**Boesman and Lena**

Athol Fugard’s play *Boesman and Lena* was written in 1969 and performed for the first time at the Rhodes University Little Theatre in Grahamstown on 10 July 1969. It was the period when apartheid rule reached its zenith in South Africa. An attempt to apply Bill Ashcroft’s theory of postcolonial transformation has been made to interrogate the subtle techniques used by the subject people to subvert the policies of apartheid and open spaces for their survival. As it is obvious from the previous chapter that the first and foremost objective of apartheid is to downgrade its subjects to a position of inferiority to every walk of life, making them live on the margins of society.

Athol Fugard has closely observed the ‘margin’ in his life and therefore in his writings has expressed the predicament of marginal men and women, as Black and Coloured in South Africa in the transformative process. Marginality is defined as “the temporary state of having been put aside, of living in relative isolation, at the edge of a system (cultural, social, political or economic)” (IGU 2). Further, it can also be conceptualised as societal and spatial. Societal marginalization takes place in a form of psychological segregation because of variances in culture, class, gender, nationality, ethnicity etc., which appears in states of inequality and social injustice. However, the spatial has been taken from the geography of location. Colonization and apartheid can be taken as situations where one group assumes superior while the other one is considered inferior. In such a process, marginal men and women are often condemned to engaging themselves in peripheral environments, for they lack resources needed to overcome constraints executed by marginal environments. The impacts of such environments are obvious on the lives of the non-White population in South Africa. Their marginalization is reflected physically as well as psychologically. American sociologist Dr. Everett Stonequist says that:

> The marginal person is poised in the psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, the repulsions and attractions of these worlds . . . within which membership is implicitly if not explicitly based upon
birth or ancestry . . . and where exclusion removes the individual from a system of group relations. (8)

The “marginal man,” thus he avers, displays “a duality of personality – a divided self”. The implication is that the position of the marginal man is one of peripheral rather than central importance, as well as one far away from mainstream thought and activity. In that, it reminds us of W.E. Dubois’ claim of “double consciousness.” Within a society, marginalized men and women are rendered powerless and almost invisible. Their sense of self and worth erodes gradually when visibility becomes more and more unclear. Consequently, their idea of self-promotion dwindles. Physical displacement and dislocation inculcates and creates such a state of a psychological condition that the marginalized people though appearing capable of sustaining life but are unable to move beyond the condition that paralyzes them.

Athol Fugard, in his Notebooks, discussed the development of the play that would appear as Boesman and Lena. For several years during the 1960s, before the appearance of the play that would narrate the story of two ostracized travellers, Fugard articulates the difficulty of making their predicament sensible and understandable in its absurd reality. Boesman and Lena’s predicament, he suggests, is “neither political nor social but metaphysical . . . a metaphor of the human condition which revolution or legislation cannot substantively change . . . (168) depict[ing] the power of apartheid laws in determining the pattern of individual existence” (141). Fugard’s commitment to foreground the plight with Boesman and Lena metamorphosed in January 1967. Fugard was convinced of the inevitability; – “a gesture of defiance in the face of nothing – and nothing will win. Time will efface us, our meaning, our value, our beauty. There are no victories. Outside our human environment is the world of stones. Hopeless innocence. Innocent loss. Boesman and Lena. Yes” (148). He narrates his observation about the people who live in his vicinity and with whom he interacts in his daily life:

Fishing on the banks of the Swartkops River: saw her . . . Lena. Either drunk or a hangover . . . doek on her head . . . barefoot. She stood to one side and let us go first . . . Unseeing eyes, focused . . . on the ground. We were merely ‘White men’ – nothing could have been more remote from her life. Walked like a somnambulist. A face shrivelled and distorted by dissipation, resentment, regrets. Bloated stomach . . . Another Coloured woman . . . Lived somewhere in the bush . . . Sense
of appalling physical and spiritual destitution, of servility . . . without the slightest flicker of ‘self.’ (166) [And] another Boesman and Lena . . . Lena was leading a dog. Typical location mongrel . . . The man had a large sack (provisions?) slung over his shoulder. Hatless – head shaven bald. (Jail?) They talked to each other as they walked along. Another encounter . . . we passed them on the road . . . Both obviously very drunk. The woman had fallen and was rolling around on the ground . . . he was trying to help her to her feet . . . in the rear view mirror . . . when we passed, I saw him pick up a large stone and threaten to throw it at her. (178)

