Healing Through Drama- "De-Stressing" in Athol Fugard's Plays

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Abstract

This research article explores South African playwright Athol Fugard's use of therapeutic techniques for individuals living in a racially segregated society. While focusing on the dreadful damages inflicted by Apartheid upon the psyche of the South African Black man, the paper aims at emphasizing on the Post-Apartheid burden which led to the prolonged mental enslavement even when the chains of servitude were lifted. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, the paper investigates how, using drama as a mode of mental therapy, the playwright employs certain psychological techniques to repair the traumatized minds of his characters. Opposing the idea of being a slave to a dominating oppressor, Fugard instigates an urge in his protagonists for freedom from the shackles of mental slavery while inculcating a sense of self in them. The study throws light on Fugard's works as agents of collective change for the deprived black majority.

Keywords: Apartheid, Athol Fugard, De-Stressing, Drama, Post-Apartheid, Psychoanalysis

> "The Theatre cures the actors. It can also cure the audience." (qtd. in Jones)

Drama is known for its healing potential ever since its origin. Even in the Greek legend of Oedipus, this therapeutic potential can be traced. Shakespeare's drama, on a personal level, treats the emotional rifts and problems of relationships, contributing towards reducing stress. Be it Hamlet's feigned madness or Othello's "green eyed monster", Lear's misjudgment or Macbeth's excessive ambition, Shakespeare's drama has the ability to heal the wounds of family feuds and the symbolic bearing upon the essence of life for the common humanity. Bernard Shaw turns out to be more like a social reformer to his times. Most of the historical names in drama have contributed immensely towards the same purpose. The playwright being explored in this paper is no exception in this regard.

Athol Fugard, born as Harold Athol Lanigan Fugard, is a South African playwright capturing the horrid aftereffects of Apartheid on the working of South African black natives' minds. Fugard preeminently wrote at a time when the burden of Apartheid was lifted from South African people, leaving its undying marks upon their psyches. His protagonists are not highly recognizable, political or social activists. He rather attempts to explore the lives of the local, unimportant and neglected natives of Johannesburg, Cape Town or any other populated and yet alienated place in South Africa. His plays and the only novel, *Tsotsi* (1980), in their plots and character development, follow an intense pattern of the way South African natives directed their thinking towards the political and social problems of that time.

Working as a psychoanalyst-cum playwright, Fugard's main concern is to portray the psychologically handicapped individuals with a hope to take them to a mental realm where they can reach sublimation through release of their psychic energies. By analyzing and assessing the intensity of their suppressed desires, Fugard tries to pull them out of their mental prisons. He experiments on various therapeutic techniques and suggests some possible heal-alls for the troubled minds of his audience in general. By taking one individual's quandary for treatment, Fugard accepts the challenge of proposing solutions for the mental slavery for all trauma survivors.

It would not be wrong to say that in his vivid portrayal of South African plight, Fugard is somewhat following Foucault's philosophical critique of the "modes of subjectivity or forms of identity to which we are tied" (Simons 185). Perhaps he is instigating the suppressed minds to think about rebellion, and by investigating the predicaments of the South African black community, he suggests, through his moving dramatic actions and brilliantly formed characters, ways to overcome the problem of slavery. Agreeing with Foucault who "urges us to refuse what we are, meaning that we should refuse to remain tied to the identities to which we are subjected" (Simons 185), Fugard also urges his characters to choose different and better ways of existence. For this, he resists the idea of being a slave to an oppressive master and puts his sole efforts to haul the deranged South African black community out of the shackles of imprisonment.

This resistance leads to the question of power. Foucault defines power as "a mode of action upon the action of others" (Simons 195) while "resistance is possible when power pushes towards its limits" (Simons 195). Rightly exercised, power serves to

be a tool of maintaining order, discipline and harmony in a society, but once corruption overpowers the beneficial power tool, there is no alternative left but to wait for a radical rebellion."Where there is power, there is resistance," quotes Jon Simons while discussing Foucault's views about power-resistance relationships in society.

Apartheid, in many ways, can be referred to such a power that illegitimately snubbed all legitimate rights of the native people. More than eighty percent of the land of the country was declared as prohibited area for the blacks and they had to carry pass books if they were to enter any such "whites only" place. This physical marginalization not only created gaps between the whites and blacks, they also segregated the non-whites from each other. This corporeal division gave way to the fixing of certain bitter notions in the minds of all involved in the activity.

