVER HIS EYES) I told you I'm tired.

QUEENY : Is it because of what you told me this morning?

JOHNNY : No. I want to forget that to-night.

QUEENY : (POINTING AT THE BOTTLE) That's not the way.

JOHNNY : I still got to find that out for myself.

(QUEENY PICKS UP HER PARCELS AND TAKES THEM TO THE BACK. A FEW SECONDS LATER SHE RETURNS WITH A SMALL ONE IN HER HANDS)

QUEENY : I should have given this to you when I came in. When I was all excited. (THERE IS A PAUSE. QUEENY IS EMBARRASSED)

It's a present for you, Johnny. Hell, I'm just making a fool of myself.

(SHE MOVES TO THE BACK)

JOHNNY : Queeny ...

QUEENY : (STOPPING) Maybe you will like it.

(SHE GIVES IT TO HIM. HE OPENS THE PARCEL AND TAKES OUT A WRIST WATCH.)

It's just a wristwatch. I thought that maybe when you was going around selling and it comes near lunch ... (HER WORDS TRAIL OFF) I just wanted to give you something. It doesn't mean anything else.

(JOHNNY GOES TO THE BACK. A SHADOW PASSES THE WINDOW. IT IS A MAN PICKING OUT A MELANCHOLY LITTLE THEME ON HIS GUITAR. JOHNNY HEARS THE MUSIC.)

JOHNNY : (WITH A VAGUE GESTURE TOWARDS THE WINDOW) Him.

QUEENY : Who?

JOHNNY : The chap who was playing the guitar.

QUEENY : (LISTENING) It's sad.

JOHNNY : It's always sad. When a man walks past a lighted window in an empty street, it's always sad.

QUEENY : Why has it got to be?

JOHNNY : When you're out walking at this hour streets lead nowhere.

QUEENY : You don't have to say it like that.

JOHNNY : It's true.

QUEENY : For you?

JOHNNY : I don't know myself any more.

QUEENY : I know a few things.

JOHNNY : I told you a lot.

QUEENY : I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about a man I met yesterday who got his chance to do something he's been dreaming of for a long time. A man who's got big plans for the future. Doesn't that sound like somebody who's got somewhere to go?

JOHNNY : I seen good-looking apples with worms in them.

QUEENY : What do you mean?

JOHNNY : The apple isn't going to get ripe. And even if it looks like it is, the first person that takes a bite will spit it out ... because they'll find it rotten inside. It only takes one worm to do that to an apple ... and maybe one thought to do it to a man.

(JOHNNY TURNS AND LOOKS DIRECTLY AT QUEENY)

And you?

QUEENY : I'm trying to be a woman.

JOHNNY : What does that mean?

QUEENY : I'm trying to hold a man, make him want to stay.

JOHNNY : (AFTER A PAUSE) Am I the first?

QUEENY : (CHOOSING HER WORDS VERY CAREFULLY) It's the first time I've ever felt like this about someone.

(JOHNNY WANTS TO ASK SOMETHING ELSE. THE EVASION IS OBVIOUS BUT HE IS NOT YET DRUNK ENOUGH TO FORCE QUEENY. HE POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER DRINK JUST A LITTLE TOO HURRIEDLY. QUEENY WATCHES HIS HANDS AND THE GLASS)

JOHNNY : Must have been a harder day than I thought.

(THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. QUEENY ANSWERS IT. IT IS A CUSTOMER AND SHE HAS DIFFICULTY IN TELLING HIM SHE IS NOT SELLING. SHE STEPS BACK INTO THE ROOM AND SLAMS THE DOOR)

JOHNNY : It's not going to be easy.

QUEENY : What?

JOHNNY : Keeping it shut. They're going to expect you to sell.

QUEENY : What they expect and what I'm going to do is two different things.

JOHNNY : Looks like it.

QUEENY : I thought you would prefer it this way, Johnny.

JOHNNY : There's worse things in this world than shebeens.

QUEENY : I closed it because it's the only thing you or anybody else can point at in my life.

JOHNNY : You don't have to say that.

QUEENY : Don't I?

JOHNNY : We said we were going to celebrate remember.

QUEENY : We've gone a long way from that idea.

