

# Athol Fugard's *Exits and Entrances*: The Playwright, the Actor and the Poet

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## Summary

The theme of "exits and entrances" can be traced on various levels, e.g. on the personal level of death (Fugard's father, the deaths of Marais and Huguenet) and birth (Fugard's daughter); on the professional level (the end of Huguenet's career versus the start of Fugard's career), as well as political (one political dispensation taking the place of another). Against this thematic background three characters emerge: the Playwright (Young Fugard), the Actor (André Huguenet) and the Poet (Eugène Marais). This paper explores the interconnections and interactions between these three people and focuses on the aspect which binds them together, namely the issue of Afrikaner identity. Although all three of them stand outside of a narrow definition of this identity, they can all be defined in terms of their links with the Afrikaner, their position within the Afrikaner community and their stand towards Afrikaans.

## Opsomming

Die tema van "exits and entrances" speel in op verskillende vlakke in die drama, byvoorbeeld op die persoonlike vlak van dood (Fugard se vader, die afsterwe van Marais en Huguenet) en geboorte (Fugard se dogter); op die professionele vlak (die einde van Huguenet se loopbaan versus die aanvang van Fugard se loopbaan), sowel as op die politieke vlak (een politieke dispensasie neem die plek van 'n volgende een oor). Drie karakters kom na vore teen die agtergrond van hierdie temas: die Dramaturg ("Young Fugard"), die Akteur (André Huguenet) en die digter (Eugène Marais). Hierdie artikel ondersoek die interkonneksies en interaksies tussen hierdie drie persone en fokus op die aspek wat hulle saambind, naamlik die saak van Afrikaner-identiteit. Alhoewel al drie buite 'n eng definisie van hierdie identiteit staan, kan hulle almal gedefinieer word in terme van hulle verbintenisse met die Afrikaner, hulle posisie binne die Afrikanergemeenskap en hulle houding t.o.v. Afrikaans.

## Introduction

*Exits and Entrances* by Athol Fugard is largely an autobiographical play which focuses mainly on the relationship between the playwright (a young

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Fugard) and a well-known Afrikaans actor (André Huguenet). As mentioned by Marianne McDonald in her short discussion of the play (which includes a short interview with Athol Fugard),

*Exits and Entrances* is one of a series of autobiographical plays that trace Fugard's development as a writer, following "*Master Harold*"... *and the Boys* (1982) and *The Captain's Tiger* (1997). The author-figure is also present in *Valley Song* (1995), but this character could just as well have been a businessman for all we learn about his craft. Now, *Exits and Entrances*, along with the play he is currently working on, *The Bird Watcher*, adds a new instalment.

(McDonald in Fugard 2006: 59)

In this play two meetings between Fugard and Huguenet are highlighted and dated, namely a meeting between the two men in 1956, when the Playwright was 24 and the Actor was 51 years old, as well as a later meeting between them in 1961. The theme of "exits and entrances" can clearly be traced on various levels, e.g. personal (the death of Fugard's father and the birth of his daughter), professional (the end of Huguenet's career as an actor versus the commencing of Fugard's career as a playwright), political (the end of one political era and the birth of a new political dispensation when South Africa withdrew from the British Commonwealth and declared itself an independent republic in 1961).

Three figures emerge from the background of this theme of exits and entrances: the young Playwright (Athol Fugard), the Actor (André Huguenet) with whom he converses on various issues, as well as an "absent character", namely the poet (Eugène Marais), as recalled by the actor. This paper will explore the interconnections and interactions between these three people, as well as how Fugard addresses and represents the issue of Afrikaner identity in the play.

## **1 The Poet: Eugène Marais (9 Jan. 1871 – 29 March 1936)**

It is interesting to note that Fugard, in fact, first titled his play *André and Eugène*, before changing it to *Exits and Entrances* (see Fugard 2006: "Excerpts from Athol Fugard's Notebooks on the Writing of *Exits and Entrances*").

Although Eugène Marais is not physically present in this play, there are long references to him in the text (pp. 22-23, 36, 43-44). It is clear from André Huguenet's discourse that he was impressed and influenced by his interaction with Marais. An obvious parallel can be drawn between Huguenet's and Marais's meetings and discussions, and those between Huguenet and Fugard later, as mentioned by McDonald:

*Exits and Entrances* refers at length to another important figure in South African cultural history – Eugène Marais ... the famous naturalist and poet ... Marais, a longtime morphine addict, shot himself – a possible link with Huguenet. André passes his blessing on to The Playwright just as Marais had once blessed him: the blessing of one creator, who understands existential despair, to another.