Keeping in mind both their political and personal backgrounds, Fugard slowly tries to heal the past traumatic experiences of his characters using therapeutic techniques. Whether it is Paval Ivanovich from the pigsty, Miss Hellen from her self-created Mecca, Veronica from her world of uncountable urges or Tsotsi from the slums of Johannesburg, Fugard is able to cope up with each of them according to the need of the situation. The drama created by Fugard is not merely an imitation of the South African world of chaos; it is also a means of actively taking part in it.

> As a writer, Athol Fugard has never shrunk from the reflection in the mirror. For over half a century he has mined the spiritual, emotional and political landscape of this country, exposing the undercurrents that have shaped our existence. (Thamm 11)

The dramatist's healing method begins with dramatic projection. As a process, projection involves the placing of our own feelings of anxiety and despair into other people or things. On a wider scale, Fugard projects sufferings of South African black community into his protagonists. In *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, Yalom describes projection as an unconscious process which consists of "projecting some of one's own attributes onto another, towards whom one subsequently feels an uncanny attraction/repulsion" (qtd. in Jones). This technique follows a sequence which starts off with denial where the trauma-survivors are unable to cope up with their current conditions and are in a state of denial. This denial, when the character is able to overcome it, leads to projection. This further leads to exploration of the long trodden desires buried in their unconscious. During their exploration, these characters experience moments of epiphany that open all the challenging vistas of discovery to them. Finally, they develop a deep insight and a modified relation to the initially denied traumatic memories and that is when they can reach sublimation. The article follows this sequence in tracing and analyzing the therapeutic techniques and the resultant effects they have on the minds of the characters.

To begin with, in *A Place with the Pigs (1987)*, the play about an army deserter, Pavel is unwilling to cope up with his condition any longer. He fears to come in contact with the reality and is in a state of denial. Although he has banished himself in a pigsty ever since he ran away from the Army headquarters, his distrust in himself and his inability to control his life have made him restless. Unable to absorb the severity of his own decision since a decade, this "deeply repentant man" (*Place* 1) is so guilty that he has started pitying himself. The speech he has prepared highlights his culpability:

> Comrades! Standing before you is a miserable wretch of a man, a despicable, weak creature worthy of nothing but your contempt. In his defence, I say only that if you had witnessed the years of mental anguish, of spiritual torment, which he has inflicted on himself in judgment of himself, then I know, Comrades, that the impulse in your noble and merciful hearts would be: 'He has suffered enough. Let him go'. (*Place* 2)

The pressure is here exercised through the stress of the circumstances that Pavel is living in. Along with that, the pressure of time, the pressure of his unbearable guilt and the pressure of the banishment he has imposed upon himself in this pigsty combine together to bring to the forefront the cause of his adult distress from the childhood memories. The strongest amongst these pressures is the pressure of time as Pavel explains:

> …my soul has had to reckon with Time…leaden-footed little seconds, sluggish minutes, reluctant hours, tedious days, monotonous months and then, only then, the years crawling past like old tortoises. (*Place* 3)

This expression helps him come to terms with his unexpressed feelings. As a matter of fact, Pavel suffers from the Oedipus Complex as is evident from the degree of attachment he has with the slippers made by his mother. But the point where he spontaneously expresses his emotions for these slippers reveals another aspect for investigation and that is, the relationship of these slippers with his ever increasing guilt. "Oh dear God!" exclaims Pavel, "Every time I touch them, or just look at them…sometimes when I even just think about them…a flood of grief and guilt wrecks my soul" (*Place* 4-5).

The audience wonder about the reason of this guilt. What grief is so forcibly attached with the slippers? Grief of losing his mother? And in psychoanalytic terms, is it the grief of his Lack or is it the guilt of deserting the army? This expression of unexpressed desires leads him to the next step of exploration where his projected feelings are further scrutinized through his own reflections from the past. The sudden outburst from him when Praskovya asks him to wear his slippers further takes us closer to the working of Pavel's unconscious:

> Wear them? In here? How can you suggest such a thing! That would be sacrilege. No, my conscience will not allow me to wear these until the day when I am once again a free man. That is my most solemn vow! (*Place* 5)

The slippers are kept safe and unworn, with a wish to use them in good times and ironically enough, turn out to be a hindrance in almost every bold step Pavel wishes to take. It is only when Pavel overpowers his Oedipal Complex that he can reach the point of sublimation. But this fervent soldier is without much action. Initially, we see him convincing his wife to let him go out and confess his sin as this seems to be the only possible solution for his salvation. Well written and well rehearsed, the speech serves as a way of catharsis as he turns desperate for freedom. His endurance level has reached its limits and he is simply unable to bear any more "pig shit" or pangs of time. "Give me support, woman!" cries Pavel in utter distress, "There is no other way. This is my only chance. The alternative is madness…or suicide! I mean it, Praskovya. One more day in here, and I'll cut my throat!" (*Place* 7).