JOHNNY : (PAUSE) Why did you get mixed up with a bastard like me?

QUEENY : Don't blame yourself, Johnny.

JOHNNY : Then don't blame yourself either. Let's blame the stinking bloody world out there that makes us what we are. Let's blame what sent us into this world because nobody with any sense would choose to come.

QUEENY : Is that how you feel about it?

JOHNNY : I've felt that way ever since the mines. Ever since they got hold of me and made me worse than an animal. The only difference is that sometimes I get the crazy idea that a man can change the world he lives in. Hell! You can't even change yourself.

(GRABBING THE BOTTLE)

Except that this isn't helping me forget.

QUEENY : Have a cup of coffee instead.

JOHNNY : Who ever heard of celebrating with coffee?

QUEENY : I'd rather not celebrate than see you start on that.

JOHNNY : Don't sell me that line.

QUEENY : Then there's no point in me turning them away at the door.

JOHNNY : This is my last one.

QUEENY : Promise.

JOHNNY : Please, Queeny, don't nag. There's the money we took to-day, if that's what you're worrying about (PAUSE) I'm sorry.

QUEENY : Is that something else Blackie said and you believed? (MOVING TO THE DOOR) Where is he?

JOHNNY : No! Queeny, please. (SHE STOPS AT THE DOOR)

Christ, this is one hell of a way to celebrate.

(THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. QUEENY IGNORES IT. IT COMES AGAIN. SHE OPENS THE DOOR IN A FURY.)

QUEENY : Go to hell. (SHE SLAMS THE DOOR) Let's try to start from the beginning.

JOHNNY : The beginning. Where's that?

QUEENY : Two hours ago when you come home. You had sold everything and you were tired. Be tired, too tired to say anything or think anything. Just want to sit down and rest and wait for the food. Maybe later we'll have some of that champagne.

JOHNNY : (GENUINELY EXHAUSTED) That sounds simple. That sounds simple and okay.

QUEENY : Try it Johnny. Sit down. Or do you want to sleep?

JOHNNY : No, sometimes a man can dream worse things than he can think. There was a time when I couldn't sleep at all, because of my dreams.

QUEENY : It's okay now Johnny.

JOHNNY : It wasn't then. No. I'll stay awake. It feels like a night for bad dreams.

QUEENY : Dream about to-day.

JOHNNY : How do you know what to-day means to me?

QUEENY : You sold everything ...

JOHNNY : Don't keep on about that like it was the happy ending to a fairy story. So I sold a heap of old rags. But I didn't sell my mind. I still got the same thoughts. I'm the same man as yesterday and the day before that right back to the mines. I never sold myself and bought a brand new person (PAUSE) Here we go again. You make the supper, I'll be okay.

(QUEENY GOES TO THE BACK. JOHNNY PROWLs AROUND NERVOUSLY. THE SHADOW OF THE MAN WITH THE GUITAR PASSES THE WINDOW AGAIN. WE HEAR THE MUSIC. IT SEEMS TO DRIVE JOHNNY TO THE POINT OF DESPERATION. HE RUSHES TO THE WINDOW)

(QUEENY COMES BACK. JOHNNY SEES THE BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE)

JOHNNY : Let's have the champagne now.

QUEENY : Go ahead.

(WHILE JOHNNY WORKS ON THE CORK, SHE FETCHES TWO GLASSES. JOHNNY DRINKS HIS STRAIGHT DOWN)

QUEENY : Aren't we supposed to touch the glasses together?

JOHNNY : Of course, I forgot. (POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER ONE) To ourselves since nobody else gives a damn.

QUEENY : To ourselves and the business.

(THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

JOHNNY : Can't you stop that damned knocking?

QUEENY : The only way I can do that is to leave the door open and let them come in.

(THE KNOCK COMES AGAIN)

JOHNNY : Well, answer it, tell him to go to hell like you did the others, but shut him up.

QUEENY : You're shouting.

(WE HEAR THE KNOCK AGAIN)

JOHNNY : Okay, I'm shouting ... but it's because that's getting on my nerves.

(QUEENY GOES ACROSS AND OPENS THE DOOR)

QUEENY : Nobody there.

JOHNNY : You don't keep customers by keeping them waiting.

