

Fugard: deconstructing the context

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Summary

Notebooks: 1960-1977 shows Fugard, an avowedly anti-theoretical and anti-academic artist, to be a close reader who like Derrida and other deconstructionists reveals the self-incrimination and duplicity in the intimate recesses of all language, including his own. As, according to Derrida, our very relation to language already functions like a text the boundaries between Fugard's literary texts and the general socio-cultural and political situation from which his texts emanate (extra-text) blur into what can be called Fugard's context. Thus, in deconstructing Fugard's context the present study looks at both the deconstruction by Fugard of the extra-text and the self-deconstruction in Fugard's work. It concludes with the suggestion that deconstruction, considered by some as a negative enterprise sinning against common sense and patience, could offer a way of resolving the conflict in the critical evaluation of Fugard between those who seek the universal in his work and those who maintain he should be more specifically regional or political. Derrida's experience of the necessity for deconstruction to expose what has been suppressed in opposition-rich framework structures such as government decrees, suggests the possibility of meaningful politicization of Fugard's plays within the South African context by means of the non-confrontational de-construction of the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another.

Opsomming

Fugard, 'n uitgesproke anti-teoretikus wat hoogs krities staan teenoor 'n soganaamde akademiese benadering tot die literatuur, openbaar in *Notebooks: 1960-1977* 'n Derridaanse en dekonstruktiewe bewustheid van die self-inkriminerende en valsheid wat diep in alle taalvorme skuil, ook in sy eie. Aangesien, volgens Derrida, selfs ons verhouding met taal alreeds as 'n teks funksioneer, vervaag die grense tussen Fugard se literêre tekste en die sosio-kulturele en politieke situasie waarin hulle ontstaan (ekstra-tekste), tot wat genoem kan word Fugard se konteks. 'n Dekonstruksie van Fugard se konteks behels dus in die onderhawige studie twee aspekte: die dekonstruksie deur Fugard van die ekstra-tekste en die self-dekonstruksie binne sy werk. Hierdie benadering tot Fugard se werk werp sodanige lig op dekonstruksie as 'n onderneming, dat wat voorheen deur sommige beskou is as negatief en ondermynend, nou moontlikhede bied vir verheldering: dekonstruksie sou die botsende sienings van kritici wat die universele in Fugard se werk soek en die wat te min van die plaaslike (politiek, ens.) daarin vind, kon versoen. Derrida vestig die aandag op die noodsaak vir dekonstruksie om dit te ontbloot wat deur opposisie-belaaiete raamwerkstrukture soos bv. regeringsbesluite onderdruk word. Nie-konfronterende de-konstruksie van die aanspraak tot 'n on dubbelsinnige oorheersing deur enige spesifieke betekenismodus sou kon lei tot sinvolle politisering van Fugard se dramas binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.

It seems to me that at present there is 'con-fusion' in the world of deconstruction, i.e. there is a merry mix-up as well as a blending together of many things into one. Regarding the 'what' of deconstruction one commentator states that 'at present the deconstructionist is content to try to prove his opponent wrong' (Ryan, 1985:17), while another emphasises that this is exactly what deconstruction does not do. Instead it points out 'the necessity with which what [the author] *does* see is systematically related to what he does *not* see'

(Johnson, 1981:xv). The 'who' and the 'how' of deconstruction do not escape this con-fusion. Having grouped Derrida, Stanley Fish, Roland Barthes and Paul de Man together as sharing 'the explicit conviction that meaning as presence or act and meaning as structured and structuring inscription are reciprocally constitutive notions, neither of which can be granted priority over the other, Ray points out that each one conceptualizes and performs the infinite regress of meaning in a different way (Ray, 1984:144, 148-149). For Fish the thematics of meaning merge with those of belief, while Barthes eschews transcendence and exploits the self-difference which Fish transcends. For Paul de Man, regarded as nihilistic and subversive in interpretation by the conservatives, rhetoric is the grounding tradition. He sees the question of meaning as primarily epistemological, concerning man's ability to control history through his knowledge and its expression. And lest deconstruction be accused of neglecting the diachronic in favour of the synchronic, the 'when' also features in the con-fusion of the deconstructive enterprise. There are those for instance who negatively evaluate deconstruction's 'difference', contending that it does not differ sufficiently from some of its predecessors to add to our understanding: 'Deconstruction has not made a decisive change in our understanding of our discipline, but has merely enabled critics to refine familiar techniques, generate more close readings, and indulge in controversy without consequences' (Cain, 1982:1111 quoted in Ryan, 1985:19).