During this process of exploration, Pavel verbalizes some of his most hidden memories and once they become audible, he is bound to ponder upon the feasible resolutions for his troubles. Struggling between the two extremes – the misery of his condition and the uncontrollable urge for freedom, Pavel experiences severe nervousness. He is simultaneously suffering from anxiety, obsession for liberation, urge for redemption and dread of traumatic memories.

It is worth noticing that these disturbed individuals, amidst the torturous situations of their lives, ultimately reach such a spot of sublimation that they are able not only to laugh and exhibit their optimistic approach towards life, but also to show their potentials of improvement. This is not the original built-in trait of a South African black individual who has actually experienced the pangs of Apartheid. Russel Vandenbroucke writes about Fugard's characters:

> Whatever the desperate conditions of their lives, Fugard's characters are able to laugh – at themselves, at their surroundings. Sometimes it is the laugh which keeps one from the brink of insanity, but more often it is a simpler bemusement, an ability to see and embrace incongruities. (qtd. in Bryfonski 231)

Similarly, despite the gloom of his current despondent state and the awe of an impending doom, Pavel is able to keep his wit intact. This comic relief at certain intense scenes of the play supplies some ease to the audience as they can relate to the mental state that Pavel is in. Perhaps, through use of wit and jokes, Fugard wants to make his audience believe that in the midst of a completely hopeless situation, man is capable of giving

birth to some optimism and that no matter how excruciating and agonizing life gets, there can still be a chance of the revival of peace.

Pavel's reply to Praskovya when she asks him to wear his wedding suit is extremely humorous when, as an answer to his assumed question of "Why aren't you in uniform, Private Navrotsky?" he says, "Comrade Sergeant, my wife used it to mop the floor, and then the mice and the moths made a meal of what was left" (*Place* 9). Caught in the middle of two terrifying options, Pavel's seemingly out of place wit serves him well. If he stays in the pigsty, he'd die of misery, if he goes out to confess his guilt, he'd surely be shot. The poor "wretch of a man" (*Place* 2) is trapped in the middle of two unbearable circumstances and yet, the quality of his wit, in the core of helplessness, is worth appreciating. This can be taken as the playwright's attempt to assure his audience that hope can emerge out of chaos.

In almost all of Fugard's plays, the protagonists experience a guiding moment that twists their lives from negativity to positivity. These moments occur at the most crucial phases of their lives. Unlike the big revolutions brought by incidents of great importance, these moments of revelation stem from very trivial happenings. It is sometimes merely a baby being a cause of the redemption of a hardened thug like in *Tsotsi*, sometimes it is a well written sentence read from a book, like in *Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act (1972),* while sometimes it might only be a little butterfly, full of colours in the middle of a wilderness like in the play being evaluated here.

This butterfly brings in all the understanding of life and all the lost optimism for Pavel. The scene is entitled as "Beauty and the Beast," as the emergence of a beautiful

butterfly in an ugly pigsty is the encounter between beauty and the wild beasts. It is interesting to notice that the very slippers that meant the world to Pavel and for which he deserted the army and banished himself into a pigsty, the very slippers that were so precious to him that he could never imagine wearing them in this filthy place, are being used in this scene to kill the flies. Apparently, this decline in the status of these slippers seems dreadful, but to the sheer surprise of the audience, it is this decline that makes all the difference. Pavel, after this, turns so confident that he, single handedly, kills a full grown pig. This transformation is extremely important at this point.

With the arrival of the butterfly, Pavel's "mood slowly undergoes a total conversion as he watches it flutter around. He is ravished by its beauty, reminding him as it does of an almost forgotten world of sunlight and flowers, a world he now hasn't seen for many, many years" (*Place* 17). The cry of happiness and release of emotions in form of a monologue is quite revealing.