Boesman and Lena is divided into two Acts. It encapsulates and captures the hardships and struggles of a Coloured South African couple who make an appearance on “an empty stage” symbolic of the mudflats of the South African veld. They are constantly on a move exhausted and fatigued they are perpetually from one location to another. Ostracised and expelled, they try to set up a temporary shelter on the road side. The woman is vocal and vociferous in her condemnation but the husband appears to have accepted his fate. In fact, he mocks his wife’s behaviour when they were forced to vacate their pondok. Their frustration is obvious when the man teases his wife taunting her “One day you’ll ask me who you are” (157). Suddenly an old Black African man [Xhosa/Zulu – “old Father”] appears from the darkness and he is requested by the woman to join them. The old man keeps muttering in Xhosa, persistently, and unintelligibly. The woman misconstrued and requests her man to give liquor to him but he refuses to give: rather commanded the stranger to leave. As an act of defiance the Woman not disobey but goes on to share her bread and give blanket to keep herself and the old man warm under the open sky: “Bitter tea, a piece of bread. Bitter and brown. The bread should have bruises. It’s my life” (175). The man is livid and keeps staring. Suddenly transforming into the White man’s bulldozer, he imitates the destruction of their “slum” village and stars reminiscing: “Our sad stories, our smells, our world . . . a pile of ashes . . . Freedom! That’s what the White man gave us . . . that’s why I laughed . . . I was happy” (179). When the woman intervenes, he cuts her short: “We’re white man’s rubbish!” (181). Lot of babbling takes in pitch darkness under the impression of making the old Man witness. It proves futile as he is dead. This angers the Man and frustrated, he starts beating the dead body violently with his fists. At last, he returns to the shelter calling his wife to start
collecting their belongings. Initially she resists following him but, ultimately is unable to say good-bye. The big question that stares at their face is ‘where?’ the man once again recounts the route, the locations of their past and their future. They review the space for some time and then exit into the dark.

*Boesman and Lena* projects a couple who wander from town to town struggling for their survival after their home has been bulldozed. They are trying to “forge meaning and substance from the circular paths and seemingly meaningless routines of their lives” (Wertheim 57). In the introduction of 1989 edition of *Boesman and Lena*, Fugard informs us that the play was based on a real life experience of “a coloured man and woman burdened with all their belongings whom [he] passed on the road near Laingsburg” (i).

The Coloured couple are Boesman and Lena who come on “an empty stage”. “A coloured man- Boesman- walks on. Heavily burdened. On his back an old mattress and blanket, a blackened paraffin tin, an apple box….these contain a few simple cooking utensils, items of clothing etc.” He is “barefoot” dragging a piece of corrugated iron with one hand and wearing “shapeless grey trousers rolled up to just below the knee, an old shirt, faded and torn sports-club blazer, cap on his head”. Then he puts down his load, and slumps to the ground beside it. It seems that he has been walking from very far and is now waiting for somebody. After sometimes “A coloured woman- Lena-appears. She is similarly burdened- no mattress though- and carries her load on her head”. Consequently, “she walks with characteristic stiff-necked rigidity”. She is having a bundle of firewood under one arm. Like Boesman, she is also “barefoot” and wearing “one of those sad dresses that reduce the body to an angular, gaunt cipher of poverty”. Trudging barefooted that reflects a simple earth bound experience. The struggle and the hardship obscure their ages, but, most probably they are in their fifties. When Lena appears, Boesman looks up slowly and watches her “with a hard, cruel objectivity” saying nothing. Lena has been “reduced to a dumb-animal like submission by the weight of her burden and the long walk behind them”. When she realizes that “she has passed him, she stops”, but without turning to face him as if they have to walk still further, she questions “Here?” (*Boesman and Lena* 167). Completely exhausted, Lena stretches forward and works a finger “between the toes of one of her finger” that comes away “with a piece of mud”. She looks at it, “squashing it between her fingers” and exclaims “Mud! Swartkops!”
(Boesman and Lena 167). She looks around and upward at the sky as if searching for something. She beholds a bird and suddenly felt jealous. The abandonment of the bird made her conscious of her reality. She envies the bird free from injustice and brutality of apartheid: “So slowly …! Must be a feeling, hey. Even your shadow so heavy you leave it on the ground” (168). She suggests that even the birds have their own identity and they enjoy their freedom, “Tomorrow they will hang up there in the wind and laugh. We will be in the mud. I hate them” (168).