With the implied licence for 'free play' I can now compare/com-pair an extremely odd couple:¹ Athol Fugard and a group described as 'some of the best and most erudite of today's literary scholars, [who have] been brought up and educated on a regimen of New Critical fare' (Meyerowitz, 1984:10). Meyerowitz suggests that like us they are living in a world of permanent criticism, in a theoretical era which encourages and demands constant questioning and self-questioning; they have learnt to listen to the rhetoric and watch the margins of their teacher's discourse; they are busy with a thorough-going retrospective critique of their own; they are selfconsciously textualist and theoretical in their work; they would probably see themselves as sharing the 'provisional, speculative, and dramatic' way in which deconstruction reads even more closely than close readers, thus revealing the 'self-incrimination' and 'duplicity' in the 'intimate recesses' of all language, not excluding its own.

Now Fugard, the Walter Matthau of the odd couple, is avowedly anti-theoretical and anti-academic: in an interview with Heinrich von Staden at Yale (Von Staden, 1982) he expressed himself as follows: 'I must say I did find the academic aspect at Yale a bit heavy. . . . No [I am] certainly not [an academic]. No, [I don't have a university degree] and the language academics use sometimes makes me wonder whether I, in fact, speak English or not.' Here immediacy seems to guarantee for Fugard the notion that in the spoken word we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, know what we have said (Johnson, 1981:viii-ix). We, on the other hand, are aware of another 'presence', that of Derrida with his critique not only of western metaphysics but also of everyday thought and language, which focuses on its privileging of the spoken word over the written word because the speaker and

listener are both present to the utterance simultaneously (Derrida, 1980). The title of a poem by Wallace Stevens provides the link between Fugard and the spoken word at Yale and Derrida and the written word in the terrain of a critique of western metaphysics and of everyday thought and language. Lines from this poem² suggest the thread drawing us to the seemingly non-side of Fugard.

Lines from canto xii of Wallace Stevens's 'An ordinary evening in New Haven':

The mobile and the immobile flickering
 In the area between is and was are leaves,
 Leaves burnished in autumnal burnished trees
 And leaves in whirlings in the gutters, whirlings
 Around and away, resembling the presence of thought
 Resembling the presences of thoughts, as if,
 In the end, in the whole psychology, the self
 The town, the weather, in a casual litter,
 Together, said words of the world are the life of the world.

The never still, never graspable, ever indefinable leaves merely 'resemble' not 'thoughts' but their 'presences' and equally casually, tenuously, obliquely the forged link/forgery(?) is extended from 'thoughts' to 'words' to 'life'. Fugard's equivalent theorizing in a diary entry in *Notebooks: 1960-1977* (1983:109) reveals him as the permanent critic, the constant questioner and self-questioner who is aware of rhetoric and the margins of discourse; the artist reviewing his own work; the theorist who is selfconsciously textualist and theoretical; the close reader who reveals the 'self-incrimination' and 'duplicity' in the 'intimate recesses' of all language, including his own. Fugard's diary entry which could be titled 'An ordinary evening in Port Elizabeth' reflects speculatively on the very possibility of its own meaning:

... ; and, as on so many nights now, I will fall asleep in the unimportant labyrinth of a dialogue that I follow through as if learnt by rote. First my mind consciously analyses the phenomenon of a shadow, the fall of light, etc., and assures me that a shadow is nothing. Then with my eyes, with all the sense of my living mortal body, I look at 'it' -'it'- and savour the beauty of its being. Yet it is nothing. My mind has told me ... etc. And my wonder increases, encompassing now not only the beauty of the shadow but the duplicity, the paradox that runs so richly through all this life. And then sleep.