(McDonald in Fugard 2006: 57)

In the play, Huguenet also mentions the similarities between his conversation with Marais in the past and his conversation with Fugard in the present (1956): “Thirty years ago, like you, I also used the word very easily one night in a conversation ... you know, unthinkingly ... assuming like you that its meaning was very simple. I was talking to Eugène Marais” (p. 22). When the young Fugard (the Playwright), however, states that he doesn’t know who Marais is, Huguenet is shocked and makes a derogatory exclamation (“You English!”) – a label that is immediately rejected by the Playwright: “I’m not. I’m a South African” (p. 22). Huguenet, however, insists that cannot be the case till Fugard finds out who Eugène Marais was, and has read his work (p. 22).

This brings one to the question of who Eugène Marais was, as well as the reason(s) why Huguenot, and also Fugard eventually, considered him an important figure.

Marais is famous in South Africa for his writings (especially his poetry) in Afrikaans, but is also internationally acclaimed as a naturalist for his studies on the termite (*The Soul of the White Ant*) and on baboons (*The Soul of the Ape*).<sup>1</sup> Marais is regarded as an iconic figure in Afrikaner cultural history – a status which is, however, conferred on him from various (often opposing) factions, as discussed by Sandra Swart in an article titled “The Construction of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner Hero”.

In her article Swart discusses Marais’s “heroic” status and the competing claims made in this regard: “Some remember him as the ‘father of Afrikaans poetry’, one of the most lionised writers in Afrikaans, and part of the Afrikaner nationalist movement. Yet a second intellectual tradition remembers him as a dissident iconoclast, an Afrikaner rebel” (2004: 847). In the article Swart demonstrates that “Marais’s changing image” was closely linked to “material changes within the socioeconomic milieu”, as well as “the needs of the Afrikaner establishment” (p. 847). She also shows how the “socio-political context of the Afrikaans language struggle was influential in shaping his image” (p. 847).

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1. *The Soul of the White Ant* was first published in Afrikaans as a series of articles in *Die Huisgenoot* during 1925-1926, and as a book, *Die siel van die mier*, in 1937. It was later translated into English (1971). *The Soul of the Ape* was completed in 1919, but only published posthumously in 1969.

Although Marais is remembered and revered as an Afrikaner, his home language was in fact English, and he received an education in London. His status as the “father of Afrikaans poetry” is also not without ambiguity, since some critics place him in the Language Movement’s stable (i.e. with Jan F. Celliers, Totius, C. Louis Leipoldt – a post-Boer-War generation of poets), while a second school “portrays him as a maverick genius (Swart 2004: 850). Although Marais also published poetry in English he is really famous for writing the first Afrikaans poem of worth, namely “Winternag” (“Winter Night”).<sup>2</sup> The importance of this poem is linked to the whole issue of the status of Afrikaans during this period and the struggle for Afrikaans to be accepted as a language in its own right. In her discussion of Marais’s poetry, Swart demonstrates how he was venerated eventually as a “*volksdigter*” (people’s poet): “Marais thus became known not only as the originator, but also as the producer of some of the greatest poetry in Afrikaans – and also very much a “*volksdigter*”, producing poetry of and for the Afrikaans people. As D.F. Malherbe acknowledged, “‘Winternag’ was a powerful propaganda tool in the increasing struggle for recognition of the mother tongue” (2004: 852).<sup>3</sup>

2. The poem was published in 1905 and is often interpreted and read as a metaphor for the Afrikaners’ post-war (Anglo-Boer War) feelings of desolation and bitterness. Guy Butler translated it into English as follows:

*O Cold is the slight wind  
And sere  
And gleaming in the dim light and bare  
As vast as the mercy of God  
Lie the planes in starlight and shade  
And high on the ridges  
among the burnt patches  
the seed grass is stirring  
like beckoning fingers*

*O tune grief-laden  
On the east wind’s pulse  
Like the song of a maiden  
Whose lover proves false  
In each grass blade’s fold  
A dew drop gleams bold  
But quickly it bleaches  
To frost in the cold*

(Butler in Grové & Harvey 1962: 7)

3. It is interesting that this poem again resonates within the Afrikaans literary community today – at a time when Afrikaans is again under pressure because of its perceived loss of status within the new dispensation. (It is now only one of eleven official languages, while English is almost exclusively used in

It is thus clear from the above short discussion of Marais's position in Afrikaner society and the role he played locally in that society (but also internationally with his scientific work) why Huguenet felt so offended by the young Fugard's ignorance regarding who Marais was. Huguenet introduced with his exclamation ("You English!") and his remark that any South African should know who Eugène Marais was, the issue of identity (English, South African, Afrikaner), as well as the whole debate on the status of Afrikaans in South Africa (especially the relationship Afrikaans versus English).