These two untethered characters virtually seem to be carrying home on their backs. Their life has been decimated to more vagabonds wandering here and there. It seems that the purpose of their life is only to struggle for their survival and to achieve acceptability in the society. Their plight is evident when the bundle of firewood falls to the ground from Lena’s hands and she takes a deep breath. Even the piece of mud between Lena’s feet symbolises that it has not been easy to be ‘here’. She is bewildered, but she is sure that she has been to Swartkops because she is having mud on her feet. Mud indicates the suffering Boesman and Lena are going through and the downtrodden life that they are living. Eighteen years of persistent deterioration, Boesman and Lena are back into the mud of Swartkops. They are not allowed to carry their pole possessions, except for the junk that they carry on their backs. The irony the whole situation is that they are denied ownership of even one square foot of the land that they have traversed while crisscrossing in search of home. They are living in a society that deprives them of their own identity, condemned to exist as Boesman describes “whiteman’s rubbish”:

…make another hole in the ground, crawl into it, and live my life crooked. One push. That’s all we need. Into gaol, out of your job…one push and it’s pieces.

Must I tell you why? Listen! I’m thinking deep tonight. We’re White man’s rubbish. That is why he’s so beneukt with us. He can’t get of his rubbish. He throws it away, we pick it up. Wear it. Sleep in it. Eat it. We are made of it now. His rubbish is people. (205)

Such circumstance may seem strange from a distance but it is too familiar a site in apartheid South Africa that compels the Coloureds to think of themselves as ‘white man’s rubbish’. It simply implies that they do not have any personal identity.
In other words, the ideology of ruling apartheid pervades in the society in such a manner that the Blacks or Coloureds struggle for acceptance in the society. Consequently they suffer from ‘identity crisis’. Lena feels annoyed at Boesman when she looks at him and asks several questions:

Why did you walk so hard? In a hurry to get here? ‘Here’, Boesman! What’s here? This…[the mud between her fingers] …..and tomorrow. And that will be like this! Vrot! This piece of world is rotten. Put down your foot and you are in it up to your knee.

That last skof was hard. Against the wind. I think you were never going to stop. Heavier and heavier. Every step. This afternoon heavier than this morning. This time heavier than last time. And there is other times coming. ‘Vat jou goed en trek! Whiteman says Voetsek!’ Eina!”.

(168)

The response of Boesman makes Lena clarify: “Don’t look at me, ou ding. Blame the White man. Bulldozer!” (168). She continues her argument:

It was funny, hey, Boesman! All the pondoks flat. The poor people running around trying to save their things. You had a good laugh. And now? Here we sit. Just now it is dark, and Boesman’s thinking about another pondok. The world feels big when you sit like this. Not even a bush to make it your own size. Now is the time o laugh. This is also funny. Look at us! Boesman and Lena with the sky for roof again.(169)

Lena needles Boesman what is he waiting for? He breaks his silence and answers: “Lena! I’m telling you, the next time we walk!…..” (169). Promting her “where?” Boesman replies: “I’ll keep on walking. I’ll walk and walk…” (169).