From 'shadow' to 'dialogue' to 'life' to 'sleep' – from being and/or nothingness to meaning and/or non-meaning to consciousness and/or non-consciousness – from what is and/or what is not to what does it mean and/or what does it not mean – this diary entry embodies the very play of opposites which occupies Derrida.

Derrida's constant interest in literature stems from a similar fascination with 'the duplicity, the paradox that runs so richly through life'. This fascination leads Derrida to deconstruction, i.e. analysis and de-construction, not

destruction (Johnson, 1981:xiv) of the logocentric claims and metaphysical assumptions of western thought. He questions the privileging of speech above writing, the vilification in the western philosophical tradition of 'writing as a mere lifeless, alienated form of expression' (Eagleton, 1983:130). In all language words, whether in spoken or in written form, are divided into phonic signifiers and mental signifieds, with the signifieds always the product of the difference between signifiers – e.g. the signifier 'boat' gives us the signified 'boat' because it is different to the signifiers 'moat', 'boar', etc. Language thus is a system of differences rather than a collection of independently meaningful units, indicating that language as such is already constituted by the very distances and differences it seeks to overcome. The self-presence of meaning or consciousness is an illusion 'produced by the repression of the differential systems from which they spring' (Johnson, 1981:ix). There is a lag in any signifying system, termed 'différance' by Derrida, from the French verb 'différer', 'to differ' and 'to defer'. In a reading of Rousseau's *Confessions* (1980) Derrida attempts 'to disentangle the weave of différance from the logocentric blanket' and 'shows how Rousseau's text functions against its own explicit (metaphysical) assertions, not just by creating ambiguity, but by inscribing a systematic "other message" behind or through what is being said' (Johnson, 1981:xiii).

This approach to language leads Derrida to a conclusion which has important implications for my study of Fugard. By undoing or deconstructing these other messages or supplements Derrida comes to the conclusion that 'there have never been anything but supplementary, substitute significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the "real" supervening or being added only while taking on meaning from a trace, and from an invocation of the supplement, etc.' There is nothing outside of the text – *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*. Rousseau's text tells us 'That our very relation to language already functions like a text' (Johnson, 1981:xiv). Substituting Fugard's name in one instance for that of Rousseau we read: 'Fugard's life, i.e. his South African experience does not become a text through his writing: it always already was one. Nothing indeed can be said to be not a text' (Johnson, 1981:xiv). So at this stage it seems expedient for my purposes to effect a merger of sorts. The proposed amalgamation is between Lotman's 'extra-text' (as distinct from text) and Derrida's 'text', which encompasses both members of Lotman's pair (Lotman, 1977). Whereas Lotman's 'text' refers to the literary text itself, by 'extra-text' he understands the general socio-cultural and political situation from which a text emanates. In what follows I shall use 'context' to integrate 'extra-text' with the all-inclusive Derridean 'text'. In other words when I apply the term 'deconstruction' to Fugard's 'context' I'll be looking at both deconstruction by Fugard of the extra-text and the self-deconstruction in Fugard's work itself. Viewed in this way Fugard's 'context' thus allows for the inevitable blurring of boundaries between texts,³ which is the result of a theory of language which views meaning as 'the spin-off of a potentially endless play of signifiers, rather than a concept tied firmly to the tail of a signifier' (Eagleton, 1983:127). Our study of Fugard is thus placed on an intertextual basis, viewing his 'context' as 'a differential network, a fabric

of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces' (Derrida, 1979:83).

In *Notebooks* (1983) Fugard is self-consciously textualist and theoretical, deeply aware of rhetoric and constantly watchful of the margins of language. By means of diary entries he creatively explores his entire context with reference to a variety of literary, philosophical, psychological, political and socio-cultural texts. He is particularly aware of and concerned with writing: *Notebooks* can be viewed as 'notes' (provisional writing) for 'writing' (final written form of his plays) for 'acting' (spoken words in performance) – 'I came back from Cape Town convinced that what we had ended up with on the stage, and on paper, was "notes" for a play and that all I needed was privacy and time to now "write" the play, (Fugard, 1983:200). Fugard oscillates between privileging the spoken and/or visual aspects of drama above writing and vice versa. On occasion his desire for presence leans towards the visual aspects: 'One of the reasons, I suppose, why I write for the stage – beyond, or before, all the spoken words there is the possibility of this code – the Carnal Reality of the actor in time and space. Only a fraction of my truth is in the words' (Fugard, 1983:171). The actors' physical immediacy seems to guarantee for Fugard an unequivocal meaning, but '*il n'y pas de hors-texte*' – there is nothing outside the text and the text itself as a differential network of traces offers no guarantee of an unequivocal meaning. This entry was made in 1968 when Fugard was in the throes of writing *Boesman and Lena* and struggling with questions such as 'How can the full reality of a life here and now be stated?' partly contradicting his support for the 'carnal reality' of the actor.