The circumstances surrounding the end of Eugène Marais's life and the nature of his death are highlighted by Huguenet in the play with a long passage in which he discusses Marais's intimate knowledge of Hamlet's famous soliloquy and ends with his statement that

[h]e was debating his suicide. It wasn't Hamlet asking "To be or not to be?" it was Eugène Marais, it was his question and he answered it five years later when he went for a walk in the Transvaal veld and never came back.

(Fugard 2006: 44)

When asked by the Playwright the reason for his suicide, Huguenet replies: "The calamity of too long a life. His creativity was exhausted and he knew it. Poor Eugène! He's been a lot in my thoughts lately" (p. 45).<sup>4</sup> It is clear from Leon Rousseau's biography of Eugène Marais that Marais was probably tired of his long struggle against morphine addiction and that he simply wanted to end his own suffering at this stage. Fugard, however, by adding a poetical dimension to his action by placing it within the framework of Hamlet's soliloquy, is then also able to link Marais's death dramatically and structurally with Huguenet's. In the following passage Huguenet effortlessly recites the whole soliloquy. The Playwright, speaking to the audience directly, then recalls the "little news item" that reported Huguenet's death that morning (p. 46).

It is clear that the young Playwright did eventually become intrigued by the figure of Marais – and even identified with him. Fugard wrote a screenplay on Marais, titled *The Guest: An Episode in the Life of Eugène Marais* (1977)<sup>5</sup> and played the role of Marais in the screen version (titled only *The*

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government departments.) "Winternag" was published on 23 June 1905 in a Pretoria newspaper, *Land en volk*, and a century later the poem was honoured when 49 Afrikaans poets used it as inspiration for their own poems in a publication titled *Honderd jaar later* (2006) Johann Lodewyk Marais (ed.), Praag Publishers.

4. Another South African playwright, Nickey Rebelo, also wrote a play about Eugène Marais and his suicide, titled *Prophet of the Waterberg* (performed during May-June 2006 in the Market Theatre, Johannesburg).

*Guest*). The screenplay was based on a real incident in Marais's life when he was staying on a farm in the former Transvaal with an Afrikaner family in an attempt to cure himself of morphine addiction. According to Swart "the lonely genius image is perpetuated in Fugard's *The Guest* (2004: 863).

## **2 The Actor: André Huguenet (22 October 1906 – 5 June 1961)**

The play commences with the Playwright making an entry in his notebook on June 1961 mentioning the "birth" of the new South African Republic, the birth of his daughter a few weeks earlier, the impending death of his father, as well as the announcement of Huguenet's death that morning. His reverie on Huguenet's skills as an actor and his role as general "dogsbody" for the famous actor serve as an introduction for the first meeting (1956) between the two men to be shown in the play.

Huguenet is heard offstage cursing in Afrikaans before entering the stage – in this way immediately establishing (by his use of Afrikaans) his Afrikaner identity. Throughout the course of his conversations with Fugard this aspect is kept in the foreground by the use of various typical Afrikaans swear words.

"André Huguenet" was a stage name for Gerhardus Petrus Borstlap. His name came from his Dutch grandfather and he did, in fact, during his early school years study in a special Dutch class in an Afrikaans school (1950: 2). When he performed under his original name during his first performances his surname elicited laughter from the mainly Afrikaans audiences and he decided to change his name to André Huguenet. This change in identity was permanent – he always used his stage name thereafter (not only on stage, but also in real life) till his death in 1961.