> Let me give you back to the day outside, to the flowers and the summer breeze…and then in return take, oh I beg you!...take just one little whisper of my soul with you into the sunlight. Be my redemption! Ha!! (*Place* 18)

The cry for redemption at the end sounds so profoundly passionate. "Does ten years of human misery account for nothing in the Divine Scales of Justice?"(*Place* 15) Pavel's voice from scene one echoes in our ears and perhaps he has gotten his answer, his relief being there in the arrival of a butterfly. But this mirth doesn't last for long as all of a sudden, a pig swallows the poor thing. This is symbolic but what is even more

significant is the reaction that Pavel shows after that. “Murderer! Murderer!!” cries the tormented prisoner. Grabbing a knife, he gets hold of the pig and kills him after a “furious struggle.” Symbolically, this may refer to the murder of his hopes of freedom. Later, while explaining the whole thing to Praskovya, Pavel feels so heart broken and confesses that his soul bleeds for that “happy harmless little beauty with rusty-red wings” (*Place* 18).

The last scene entitled as “Orders from the Commissar,” sums up the reasons of almost all of Pavel’s problems. As discussed previously, Pavel suffers from Oedipus Complex, this last scene completely explains the reason of his guilt for the slippers, his mad pursuit for freedom and his running away from army and the men of authority. His shattered confidence in his abilities after deserting the army is all due to his Oedipus Complex that accompanies him since childhood, leading to the Castration Complex. “What breaks up this oedipal desire,” according to Freud, “for boys, anyway, is the father, who threatens Castration” (Freud n.pag.). The voice that communicates with Pavel in this scene is perhaps his fear of the father figure as we hear the “oily, evil” voice saying, “I think Daddy should take off his belt and drag you out from under the bed and give you a bloody good thrashing!!” (*Place* 34) and in reply, Pavel’s helpless “I’m sorry, I’m sorry. I won’t do this again” (*Place* 34) highlight his inability to overpower this terror. The sarcastic remarks that this voice passes to Pavel prove to be the final blow. The repeated use of the word “little” for a grown up character refers to the immaturity of his emotions. “Oh, you’re finally interested in the truth, are you!” the “oily” voice investigates,

> Can you even remember why you betrayed your country and its people? A pair of slippers. (*Heavily sarcastic tone of voice*) A pair of pretty red slippers which dear old Mama made for her darling little Pavel. (*Place* 35)

The little Pavel, of course, is heavily encumbered with this talk about his mother. The reactionary warning is well expected, "DON'T drag my mother into this! Say anything you like about me but *leave my mother alone!"* (*Place* 35). The psychological analysis of this reaction discloses a natural feeling of rivalry that a boy has with his father. "The son," explains Freud in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, "when quite a little child, already begins to develop a peculiar tenderness towards his mother, whom he looks upon as his own property, regarding his father in the light of a rival who disputes this sole possession of his" (Freud 174).

The pressure Pavel experiences is strongly required for his mental liberation. "What do you mean 'leave her alone'!" teases the voice again. "Giving birth to you makes the old bitch an accomplice in all your treachery," and Pavel's loud "STOP NOW!" assures us that the required energy level is reached. His struggle for freedom, his anxiety for the unknown future and his internal guilt find one final way of catharsis through which he is able to at last rescue his dying ego and make it control the other two devils, the id and the super ego. When the idea of freeing the pigs comes, Pavel is shocked to realize that it had all been so effortless and uncomplicated. "Unbelievable!" says the startled man, "So simple…so obvious!...just let them go. Yes yes yes…of course! It makes total sense. Just…open the doors, open the pens and let them go!"

(*Place* 36). When Pavel happily kicks the pigs away, he is actually freeing himself from the years of torture and it has all been possible because he has realized his potential to regain his original identity. With the use of projection and later exploration, Pavel has finally gotten rid of his self imposed banishment. The last action of liberating the pigs can be seen as the last act of his "obsessional condition" which directs him towards normality. After this, no goal seems difficult to achieve. This displacement has led him to the independence he had dreamt for himself. Freud explains while talking about the meanings of such obsessive acts in his lectures:

> The actions performed in an obsessional condition are supported by a kind of energy which probably has no counterpart in normal mental life. Only one thing is open to him-he can displace and he can exchange… (Freud 220)

The ending of the play leads Pavel to an optimistic urge of seeing the sunrise that was missed earlier. Fugard meets the challenge of finding redemption for his hero, of proving himself as a social reformer and in Pavel's voice, merging the voice of the whole of South African black community.