In a 1972 entry while working on *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*, Fugard is once again involved with the problem of translating a here and now reality into words on paper for performance on stage – 'those six terrible photographs of Joubert and Philander [taken by police when Joubert and Philander were caught contravening the Immorality Act] scrambling around in the dark; twenty seconds of Hell which start with them together and end with them irrevocably apart; the twenty seconds that it takes to pass from an experience of life to an intimation of death' (Fugard, 1983:200). To overcome this kind of obstacle he refers to the successful use of 'specifics' in *Boesman and Lena*: 'With Boesman and Lena a sharp focus on the specifics (Lena's bruises, the piece of bread, Outa, the dog, the bulldozer) did not stop me from making my statement about Man – Woman: in fact the specifics were my vocabulary and as simple and primitive as it was, I was nevertheless able to say my thing – all the more powerfully I suppose because my vocabulary was that simple and uncluttered' (Fugard, 1983:201). Although Fugard is here still dealing with the code of the carnal reality of the actors in time and space, with what is 'beyond and before all the spoken words', his expression is about writing – 'statement', 'vocabulary', 'say my thing', indicating the inseparability of the written and that which is related to the spoken in drama, the visual aspects of performance. The 'specifics' do not just hang there forming a reality of their own which is unconnected to the reality of the spoken word. Lena refers to 'my bread', she addresses Outa, talks about him to Boesman, remembers the dog and recalls the events of the

morning when the bulldozer flattened their pondok. So while Fugard is apparently privileging the visual over the spoken and the written with his emphasis on 'specifics', he is locating a plenitude of meaning in the written.

At other times Fugard explicitly searches for the presence of meaning in writing rather than in speech or an aspect of speech, physical immediacy. In one of his final entries in *Notebooks* (Feb. 1976) Fugard reviews his work in terms of the opposition between speech and/or physical immediacy in drama and writing – 'My attempts before to work creatively, as a writer, with the actors, was a bad mistake and resulted in my getting lost and losing all faith in my vision. Over the past few months I've rediscovered it and moved towards its statement on paper' (Fugard, 1983:219). Although the 'writing' of the actor in this case is not yet traced through by the playwright's writing, Fugard is still opposing his writing to their physical immediacy and speech, suggesting that a sign, in this case his own, is independent of other signs and is fully meaningful. Since all signs in the chain of being are traced through with all the others 'to form a complex tissue which is never exhaustible' (Eagleton, 1983:128) our reading of Fugard must aim at the relationship, unperceived by him, 'between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses' (Johnson, 1981:xv).

Fugard is fully aware of this paradox of language, of what Derrida describes as 'the whole ungraspable paradox of a trace which manages only to carry itself away, to erase itself in marking itself out afresh' (Derrida, 1983:38). He is constantly struggling with the movement from 'the full reality of a life here and now' to the reality of words on paper, how for instance to do justice to 'the enigma and mystery of that little stippled expanse beside the washed blue of the river where Boesman and Lena spent the night' (Fugard, 1983:174). He is caught in the world of possibilities and choices – 'Before even the magic of the word, the clotted choking reality of blank paper. Every – but every – possibility. I must choose one' (Fugard, 1983:174). As one way out of his dilemma he strives 'quite consciously and deliberately for ambiguity of expression because it is superior to singleness of meaning and reflects the nature of life' (1983:183). He also plays the 'game of traces', described by him as 'a sense of the "word" again, of playing with it on paper and in the accidents of the game making discoveries' (1983:172). His exploration of the rhetoric of drama and the margins of its language is shown in the following illustration of his playing with the 'word' on paper – 'The accident in writing: A powerful example when sorting out my ideas and images for the ending of Act I – Lena at the fire with Outa, sharing her mug of tea and piece of bread – kept hearing her say, 'This Mug ... This Bread ... My Life ...' Suddenly and almost irrelevantly, remembered Lisa the other day reading a little book on the Mass – and there it was – Lena's Mass ... the moment and its ingredients (the fire, the mug of tea, the bread) because sacramental – the whole a celebration of Lena's life' (Fugard, 1983:173).