The question that arises is where they are going after all. The answer is implicit in Boesman’s reply “here” suggesting that the “two reject characters” as Fugard himself calls them have been compelled to live in present, perpetually from one moment to the next. The system of apartheid cannot permit them to do anything productive in their lives. Their lives are ‘here’ because their past has been destroyed, their shacks have been bulldozed to the ground and future is uncertain. His answer ‘here’ shows that they are stuck in the mud in such a manner that they do not have any
ray of hope for future. Lena is walking behind her husband, but she is unaware of her destination—where she is going? Wertheim states: “In the play’s larger realm ‘Here?’ is an existential question for Lena who will spend her time on the stage searching for the meaning of her life and for her value as a human being” (56). The eponymous characters in the play Boesman and Lena are shown continuously “walking and walking” as if endlessly never reaching to any destination. Lena’s insistence on, vindicates this fact.

Where we going, Boesman? ‘Don’t ask questions. Walk!’ ja, don’t ask questions. Because you didn’t know the answers. Where to go, what to do. I remember now. Down this street, up the next one, look down that one, then turn around and go other way. Not lost? What way takes you past Berry’s Corner twice, then back to where you started from I am not a fool, Boesman. The roads are crooked enough without you also being in a dwaal.

First it looked like Redhouse, or Veeplaas. Then it was Bethelsdop, or may be Missionvale. Sukkel along! The dogs want to bite but you can’t look down. Look a head sister. To what? Boesman’s back. That’s the scenery in my world. (171)

Their circular and un-progressivé ‘walking’ gives an insight of the working of apartheid regime that created a number of difficulties for Black people in South Africa. Boesman and Lena are symptomatic of the relentless policy of apartheid that was designed to dislocate and keep the Black people running. Boesman and Lena’s lives, after the demolition of their shacks, are an attempt to associate them with the reality of physical dislocation. The conditions of Coloureds were worse than that of Blacks because Blacks, at least, have their own homelands while Coloureds have no homelands. This is the reason that compels Boesman and Lena to walking without destination. Lena’s query “Where we going Boesman?” (171) becomes a metaphor of their existential crises. Further, the disruption of place and space, because of ‘urban removals’, can be understood in Lena’s statement that they are always “on the wrong road at the right time” or on “the right road leading to the wrong place,” (193).
Martin Orkin observes that:

the predicament of Boesman and Lena and their ensuing experience suggest the thousands upon thousands of squatters who still inhabit present day South Africa is as a result of their historic removals in the name of influx control. In fact the so called ‘influx control was designed to facilitate a steady supply of labour and the perpetuation, in sequence, of the master-servant relationship in which the master can dictate all because the labourer he deals with has no rights of domicile, no home ownership, no rights to live with her/his family and is therefore totally vulnerable and insecure. (143-44)

In Boesman and Lena, Fugard reveals the consequences of influx control on the lives of Coloureds who were downgraded to the lower rungs under the influence of apartheid caste hierarchy. At the opening of the play, we find that Boesman and Lena heavily burdened physically and metaphorically and their worn out old clothes suggest that their destitution has been systematically and subtly implemented.

Boesman and Lena are mocked, condemned not only by apartheid system but also by Nature itself. According to Albert Wertheim, “Boesman and Lena’s lives are earthbound, in the mud, mocked not merely by Whites, but even by the birds” (58). Having their own home as nest, the birds are enjoying freedom while Boesman and Lena have neither home nor freedom. This recalls us of Jesus’ words in Mathew 8 verse 20 that “foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head”. Here in the play, representing types of postcolonial characters Boesman and Lena have neither holes nor nests to rest their heads. The idea of mud is interwoven in the context of apartheid politics. Boesman is continuously walking without any conversation with Lena. He only speaks to come “here”. When Lena asks Boesman, “What’s here?” (168), the “here” spoken by Lena is ambiguous. It can be literally understood as the place where they are standing or it can also be, metaphorically, understood as apartheid South Africa to which she refers saying “this piece of world is rotten” (168). Thus “here” can refer to the social as well as psychic space they inhabit.