Another one of Fugard's masterpieces, *Statements After an Arrest under the Immorality Act (1972)*, follows the same sequence for the investigation of the guilty mind of a black man and his white seductress. In this play, Fugard has shifted roles of black and white, assigning white attributes to the black and linking black deeds with the white. The attempt is to satisfy the vengeful vein in the black audience to have some confessions from the white man for his maltreatments. Most of his characters go against

the set norms of society and experience sheer guilt of doing something wrong. Like Pavel, Philander has also broken the law by indulging in a sexual relation with Frieda, a white woman. In a racial society, this is no less than a sin. The guilt of having an illicit sexual relationship with a black man is strong enough to make Frieda wish to stay hidden from the judging eyes of society. Her escaping movements to remain concealed even from the eyes of the man lying next to her portray the attempt of the white society to keep the black man in a state of oblivion.

By doing so, perhaps, Fugard is daring to label the white community as the guilty one. At another point of the play, Frieda's outburst of her internal emotions is of great importance as it encounters the self/other dichotomy. She says:

> I am not no one. I am also me. I'm the other person on the floor. With you. [*Pause.*] I'm jealous. You can make me so jealous. And I'm frightened. Yes. And there are things I don't want to see…(Statements 5)

It is Fugard's audacity that this white woman, this "other person" is on the floor next to a black man. The idea of other is investigated by many theorists and critics in a variety of perspectives. Central to the idea of other is Lacan's view point that the unconscious is the discourse of the other and the "ground of all being" (Klages 74). Lacan probes into the notion that other is what actually characterizes the self by not only existing as something what the self is not, but also, being deficient of what the self possesses, hence, becoming what the self both fears and at the same time, wishes to be. In case of the struggle between the white man and the black one, this happens because of various reasons. It might be due to an uncertainty on the part of the white man about

the unexplored world of the black man or because of his inability to be intimate with the black man due to societal constraints. In this way, while Frieda considers herself an other, it is but clear that Fugard's intention here is not only to mortify and humiliate the white race but also to reveal the desire of the white man to be like the other of the society, i.e. the Black man. It is this deconstruction in the self/other dichotomy that Fugard is actually aiming at.

Frieda's outburst after this is laden up with a lot of meaning. "I'm jealous," says the woman after a pause, "You can make me so jealous. And I am frightened" (*Statements* 5). At this point, another version of the same idea propounded by Jacques Derrida can be seen at work. Center, according to Derrida is something where everything links to. The center is like an army headquarter where all the dedicated soldiers come to report. In post-colonial terms, this center remains the governing power of the Westerners or the Colonizers over the colonized others. In the play under discussion, Frieda is supposed to be the center as she belongs to a race that has been enjoying all the privileges over the blacks. Through exchange of roles, Fugard attempts to satisfy the impulse of the black man to get to the central position. Frieda is jealous, and at the same time, quite frightened. She seeks peace of mind and body by getting close to the assumed core, wishes to have an identity of her own when she says, "I'm also me" and at the same time, is terribly scared of getting close to this center. This exchange seems quite apt to satisfy the black audience.

In "Remembering Fanon", Homi K Bhabha explores and expands this idea. Quoting Fanon's notion that "What is often called the black soul is a white man's

artifact," Bhabha emphasizes that "to exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness, its look or locus" (qtd. in Williams). In simple words, for a thing to exist or be, it is necessary for it to be valued and judged against another thing. The center would be able to create a system if only there are others whom it can rule and dictate.

Frieda sees her own artifact in Philander. Fugard is attempting to highlight the white man's guilt as well as the black man's desires, with a deeper look at the latter issue. Bhabha agrees with Fanon that the black man wishes to be noticed, to be considered and also to have an "objectifying confrontation with otherness" (qtd. in Williams). Frieda serves this purpose for Philander very rightly and the play attempts to do the catharsis of the black audience on a wider scale.