Similar ambiguities regarding Huguenet's status as an iconic figure in the Afrikaans cultural world, as was the case with Marais, can be shown to have existed. He was one of the first actors in Afrikaans to have achieved fame in his own country. He did not only act in Afrikaans, but also achieved fame internationally for roles that he played in the UK. Afrikaners during that period were mainly conservative Calvinists who were anyway wary of the lifestyle followed by the travelling theatre groups performing across South Africa and the fact that Huguenet was a homosexual was kept quiet for the

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5. The "episode" described in *The Guest* was based on information given in Leon Rousseau's biography of Eugène Marais (first written and published in Afrikaans as *Die Groot verlange* in 1974, and later translated by Rousseau as *The Dark Stream: The Story of Eugène Marais* in 1982).

public. He also never mentioned anything in this regard in his autobiography *Applous: die kronieke van 'n toneelspeler* (1950).<sup>6</sup>

Fugard considered Huguenet's homosexuality as an integral part of who he was and on addressing this issue in Marianne MacDonald's interview with him, stated: "So much of André's genius, so much of André's loneliness, so much of André's predicament stemmed from that. You know in taking on André, I absolutely had to take that on" (2006: 69).<sup>7</sup> In the play Huguenet often refers to this aspect and often places it within the context of the Dopper church/family, e.g. "the 'Little Predikant', my nickname in the family – I was being groomed you see to be a Dominee in the Dopper church" (p. 11), "the little Dopper Moffie – that was my other nickname" (p. 12), "The angelic 'Little Predikant' was always kneeling at his bedside asking the Almighty to rain down his wrath on the bully boys who were tormenting the little Dopper Moffie" (p. 41), "I am also desperate to escape from my cell and stand in the light of day as my true self. Wear my curse – the Dopper Moffie – as a badge of honour and not one of disgrace" (p. 42). The word "Dopper" is a word commonly used by Afrikaans-speakers to denote someone who is a member of the Reformed Church in South Africa (one of three so-called "sister" Protestant churches in South Africa). "Doppers" are often seen as being very conservative – even narrow-minded – in their outlook on life. McDonald's translation of "Dopper Moffie" to "village queer" in her short discussion of the play (2006: 49) is thus incorrect. In Afrikaans a village is called a "dorp", while a "Dopper" does not refer to a village at all, but is used to indicate a member of a certain religious, Calvinist group, the Reformed (Dopper) Church.

While Marais's poem "Winternag" is considered to be the first poem of worth in Afrikaans, it was Huguenet's role as the poor, innocent Afrikaner boy, Ampie (wrongly spelt "Ample" in the text, p. 40), which made Huguenet famous as an Afrikaans actor. The play was a stage adaptation of an Afrikaans classic<sup>8</sup> by its author (van Bruggen) and was hugely popular

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6. Binge in his study of the development of early Afrikaans theatre also does not mention Huguenet's homosexuality, but only refers euphemistically to his "sexual problems" (1969: 153).
  7. Pieter Fourie, a well-known Afrikaans playwright, also recently wrote a play (*Elke duim 'n koning* (2002) about André Huguenet in which his homosexuality is openly portrayed.
  8. Jochem van Bruggen, in fact, wrote an *Ampie* trilogy which was published in different editions (*Ampie: die natuurkind* [Ampie: A Child of Nature] (1924), *Ampie: die meisiekind* [Ampie: The Girl] (1942), and *Ampie: die kind* [Ampie: The Child] (1942)). The first book was adapted for the stage and is probably also the most "famous" of the three. Elize Botha, in her profile on Jochem van Bruggen in *Perspektief en Profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis, Deel 2*, 1999: 646, describes it as a seminal work in Afrikaans

with Afrikaans audiences for many years. Huguenet gives a long discussion in his autobiography of how the first performance of this play was attended by many intellectual and cultural figures (and even important political persons) of the day, and also of how popular this play became with the Afrikaans community. Jill Fletcher in *The Story of South African Theatre: A Guide to Its History from 1780-1930* describes the reception of this play as follows:

The following day Gustav Preller and Eugène Marais hailed *Ampie* with leading articles, and Stephen Black reviewed it in detail in the *Sjambok*. *Die Burger* wrote that the critics ranged between favourable to unfavourable, but the important thing was that one of the country's best-known books had been dramatised by the writer, directed by an Afrikaner who had trained in Europe, the décor executed by one of the country's best-known artists and the lead role taken, despite his youth, by one of the country's best-known actors. In other words, Afrikaans talent had come together to produce a play which was a milestone in its culture.