Despite these and other possibilities of coping with the slipperiness of language, Fugard still consciously seeks the presence of meaning. He admits: 'My whole temperament inclines to be very unequivocal indeed. That is not difficult – but it would be at the cost of truth' (Fugard, 1983:183). Fugard

seems to deepen his dilemma by this admission – having already admitted that one of his major problems as a playwright is to render certain aspects of the South African reality in language abounding with possibilities, he now further narrows down his choices by committing himself to an engagement with opposites. This engagement is central in Fugard's consideration of the role of art in society and of his own place as dramatist in a particular society:⁴ 'What I do know is that art can give meaning, can render meaningful areas of experience, and most certainly also enhances. But, teach? Contradict? State the opposite to what you believe and then lead you to accept it? . . . If there is any argument which makes sense to me it is that the plays must be done and the actors seen (even on a segregated basis) not for the sake of the bigoted and the prejudiced – *but for the sake of those who do believe in human dignity*' (1983:59). If Fugard is not aiming to change the 'bigoted and the prejudiced', to attempt to lead them to accept the opposite of what they believe, but rather to 'render meaningful areas of experience' for 'those who do believe in human dignity', the nature of Fugard's 'engagement with opposites' needs to be investigated.

Fugard's work is traced through with the same kind of opposites we find in that of Derrida: writing and speech, the self and the other, reality and unreality, truth and error, good and evil, man and woman, life and death, auto-eroticism and hetero-eroticism. From his thesis defence (1983), given nearly twenty-five years after he had committed himself to working on a thesis, we learn that Derrida too had had his share of 'the bigoted and the prejudiced'. They ranged from those who found doctorates based on published works unacceptable to those academic authorities who after 1968 seemed to him 'to be both overreactive and too effective in their resistance to all, that did not conform to the most tranquillizing criteria of acceptability' (Derrida, 1983:44). By the late 1960's the general turn Derrida's research was taking could no longer conform to the classical norms of the thesis; in fact 'the very idea of a thetic presentation, of positional or oppositional logic, . . . was one of the essential parts of the system that was under [Derrida's] deconstructive questioning (Derrida, 1983:42). Derrida's experience of bigotry and prejudice at a university institution, together with his interest in the question of writing, led him to the conclusion that the necessity of deconstruction 'was not primarily a matter of philosophical contents', etc. but 'especially and inseparably meaningful frames, institutional structures, pedagogical or rhetorical norms, the possibilities of law, of authority, of evaluation, and of representation in terms of its very market' (Derrida, 1983:44-45). Derrida hesitates to call the world or space of these framework structures socio-political, considering it a triviality but what must be shown is that they are 'blind to their own inscription, to the law of their reproduction performances, to the stage of their own heritage and of their self-authorization, in short to [what Derrida calls] their writing' (Derrida, 1983:45).

This space or world of opposition-rich framework structures is indeed where Fugard's engagement of opposites takes place. The way in which he describes his involvement as playwright in this engagement suggests that he is the somewhat strange bedfellow not only of some of today's literary scholars