According to Philander, his moment of revelation comes while he is reading the conclusion of Charles Lyell's book, *Principles of Geology*, and comes across this very moving expression, "…no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end" (*Statements* 4). Like Pavel's butterfly, this sentence works wonders with Philander and he is able to gain a greater confidence in himself. It is this magnified moment that brings all the change in his personality and he dares to have an affair with a white woman. The fact that he has been "bloody sick of his life," enhances the urge for this transformation in him. The effect of that "precise moment" on Philander is very vividly expressed,

> Being me, just being me there in that little room was…[*choosing his words carefully*]…the most excited thing that had ever happened to me. I wanted that moment to last forever! It was so intense it almost hurt. I couldn't sit still. (*Statements* 5)

Perhaps this moment of epiphany brings extreme mirth with it. It is uncanny that throughout the play, the black man is portrayed as someone having the nerve and eagerness for the present moment and is making powerful decisions for himself all by himself. On the other hand, the white woman is not sure of anything. She is in constant need of the black man to explain to her every essential thing about life, about relations and decision making. The inherent inferiority that is considered to be the ultimate fate of the black man is now made a trait of the white community. Knowledge is power and power belongs to the white man only. By making the black man powerful while the white woman weak, Fugard wants to make the black man feel significant. By this reversal of positions, he is trying to prove that the black man has the knowledge and is therefore, able to fully control his life and emotions. He is not only placed on a higher platform, but has also turned strong enough to observe the white man and invent truths about him.

The emotional intensity of Frieda's questions such as, "Are you sure you are happy?" (*Statements* 7), "Am I alone?" (*Statements* 9), "Do I have you?" and "Is there nothing we can do any more except hurt each other?" (*Statements* 11), expose two aspects of the Post-Apartheid South African society. Firstly, the unstable relationships between blacks and whites is exposed even after the reconciliation is done. Secondly, Frieda's confused state of mind can also be a glimpse of what the white man experiences as a result. "What will make you happy?" (*Statements* 15), asks Frieda, a very loaded question in deed. Now that the atrocities of Apartheid are over, the white man is seeking reconciliation. Philander's reply, "No, I haven't got you. You haven't got me," explores

the deep rooted wrath of the black man for the white race while offering a sense of satisfaction to the black audience.

Another very significant point in the play is when Philander has this outburst of emotions while Frieda talks about sending him some of her water. Fugard wants the black man's plight to be exposed and his deprivations to be highlighted. "*Your* water," says Philander:

> You want to send me some of your water. Is it so hard to understand? Because if you can't…! Why do you think its easy? Is that what I look like? Is that why they're so nice to me out there? Because I'm easy? But when for once I get so…I feel so buggered-up inside that I say 'No' instead of 'Yes.' (*Statements* 10)

The condition of Bontrug, the shortage of water and the refusal of this black man to accept a favor of getting water from a white woman's borehole accentuates not only the plight of the black man under the unkind supervision of the white man but also the ignorance of the ruler. "I don't understand… anything," says Frieda to which Philander's reply again mocks at the failure of white society to understand their stipulation. "Then you can't. Don't even try" (*Statements* 11).

The paradox of the thinking patterns of white and black is evident when Frieda forces him to take aid of water at least for his family. The compassionate black man of course, cannot tolerate this differentiation and does not consider himself apart from the whole black race, wishing all of them to get water from the same source. This unity of the black community is also highlighted by Elsa in *The Road to Mecca* when she

explains that since Helen is an Africaner hence it is a fact that she is "one at heart (Mecca 22)" with them all. Similarly, here the white man's self-centered approach towards life contradicts the selflessness of the black man. He refuses to take water from Frieda for the fact that the whole "Bontrug is thirsty" (*Statements* 10). Fugard's therapy heightens its own effect when, through the tool of "free association," he leads Frieda to make many confessions in her last dialogue towards the end of the play,

> All of me that found you must now lose you. My hands still have the sweat of your body on them, but I'll have to wash them…sometime. If I don't, they will. Nothing can stop me losing that little bit of you. In every corner of being myself there is a little of you left and now I must start to lose it. I must be very still, because if I do anything, except think nothing, it will all start to happen, I won't be able to stop it. (*Statements* 25)

Fugard is able to find redemption for his black man and challenge the mode of conduct of the white man by the end of the play. His last words are full of ease and Fugard's aim is fully achieved when we hear Philander's final declaration that "Now I'm here. There is nothing here. They can't interfere with God any more" (*Statements* 28). Philander's adultery can be taken as an example of Fugard's attempt to highlight the inborn instinct of freedom in human beings. He struggles to bring the trapped minds of individuals closer to the point of realization of this instinct and shows them ways towards independence.