It is by now amply evident that Athol Fugard’s objective in writing about the life of his time is to “witness as truthfully as he can the nameless and destitute of this
little corner of the world” (Blumberg 125). Boesman and Lena are the best example of the ‘nameless and destitute of this little corner of the world’. It becomes obvious when the White man says ‘voetsek’, Boesman and Lena starts running for their lives as if they are trespassers on the White man’s land. In order to acquire more and more space, the White man displaced Coloureds and Blacks relegating them to desolate, barren areas. Since physical displacement involves unwillingly leaving not only home but also cultures and traditions for a new and unknown place, it is always a traumatic experience. This is what may be termed as post-colonial trauma. Boesman and Lena are experiencing it due to their perpetual displacement and dislocation. Far from their shacks in Korsten, they feel strange in a new and unfamiliar cultural milieu of “here”.

As Bill Ashcroft puts it “a sense of place may be embedded in history, in legend and language…without becoming a concept of contention and struggle, until colonization disrupts a people’s sense of place” (Ashcroft 125) through forced displacement. In colonialism though the place exists, but it ‘belongs’ to someone else. In this play, Boesman and Lena’s difficulty is that the place that once belonged to them now has been captured by the colonizers; still they are endeavouring to carry on their struggle for survival. In other words, they are searching for identity in a new and unfamiliar environment.

It is fascinating not only for Fugard but also to a number of critics to investigate how the people of the colony tolerate the trauma that occurs with changing places. Boesman and Lena take liquor “Let’s have a dop” (168) to mitigate the magnitude of their anguish. This is her attempt to forget the present. Moreover, she is also endeavouring to overlook the traumatic experience. Following her husband, Lena takes liquor to tolerate and recall how she got ‘here’. But the attitude of Lena and that of Boesman are totally different regarding their situations. After being dislocated, Boesman seems to be happy, but Lena shows strong resentment against the system of apartheid regime. Though Lena has been uprooted from her cultural milieu as well, yet she struggles to negotiate it by indulging in dancing, singing and reminiscing. To some extent, Boesman appears satisfied with the system of apartheid. He has adopted the values and cultures of the colonizers. Consequently, he begins to hate himself. The colonizers have made him a ‘hotnot’ and use him to propagate that the forced removals are for the benefits of the Coloureds and Blacks. Boesman is too naïve to deny all these falsehoods. Frantz Fanon has dramatically presented, in Black Skin
White Mask, the way in which the subject people are bought into the system of the colonizers. In the essay ‘The Fact of Blackness’ the negro boy has been labelled an animal, bad, mean, and ugly. So he sits down and recalls:

All round me, the White man, above, the sky tears at its navel, the earth raps under my feet, and there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me…I sit down at the fire and I become aware of my uniform. I had not seen it. It is indeed ugly. I stop there for who can tell me what beauty is? (Fanon 86)

Here the Negro boy is sure that he is ugly and worthless. Similarly, in the play, Boesman is convinced that he is ugly and mean. He claims his happiness in spite of having nothing. He says, “I was sick of it so I laughed” (170). He thinks that the White man has favoured him by pushing over the rotten old pondok, “the white man has pushed over a rotten old pondok. He did me a favour” (170). But it is only a trick to adjust himself to the system of apartheid. He accepts the removals as his lot.

Lena tries to reorient herself by remembering her past. She remembers the places she has been such as Veeplaas, Kosten, Redhouse, Kleinskool, Bethelsdorp, Missionvale, Swartkops etc. We get a possible history of Boesman and Lena’s inevitable descent into an abject penury in Fugard’s Notebooks:

Coega to Veeplaas - the first walk. One night in an empty shed at the brickfields. At Veeplaas Boesman got a job at the Zwartkops Salt Works. To begin with rented a small pondok- later built one of their own. Lena’s baby born-six months later dead. First miscarriage. Three to five years.