QUEENY : Then I'd better not answer the door.

JOHNNY : You sure want to lose them.

QUEENY : Meaning?

JOHNNY : Next Friday you might think it better business to open again.

QUEENY : Why should I want to do that?

(JOHNNY IS SAVED FROM ANSWERING BY ANOTHER KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

JOHNNY : Christ, there it goes again.

QUEENY : You didn't answer my question.

JOHNNY : If you'll tell him to shut up.

QUEENY : I asked you ...

JOHNNY : Well, stop asking me ... you might get an answer you

(HE MOVES SUDDENLY AND KNOCKS OVER THE BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE. IT SPILLS OVER THE TABLE CLOTH, THEN DRIPS ONTO THE FLOOR. THEY WATCH AS IF MESMERISED. THE KNOCKING IS HEARD AGAIN)

QUEENY : I told Sam I was closing down because I was sick of drunks messing up my place. (SHE SPEAKS QUIETLY)

JOHNNY : (MOVING SUDDENLY) I need some fresh air.

QUEENY : Johnny!

JOHNNY : (CRY OF DESPERATION) The window ... I'm only going to the window ... don't suffocate me, Queeny ...

QUEENY : What's happening, Johnny? What's gone wrong?

(PAUSE. JOHNNY GETS A GRIP ON HIMSELF)

JOHNNY : I got the smell of filth again. Queeny, I wanted to start to-day more than anything else in my life. I thought I'd been given my chance to start from the beginning ... I want to do that ... Jesus knows, I want to do that. I told you about myself this morning, Queeny. It wasn't just that I owed you a start ... I looked at you like I've never looked at another woman before ... I don't want to run away from it but ... Queeny, I been honest with you ... you got to be honest with me ... but tell me ... I got to know ...

QUEENY : Who ...?

JOHNNY : Queeny, listen ...

QUEENY : Who told you?

JOHNNY : Nobody told me anything.

QUEENY : Blackie!

JOHNNY : He didn't say a thing.

QUEENY : It was Blackie.

JOHNNY : If you go out without telling me, I won't be here when you come back.

QUEENY : Why must you know?

JOHNNY : I got to stop myself thinking.

QUEENY : Will it make any difference what I tell you?

JOHNNY : Don't ask me that. I'm not God. I didn't make myself.

QUEENY : I didn't ask you any questions about yourself.

JOHNNY : Can't you see, Queeny, I had to tell you, just like I got to know now?

QUEENY : But you're asking me. You're asking me for something I've been trying to hide away from myself. Give me time, Johnny. Give me time to live with myself and find the right words, and tell you when I know I got to, when I can.

JOHNNY : And what must I do?

QUEENY : Wait. You got to wait.

JOHNNY : Wait. You know what that word means ... wait? That means days, weeks, months, maybe years. I just had two hours of it and it's driving me mad. And you know why? Because you don't stop thinking when you're waiting. (PAUSE) Queeny, let me go. Let me walk out of that door.

QUEENY : No.

JOHNNY : If I stay I got to know.

QUEENY : You said this morning ...

JOHNNY : Don't stall Queeny! Tell me or let me go.

(EVASIONS ARE PAST. QUEENY REALISES THAT SHE CAN NO LONGER AVOID THE TRUTH)

QUEENY : Where do I begin?

JOHNNY : There is a name for everything.

QUEENY : Nongogo.

JOHNNY : Jesus!

QUEENY : Yes ... Nongogo ... a woman or two and six. Don't you think that was a bargain? Me for two and six. And you're seeing me when I'm older and fat. You should have seen me then ... maybe you would have joined the queue.

JOHNNY : No.

QUEENY : Yes ... I'm telling you yes.

JOHNNY : Stop it.

QUEENY : You wanted to know so I'm telling you, Johnny, and now you got to listen. I did it because I was hungry, because I had sworn to myself I was going to make enough to tell the rest of the world to go to hell. And nothing makes money like Sam organising the business. We started with queues around the mine dumps at night. I can also tell you a few things about compounds, Johnny. But we ended big ... one man at a time. That's how I got here and Sam got his shop across the street and that's the ten pounds that bought your rags and the first decent thing I've ever had in my life. Because if you think I liked it or wanted it that way you're so far away from knowing what a woman is, you can forget them. I'm a woman Johnny. I never stopped being one, but no one's given me a chance. I've had men but never one who treated me like I mattered far more than just a night in bed. Because that man I'll love. If he'll just take me, for what I want to be and not what I was. I'll make him happy. God's been generous in what he's given me. In body, in feelings, in the need for love ... give me a chance ...