The same tool of projection can again be traced in the play that Fugard himself labels as "the biggest of them all" (Sichel 25). A miserable white train driver, striving to get a clue about the grave of the nameless woman and her child that he has accidently

killed, exhibits the guilt almost similar in intensity as the one experienced by Pavel in *A Place with the Pigs*. Fugard has projected and transformed the whole of South African White man's remorse in Roelf while the black community is depicted through the gravedigger, Simon. Completely lost in the depth of his guilt, Roelf is suffering from the Post-Traumatic Disorder (PTD). Despite the various attempts of people around him and his physician to make him believe he has not been the cause of the woman's death and that it was a clear suicide, and despite having the newspaper clipping in his pocket stating the whole event as an accident, Roelf is unable to satisfy his superego and is in constant search of some relief for his soul. This true story greatly stirred the white man's compunction which Fugard equally shared because of his white skin. He quotes his friend Stephen Sacks, a theatre director, who was one of the first ones to read *The Train Driver:*

> In The Train Driver, white anger turns into self-realization and transformation. Realizing he must 'claim her' as his own. Which is what you've done all your life. With all of your plays. Each character you've created. Claimed them as your own. And challenged audiences around the world to claim them for themselves. It is what your life's work is all about. (qtd. in Sichel 25)

Fugard was obsessed with the intensity of the accident and, unable to digest the bitterness of the choice that Pumla Lolwana, the black woman made, he tried converting it to the work of art for the purpose of catharsis. "For eight years I have been trying to write that story," explains Fugard in an interview, "Trying to deal with it because I felt I needed to

go through a process myself to understand how a human being can end up in a place so dark, so without hope, so alone, that she would do that not only to herself but her three innocent children as well" (Sichel 25). This horrendous story-cum-nightmare turns out to be a play that is "of intense personal significance" (qtd. in Cohen 9) for Fugard.

The moving speech that Roelf delivers in scene five of *The Train Driver* captures the culpability of the white man towards the black. Roelf is experiencing one of the worst agonies of his life and that is depicted through the way he confesses the helplessness of white man to understand the condition of black man's life.

> You see, Red Doek, most of us white people got no idea about what it's like because our world is so different! We always think we know – like Lorraine, my wife – she thinks she knows everything about you people …and I did as well … but the truth is, we don't. (*The Train Driver*)

Strangely enough, the white man, otherwise a symbol of supremacy and limitless knowledge, is shown making confessions about his ignorance. This comes naturally to the patient suffering from PTSD. In an interview, Robert Jay Lifton, while expressing his views on Trauma and Survival, affirms that "there can be self-condemnation in survivors or what we call guilt" (Caruth138). Roelf's self-condemnation transforms his guilt to a sense of responsibility which according to Lifton is laden with "enormous therapeutic value." (Caruth 138) Some compensation is further offered when Roelf agrees that he now understands how the black world is. Perhaps, the attempt here is to make the black sufferer feel triumphed in at least knowing that there is some tinge of repentance in the white man for his wrong actions. And it is not this repentance only,

the claim that the white man feels he has over this black woman is also very significant:

> You see, Red Doek, if I did lose you … if I ever, for one day, forget what happened to me and you there between Perseverance and Dispatch, then God must send me off to hell when I die. (*The Train Driver*)

This claim, however, being the strongest desire of the occident, can be misinterpreted as well. As discussed earlier, it is a grave fact that the "relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination" (qtd in Williams), the claim of Roelf can also refer to this power and dominance over the black dead woman. Viewed from this perspective, Roelf can be mistaken as the same occident that the orients fear. But contrary to this idea, Roelf's search for the nameless black woman and his fanatical wish to claim her are projecting white man's struggle for reconciliation. Fugard has tried to give voice to the unvoiced thoughts of this white man against his own acts of oppression. "…black man or white man," says the obsessed train driver, "…the worms don't care about that … its all the same to them" (*The Train Driver*). And later when Simon mentions the dogs, Roelf's reply is replete with great meaning, "And they don't give a shit either, do they, about white or black?" asks Roelf. "And you know what we call them, white men – the dogs? Man's best friend! How's that for a joke?" (*The Train Driver*). Roelf's association with the black world and his open confessions are very significant to make him come out of his traumatic memories. Lifton explains the beneficial effects of this association in the interview with Cathy Caruth:

> …the only way one can feel right or justified in reconstituting oneself and going on living with vitality is to carry through one's responsibility to

> the dead. And it's carrying through that responsibility via one's witness, that survivor mission, that enables one to be an integrated human being once more. (138)