(Fletcher 1994: 147)

Fugard depicts Huguenet's death in *Exits and Entrances* as being a suicide (clearly corresponding in the play with why Marais made an end to his life). Although Huguenet was depressed at the end of his life and his career had for all purposes been brought to an embarrassing closure, he did not kill himself as many people believed then and even today. Danie Botha in his work on the early years of Afrikaans theatre states that Huguenet died of a heart attack in his sleep on a Thursday night (15 June 1961) in his sister's (Sally Kruger's) house in Bloemfontein. Botha mentions the rumour that still surfaces today that Huguenet committed suicide, but dismisses it and states that the actor was at that stage simply physically tired out after having survived two earlier heart attacks (2006: 301).

It is of more importance to focus on the legacy Huguenet left to Afrikaans theatre. Although he cynically dismisses in his conversation with the Playwright his youthful ideas and vision for an "Afrikaans theatre of the future", which he calls in a discussion with Eugène Marais "the height of madness, wasn't it? A young man with a vision in this country!" (p. 23), his work, his contribution in the field of early Afrikaans (and South African) theatre has been acknowledged widely by the South African theatre community.<sup>9</sup>

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prose, on the grounds of its depiction of the problem of poor whites/ Afrikaners – the so-called "poor-white problem" of the twenties and thirties in South Africa.

9. Huguenet's contribution is discussed fully by Danie Botha (2006: 179-301). Fletcher describes him as "the first great South African actor" and one that "played classical roles in English as well as Afrikaans, and rose to



### 3 The Playwright: Athol Fugard (11 June 1932 –)

In the play the focus is on the “young” Fugard/Playwright (“The young Playwright is at his table in Port Elizabeth”, p. 1), and on two incidents in his life (his two meetings with the famous Afrikaans actor, Huguenet in 1956 and 1961). Both meetings take place in the theatre and most of their discussions revolve around issues pertinent to theatre (e.g. the value of theatre in society, the relationship between theatre and society, theatre and the South African context, etc.),<sup>10</sup> as well as issues such as identity (Afrikaner vs South African) and language (Afrikaans vs English).

Huguenet is portrayed on both a personal level (as Fugard’s friend) and a professional level (as a famous Afrikaans actor) in these two meetings. During the 1956 meeting Fugard is a minor actor (“the old shepherd”, p. 3) in *Oedipus Rex*, who shares Huguenet’s dressing room and is “his dogsbody, fetching and carrying and serving him in whatever way I [can]”, p. 3). Fugard is a young man (24 years old) with little experience (“my only stage experience ha[s] been in a couple of amateur productions”, p. 3), while Huguenet (50 years old) is an established and well-known actor famous for his character roles, like Oedipus. The young Fugard expresses his deep admiration for the old actor (“You’re wonderful ... Looks like nothing on paper, but when you speak them ... I don’t know ... I get goose pimples watching you when I stand there in the wings”, p. 8). As the conversation between them continues and develops Fugard becomes even more affected by Huguenet, till he is “*totally under André’s spell*”, p. 13.

Despite the young Fugard’s almost hero-worship of Huguenet it is clear from his reminiscence during this episode (when he addresses the audience directly), that he realises that Huguenet’s career is starting to falter:

That opening night was on the face of it a great success. A full house gave us a standing ovation at the end and the critics were all very respectful of the occasion and wrote glowingly about André’s performance. In spite of all that, however, we were soon playing to very small audiences and in the last week there were a couple of nights when we thought André might even cancel the show because so few people had turned up.

(Fugard 2006: 20)

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international fame” (1994: 149). Three theatres (Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Pretoria) are named after him.

10. In many of his plays Fugard is concerned with the craft of writing for the stage and the position of the playwright in society, as also highlighted by Wertheim (2000: 153) in his comprehensive study of Fugard’s plays: “For many, Athol Fugard is first and foremost a political playwright. He is certainly that, but running rather prominently through his work as well is an abiding concern with art, the artist, how the artist comes to be an artist”.

Fugard's admiration for Huguenet, however, does not waiver, and speaking to Huguenet he says: "Yes. Bravo André. That is what that miserable audience should have been shouting. You can go home tonight feeling very satisfied. ... God, you were good!" (p. 21).

When the Playwright meets Huguenet again in 1961 the roles have been reversed to a large extent: Huguenet is now battling to survive as an actor and had to face humiliating circumstances before taking on the role of *The Prisoner*, while Fugard's chosen career as a playwright is gaining momentum and receiving more attention from audiences and critics during this period (*The Blood Knot* was finished and receiving international attention).