who have been brought up 'on a regimen of New Critical fare' (Meyerowitz, 1984:10), but also of Derrida, that name synonymous with deconstruction. Fugard describes his activity as playwright in terms of opposites, in terms of a variation of the self and the other opposition: 'My wholeness as a playwright is that I contain within myself both experiences – I watch and am watched – I examine the experience and I experience. The motion of a pendulum – or if that is too balanced and sane a movement – let me speak rather of agitation between two poles of awareness' (Fugard, 1983:89). Here Fugard deconstructs his own language – he exposes what his own metaphor 'pendulum', with its suggestion of a balanced movement between two opposite poles has suppressed, viz. the possibility of a dissolution of identity. That which Fugard watches, the South African world, features as a constant given the White/Non-White polarity, which is encountered in a variety of different forms depending on which particular space or terrain the government fiat chose to let them attain 'full meaning' – e.g. let there be Whites, let there be Non-Whites in the terrain of voting (the South Africa Act Amendment Act, 1956 which validated the original separate Representation of Voters Act, 1951 as well as their amendments); let there be Whites and let there be Non-Whites in the terrain of daily living (Group Areas Act, 1950); let there be Whites and let there be Non-Whites in the terrain of physical love and marriage (Immorality Act, 1950 and Mixed Marriages Act, 1949). The agitation in Fugard between two poles of awareness leads to an analysis of this government written White/Non-White polarization in South Africa in terms of three related pairs of opposition: the self and the other, man and woman and auto- and hetero-eroticism. Sexuality is thus used as one of the metaphors with which to deconstruct that which Fugard watches, but as a sign or a network of signs it in turn embodies an implicit exigency to be read supplementarily, i.e. to have its suppressed meanings exposed. The other side of watching is being watched.

The archetypal opposition for sexuality, man and woman, is used by Fugard as touchstone for his further analysis of the South African situation. A walk in South End for a meeting with the New Brighton acting group, the Serpent Players, leads to the following entry in *Notebooks* in 1963: 'In another corner of the bridge a bus conductor – one hand holding his timesheet and tin box of tickets – had a woman pressed up against the wall. Between them at that moment, holding their two bodies together was one thing above all others: he was a man, she was a woman. So obvious – but in the way a child writes its first word – enormous and naive. I can remember nothing of their faces except that in a different light I would have thought them crude. At that moment their very crudities were archetypal – her red lips and mocking smile; his eyes, his body' (Fugard, 1983:100). The archetypal pattern of fulfilment, mutual satisfaction by man and woman, is seen by Fugard as 'presence' and he uses this basic pattern with variation to analyse the experience of the self and the other in South Africa. Like Rousseau, who condemns masturbation as a means of cheating nature and substituting a mere image for the presence of a sexual partner (Derrida, 1980), Fugard condemns that kind of activity which leads away from the other man, suggesting that this leads away from life. 'In organizations men no longer "do" to others, they "do" to themselves.

And even this is so much like masturbation – what can it lead to? The way into my life is through the “other man”. And to reach the “other man” we need the simple act, we need “responsibility” (Fugard, 1983:127). But, as Derrida has shown with regard to Rousseau, the loss of presence has always already begun. Hetero-eroticism itself springs out of an alienation or difference that has the very structure of auto-eroticism. So we have not A better than B, but A and/or B.

In the South African context one of the effects of this leading away from the other man which by government fiat is set up as ‘presence’, takes metaphorical shape in Fugard’s context as the emasculation of manhood. In an analysis of the experience of being caught contravening the Immorality Act, written in *Notebooks* in preparation for *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*, Fugard links different forms of ‘leading away from the other man’:

In a sense another version of Boesman’s predicament: the constant emasculation of manhood by the South African ‘way of life’ – guilt, prejudice and fear, all conspiring together finally to undermine the ability to love directly and forthrightly.

Yes! The man’s predicament then not just the personal torment and guilt of the adulterer – the ultimate question is again articulated. What am I? It is not his heart and divided love that create his dilemma – but a system, a society.

The penalty is not just the loss of what he loves – but the negation of manhood. Therefore be very careful of the too easy and false parallel with adultery. (Fugard, 1983:194)

Having set up the archetypal pattern of sexuality (he was a man, she was a woman) as touchstone for the analysis of certain aspects of the South African situation, Fugard then with others becomes his own watcher. While deconstructing the South African world which he watches, Fugard at the same time deconstructs that which others are watching, viz. his own text. Almost a decade after the first entry in 1963 in which Fugard introduced to his context the archetypal pattern of sexuality, an entry in 1972 suggests a development in terms of Fugard’s own metaphor, from the balanced movement of the pendulum to agitation between two poles of awareness:

The immorality Act – at one level this country’s unique contribution to the world of pornography.