Fugard's attempt to offer some relief to both the white and black man can be taken as his survival mission, moving from the individual to the society in general. What happens to Roelf due to the amnesty between the black and white race is beyond the scope of this article but by the end and before his death, Roelf has acquired the true ease of mind and soul that he was striving for. Harvey Perr writes about the appeal of the play, "Most of the time, redemption does not come to his characters as much as it comes to us, the audience, at that moment when we finally begin to live inside those characters." (qtd in Perr)

Apart from the political and social strife leading to mental prison, Fugard caters personal issues in a very interesting way too. *The Road to Mecca* is an outstanding example of 'obsession' and its impact on the mind. "Crazy" as the people regarded poor Helen, she made "statues and sculptures" and kept them all around her house. This variation from the normal living style and freedom of choice she generously exercised on her statues forced the stereotypical society to regard her as eccentric.

Her Mecca has become her obsession. From the Psychoanalytical standpoint, Miss Helen suffers from many mental issues which result in her social isolation. She has suffered the loss of her husband and as this trauma has been extremely intense for her, she has acutely suffered from PTSD which has ended up in this 'Projection' of her grief into objects of interest which ultimately forms her Mecca. Although this deviation

from her loss has resulted in creativity, yet it strongly signifies Miss Helen's "fixation" upon the trauma of her husband's death. Freud explains that such victims, "give the impression that they are "fixed" to a particular point in their past, that they do not know how to release themselves from it, and are consequently alienated from both present and future" (Freud 231). This universal characteristic of neurosis can be traced in the actions of Miss Helen while the audience can also link up their obsessions with hers. Miss Helen reassures Elsa that "The only reason I've got for being alive is my Mecca. Without that I'm … nothing … a useless old woman getting on everybody's nerves" (*Mecca* 35) and later when Elsa investigates what the reason behind it is, Miss Helen replies "My Mecca has got a logic of its own, Elsa. Even I don't properly understand it" (*Mecca* 36).

On the other hand, Fugard's attempt to open the bolts of social prisons for the black people, forcing them to take free flights for their own survival, is illustrated through Elsa. She is an independent woman, capable of not only thinking freely, but also to transform her thoughts into actions. It is because of her free will and boldness that she has to appear before "Board of Enquiry of the Cape Town School Board". The charge against her is that despite teaching in a "Coloured School," she has assigned her students a task "to write a five-hundred word letter to the State President on the subject of racial equality" (*Mecca* 27). She wants "to make those young people" in her classroom "think for themselves" (Mecca 28) and this is exactly what Fugard aims at achieving for his audience on a larger scale.

In case of Miss Helen, it is not merely a matter of confinement or fixation to a

certain obsession. Her imagination has made her travel the distances she wouldn't ever have covered in reality. It is Mecca, the "city of light and color more splendid" than she had ever seen in reality, that her imagination takes her to. And it is this city where she finds the solution to her problem.

"This is my world," says Helen to Marius, "and I have banished darkness from it" (*Mecca* 73). Certainly, this is the point of self awareness, a revelation which no one else can understand but herself. For the onlookers, she has turned insane, but it is only Helen who can tell the difference between madness and sanity as she is the one experiencing the whole thing. She has illuminated her internal world in order to shun the outside darkness."It is not madness, Marius," explains Miss Helen, "They say mad people can't tell the difference between what is real and what is not. I can. I know my little Mecca out there, and this room, for what they really are" (*Mecca* 73). The play ends with an optimistic vision as the one seen by Pavel at the end of *A Place with the Pigs*, and certainly, the audience feel the confidence and hope inculcated in the protagonists of both the plays. Elsa suggests that Helen should make an angel next and Helen believes that if she makes one, it would not be "pointing up the heaven" like others. "…I'd have it pointing to the East," to her Mecca.

Fugard's therapeutic techniques work wonders when it comes to the questions of mental freedom and self awareness of individuals and even of bridging gaps between white and black races. It is as if he tries to move his characters from the amphitheatre to the operating theatre for their treatment and fortunately enough, none of the operations fail. However, this is purely mental treatment based on the strong observations of the

author. The combination of drama with therapy makes his work more beneficial for the local natives and even for the audience outside South Africa. It is hence no exaggeration to infer that Fugard's plays are not mere ordinary plays, they present before us the nuanced view of the South African history and the conditions of black people during and after Apartheid. His core processes of drama therapy successfully dig out the most sensitive, comprehensive and focused study of the human mind. Fully energetic with his strong belief in healing-through-drama, Fugard remains, unquestionably, the most valued playwrights of South Africa.

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