#### 4 Afrikaner Identity and Afrikaans

Giliomee in his award-winning and comprehensive book on the Afrikaner, titled "*The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*", discusses the history of this term and mentions that it was first used in the late 1770s/1780s when a group of Settlers started seeing themselves as different from their forefathers who had come from Holland, France or Germany: "A sense of being Afrikaners rather than being Dutch or French or German had crystallized by the end of the eighteenth century" (2003: 51).

This notion coincided with the rise of Afrikaans and by "1875 Afrikaans or some form of simplified Dutch was spoken across most of the present South Africa" (2003: 215). As indicated by Giliomee the long history of animosity between the Afrikaners and the British in South Africa has its origin in the early history of this country when the British occupied South Africa (for a second time during 1806). The arrival of a large number of British settlers in 1820 did not only influence the language situation in the country but also exacerbated the tension between the two groups: "From the start, an incipient tension marked the relationship between the Afrikaners and the British at the Cape. The spectacular advance of Britain as a world power had bred a conviction among the British that their way of doing things was superior" (p. 194).

That this tension prevailed for many decades thereafter is also illustrated in the following exchange between André and the Playwright:

ANDRÉ: Read my book.

PLAYWRIGHT: What's it called?

ANDRÉ: *Applous! Die Kronieke van 'n Toneelspeler.*

PLAYWRIGHT: Oh – it's in Afrikaans.

ANDRÉ (*heavy sarcasm*): Yes, and I do apologise for that to all you very superior English-speaking South Africans!

PLAYWRIGHT: Come now, André, it's just that Afrikaans was never one of my good subjects at school.

ANDRÉ: Of course! But why bother about that, because nothing of any significance has ever been written in that language. Not so?

PLAYWRIGHT: For your information, André, my mother is an Afrikaner.  
(Fugard 2006: 9)

All three figures in this play identify themselves in some way or another with being an Afrikaner or having links with the Afrikaner. Although **Eugène Marais** grew up in an English-speaking household he came to be considered, according to Giliomee, as “one of the first champions of Afrikaans” (2003: 364). As seen in the above discussion of Swart’s article on Marais, he was, however, not a “typical” Afrikaner. Giliomee also perceives him as different: “Here was a new type of person identifying with Afrikaans: modern, brash, secular and sophisticated, though also addicted to morphine. It was hardly a mix designed to give Afrikaans a good name among the conservative Boer people” (2003: 364).

**André Huguenet**, who describes himself as an Afrikaner, readily admits being at variance with this group and distances himself from its extreme conservatism. Like Marais he worked towards the development of Afrikaans – in his case the development of Afrikaans theatre – and devoted his career to this ideal. He shared his “vision” for an Afrikaans theatre with Eugène Marais while working as young reporter at *Die Vaderland*: “ANDRÉ: ... Believe it or not but Vervloekte André thought that theatre could liberate our people – break the shackles that the verkramppte<sup>11</sup> dominees and politicians were forging around our minds and souls” (Fugard 2006: 23).

During their first meeting (1956) Fugard as the Playwright withdraws from the scene for a moment to make a few comments on Huguenet (given from a perspective of “some years later”, p. 20). He did eventually read Huguenet’s autobiography and then realised that “his thirty years of single-minded and unwavering dedication to Afrikaans theatre had not been richly rewarded” p. 20). Huguenet admits in his last meeting (1961) with the Playwright that his vision for a theatre that would have changed the Afrikaner (as discussed above with Eugène Marais when he was a young actor) has not realised: “ANDRÉ: ...Wake up the Afrikaner and make him think? Did I really say that? What a fool! Look at them. It’s worse now than when I

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11. According to Giliomee, Willem de Klerk (brother of F.W. de Klerk), introduced the terms “*verligtes*” and “*verkramptes*” in the political debate of 1967 (thus a little later than 1961 when Huguenet supposedly used this term): “There were *verligtes* (enlightened ones), liberals in a new Afrikaans guise, who discarded tradition and favored openness and freedom, also in the field of race relations. There were the *verkramptes* (constricted or narrow reactionaries), who were narrow-minded and insular, clinging to the past and engaged in witch-hunts against everything not traditional” (Giliomee 2003: 549).

started out thirty-five years ago. The Guardians of the Volk have locked up this country and thrown away the key” (p. 37).