JOHNNY : Stop using words that mean nothing. Love, chance ... God made me without the one and my life'd had nothing of the other. Why didn't you say you were filth ... like me? When I walked in here last night, why didn't you recognise another piece of trash? Why did I have to think you were different?

QUEENY : Different from what? The respectable people out there? Respectable? They were my customers ... the ones that lived cleanest and hated filth ... like you! I've found bibles in their pockets when they

lay sleeping in my bed, with pictures of their pretty wives and nice clean children. And I bet Daddy took them all to Church on Sundays.

JOHNNY : Don't drag everything into the gutter with you, Queeny.

QUEENY : I'm not the landlord of that strip of muck, Johnny. Everybody owns a plot down there.

JOHNNY : Some of us try to crawl out of it.

QUEENY : What do you think I've been doing for five years? It had ended Johnny, it was dead and buried when you walked in here. But you won't let it stay that way will you? You'd be worse than Sam, who just sighs when he passes the grave. You've dug it up. You've performed a miracle Johnny. The miracle of Jesus and the dead body. You've brought it back to life. The warmth of your hate, the breath of your disgust has got it living again. I'm not too old ... not too fat ... even you looked at me like you never looked at another woman. God's put a lot of men onto this earth. There are a lot of streets I haven't walked, lampposts I haven't stood under, faces I haven't smiled at.

(HANDS ON HER HIPS, SHE STARTS LAUGHING AT JOHNNY AND WALKS UP TO HIM PROVOCATIVELY. HE TURNS AND LEAVES WITH QUEENY LAUGHING LOUDLY. WHEN JOHNNY HAS GONE, QUEENY GOES TO THE DOOR, FLINGS IT OPEN AND SHOUTS OUT INTO THE STREET)

QUEENY : Where's everybody? This damn place is a graveyard. I've got a locker full of booze and it's not diluted.

(QUEENY GOES BACK INTO THE ROOM. SHE GOES TO THE MIRROR, PUTS ON LIPSTICK ... ROUGE ... EARRINGS .. BRACELETS AND DOLLS HERSELF UP INTO THE REAL TART)

SAM : (APPEARING AT THE DOOR) Did I hear right?

QUEENY : What did you hear Sam?

SAM : I heard something that sounded like the old Queeny.

QUEENY : There's nothing wrong with your hearing.

(SAM LAUGHS. GOES BACK INTO THE STREET.)

SAM : (OFF STAGE) Come on ... I'm telling you it's alright.

(SAM COMES BACK RUBBING HIS HANDS)

SAM : We still got time. It's only nine. When the word gets around that Queeny's back in business, they'll be back for the ball.

(PATRICK ENTERS HESITANTLY)

SAM : Come in.

PATRICK : Is this on the level?

QUEENY : The only level we worry about here is that in the brandy bottle. Where's Blackie? Blackie!

SAM : (TO PATRICK) Didn't I tell you?

PATRICK : You sure did.

QUEENY : What did you call the kid, Patrick?

PATRICK : Kid. It was twins.

(BLACKIE APPEARS)

QUEENY : Where have you been? I got customers and you're keeping them waiting.

(BLACKIE BACKS AWAY UNCERTAINLY ... SAM AND PATRICK LAUGH AT THE EXPRESSION OF HIS FACE.)

QUEENY : (POURING THE CHAMPAGNE) Have some of this while you're waiting.

PATRICK : What is it?

SAM : Champagne.

PATRICK : Lemonade!

SAM : You got no taste.

(BLACKIE HAS BROUGHT IN THE LIQUOR)

SAM : (POURS THE DRINKS) You had us worried.

PATRICK : You sure did.

SAM : It's like old times again.

PATRICK : It sure is. What happened to that salesman Queeny?

QUEENY : Man. There was no man here.

C U R T A I N,

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Secondary Sources (which are the other works studied and/or referred to).

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