A guilt-ridden inversion of the celebration of the erect penis and moist vagina.

In the secrecy of darkness, with one of the forbidden and therefore coveted women, the man has discovered his penis, fostered its erection, had intercourse and so affirmed himself in defiance of the white father figure. But the latter discovers him and punishes him with castration.

Substitute symbols and activities – guns, police batons, sport, ‘boys’ and ‘baas’. (Fugard, 1983:199)

The archetypal pattern of fulfilment, mutual satisfaction by man and woman, is no longer seen as ‘presence’ since the government-written White/Non-

White polarization, the leading away of the other man from the self has inverted the ideal.

What has been decreed by law as presence, i.e. the removal of the White from the Non-White, of the self from the other, is shown by Fugard, mainly by means of the metaphor of sexuality to have been an illusion. White is not opposed to Non-White; White and Non-White are also not the same; White is added to Non-White or is offered as an alternative to Non-White. Through an agitation of two poles of awareness what has been suppressed by writing, i.e. by the 'free play' or element of undecidability within every system of communication (Norris, 1982:28) is exposed. Fugard stands language on its head, by for instance suggesting that pornography which is censored by one government decree, is introduced by another. In almost 'pure' Derridean terms Fugard shows that he has been engaged in a thorough-going retrospective critique of his own: 'Sex provides the most primitive experience of self – the double mystery/aspect of discovery and loss, both of "self" and "the other" (Fugard, 1983:199).

In this 'game of traces' that we have been playing with Fugard's context, Fugard the watcher and Fugard the watched have merged: – those who are watching Fugard are in fact part of that which he is watching, viz. part of the South African world or part of the rest of the world in as far as it relates to the South African world. The wider world and the South African world are vital distinctions for a certain section of Fugard's watchers, the literary critics. Michael Green (1984) points out that the conflict in the critical evaluation of Fugard's work hinges on the opposition between the universal and the particular – his acceptance in metropolitan centres is linked with tracing the 'transcendents' of the local specifics to which Fugard has declared his allegiance, whereas the more polemic (primarily) Marxist critics take Fugard to task for not being more specifically regional, political, etc. Green suggests that this conflict in the critical evaluations of Fugard's work indicates a changed position for his plays within the field of cultural activities. Therefore the terms for the reception of Fugard's plays 'need careful attention if they are to be "politicized" in a meaningful way within the contemporary Southern African context' (Green, 1984:52).

Perhaps we should call on Derrida's experience of the necessity of deconstruction to expose what has been suppressed in opposition – rich framework structures, for a suggestion of the terms of reception for Fugard's plays. 'Meaningful' politicization within the contemporary South African context might be possible if terms such as those of Derrida are used to point out the necessity with which *what* framework structures *do* see is systematically related to what they *do not see*. Thus the conflict hinging on the opposition between the universal and the particular within the ranks of the metropolitan critics and the regionalist critics on the one hand, and between these two groups on the other, could give way to the non-confrontational de-construction of the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. This might entail walking the tightrope between meaning and non-meaning, between the reign of angels and the reign of demons, in which case we should remember the words of Milan Kundera from *The Book of Laughs*

ter and Forgetting: 'If there is too much uncontested meaning on earth (the reign of angels), man collapses under the burden; if the world loses all its meaning (the reign of the demons), life is every bit as impossible' (Kundera, 1982:61).

Notes

1. I am indebted to R.D. Cumming (1981) for this title, which he uses for a comparison of Heidegger and Derrida.
2. Meyerowitz alerted me to this poem which he suggests provides us 'with the anxiety – dispelling "what" of education . . . begs us to put our heads down to the literary nitty-gritty of close reading and the teaching of its techniques' (Meyerowitz, 1984:10).
3. This is why what I say about Fugard and deconstruction with reference to *Notebooks* also alerts us to relevant meanings in his plays.
4. The role of a playwright such as Athol Fugard and the function of his text in society is investigated in Bowker, 1983.

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