Huguenet’s fears in 1961 regarding the political situation in South Africa were, of course, realised in the political dispensation that came to pass before the first democratic elections eventually took place in 1994.

**Athol Fugard** (as seen in his altercation with Huguenet above) has always acknowledged his link with the Afrikaners from his mother’s side. Gray (1982: 30) mentions that Fugard had said in an earlier interview that his mother had been born Afrikaans-speaking (née Potgieter), while his father was Anglo-Irish, and that “[b]y and large, because of the strength of my mother’s personality, the Afrikaner culture was more dominant”. In a more recent interview with Pieter Fourie (the Afrikaans playwright), Fugard again acknowledges the great influence that his mother had on his life and work, and describes himself as a “baster-Afrikaner” (a bastard Afrikaner) (Fourie 2002: 33) – as someone who sees himself as an Afrikaner who sees, feels and thinks like an Afrikaner, but uses English to express himself.

As Angove demonstrates in her study of how Fugard portrays the Afrikaner in his plays, it is clear that his works “incorporate Afrikaners of differing degrees of culturedness, sophistication, education and social awareness; often opposing types of Afrikaners are found within a single drama” (1986: 19). Angove wants to illustrate how “Fugard’s Afrikaner characters represent to a certain degree the social stereotype of the time in which each specific play was written” (p. 85).

In *Exits and Entrances* Fugard portrays two Afrikaners – not fictional characters but real people who influenced his thoughts on theatre, South African society and “Afrikanerskap”. Today the issue of Afrikaner identity and the status of Afrikaans are again debated in Afrikaner circles. Many Afrikaners feel that Afrikaans is once again involved in a new language struggle – similar to the one in which Marais took part. The situation regarding Afrikaans today has in a sense come full circle: Afrikaans-speakers again perceive themselves to be fighting for the status – even survival – of their language against the backdrop of a seemingly overwhelmingly process of Anglicisation taking place in the country.<sup>12</sup> It is clear

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12. Brits highlights in his discussion of Giliomee’s book the language issue and mentions that

he refers to recent opinion polls showing that 80 per cent of Afrikaners are dissatisfied with the marginalization of Afrikaans, and that the more unfairly Afrikaans-speakers perceive themselves to be treated by the government, the more they tend to identify themselves as Afrikaners. Many Afrikaners have nevertheless accepted the new order, welcoming the country’s deliverance from isolation and the removal of the stigma from Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor.

(Giliomee 2004: 75)

– not only from Athol Fugard's sympathetic portrayal of these two characters in the play – but also from his interview with Fourie,<sup>13</sup> the fact that quite a few of his plays are now being translated into Afrikaans<sup>14</sup> and the decision to premiere his most recent play, *Victory*, at the Absa KKNK festival (the main art festival for Afrikaans-speakers in South Africa), that he also identifies with the Afrikaners' language struggle today.

*Exits and Entrances* is still framed by the important political events of the day (Sharpeville: "Our meeting took place in his dressing room in the Opera House in Port Elizabeth – it was just a few days after the first anniversary of Sharpeville", p. 26), while the young Playwright also feels morally obliged to write about the social injustices he notices around him, (pp. 33-37). By focusing mainly on the interaction between the young Fugard and the old Afrikaans actor, André Huguenet (while Eugène Marais is also brought to life through Huguenet's recollections of him), the play, however, also addresses to a large degree the question of Afrikaner identity and the role played by Afrikaans in forming this identity. Although Marais, Huguenet, and Fugard stand outside of the narrow definition of the term "Afrikaner" – the Poet (a "maverick" Afrikaner), the Actor (a "Dopper Moffie") and the Playwright (a "bastard-Afrikaner") – their identities are determined to a large extent by their links with the Afrikaner community and their acceptance of Afrikaans as part of this identity.

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13. In his interview with Pieter Fourie, Fugard again refers to the abiding influence of his mother on his work; his belief that Afrikaans has finally broken free from the shackles of apartheid and is no longer seen as the "language of the oppressor". He ends the interview by indicating that he would still like to write a play in Afrikaans "for his mother" (In: *Insig*, October 2003: "Boekwurm").
14. Idil Sheard translated *Valley Song* as *Lied van die vallei* (published in 2006 by Maskew Miller Longman); and in 2007 *The Road to Mecca* as *Met Kerslig na Mekka*. She is now also translating *Hello and Goodbye*, *Boytjie and the Oubaas* and *Master Harold and the Boys* into Afrikaans.

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