Redhouse - working for Baas bobbie-farmer. One year.

Kleinskool - job with Vermaak the butcher. Labourer for building contractor. One yrar.

Bethelsdorp - Farm labourer. Brickfiels. Two years.

Missionvale - Salt works. Aloes. Lena’s second miscarriage. One year.
Kleinskool - Odd jobs. Theft- six months in jail. Lena did housework for Vermaak. Two years.


Redhouse - Farm labourer. Six months.


Korsten - Odd jobs. Empties. Lena’s third miscarriage. Boesman in jail again- knife fight. One to two years.

Veeplaas and Redhouse - prickly pears. Six months.

Swartkops - Bait- odd jobs six months.

Korsten - Empties. One year. (Notebooks 169)

Lena’s recalling the names and her efforts to fit into each new location is nothing but her frantic attempt to save herself from being drowned and lost in new set up. Names might have changed in apartheid regime but Lena must locate these places in her mind in order to recall her roots and routs. She asks the questions, “where are we going? Let’s go back. Who? What? How?” (173) that indicates her past. Remembering is a way of reorganizing the past in order to place oneself in it. Lena’s question “where am I” itself shows that her physical and psychological universe have been displaced. Her displacement and the cyclic walking from one place to another confuse her memory. It means that if she fails to recall, she will also lose her ability to reclaim her lost home. Even she cannot do so with the help of imagination. When Boesman tells directions to Lena in roundabout ways, she says, “don’t mix me up Boesman”(178). The implication is that clear memory is necessary to remember the past. It is key to her history. Edward W. Said states, “memory is something that can be carried, not only through official narratives and books” (182). That is why Lena is “as disparate to remember as she is to be witnessed: to dredge up from oblivion the ordering of events that evolve meaning out of chaos and identity out of confusion” (Durbach 66). When she describes the places she has visited such as Veeplaas, Korsten and Redhouse etc., she seems seriously involved in reorienting herself. “Remembering means rediscovering history, resisting the insidiously programmed
forgetting that deprives the dispossessed of the memory of their past” (Durbach 66). Tripathy is of the opinion that the colonizers dislocate natives from their culture aiming to instil “a loss of memory which would make them forget who they are and where they came from”. Consequently, “decolonizing mind and history involves remembering connections and knowing native histories” (11). Lena endeavours to reposition herself physically in order to get right directions.

Lena’s fantasies are remarkable because they lead us to her real intention where she wants to be, where she has been and where she is now. Lena is not merely looking back nostalgically rather she is repositioning herself to obtain a place on the map. She says:

you won’t mix me up this time. I remember, the Boer pointed out his gun and you were gone, no stop to Swartkops. Then Veeplaas. Then Korsten. And now here. (178)

Lena becomes agitated when Boesman again tries to disorient her. In other words it can be said that Lena desires to know the answer of the question why and how she is here. It means she wants to know the roots and routs of her journey into the past. Her assertion, “I know how I got here” indicates that she has the knowledge of her history. She is familiar with the places she has been to and where she is now (179). This shows that she is aware of her own identity.

Though Lena has been physically dislocated by the policies of apartheid regime, yet she is not ready to accept her defeat. Rather she is continuously making efforts to improve her demolished world. She does so with the help of imagination because this is the only way that life has meaning. It is truly said that memory is a powerful weapon of self-liberation. People engaged in war of freedom often get inspired by memories of the lost world, its values, traditions and cultures. By remembering her past Lena is recording history. Some critics condemn Fugard on the ground that he only bears “witness” instead of engaging in political activities. But his witnessing must not be underestimated because it tells us that the colonialist is engaged writing her history of displacement.
Unlike Lena, Boesman is constrained to the dominant circumstances of his life in such a manner that he is unable to see beyond his present life. In fact, Boesman suggests Lena to forget her past, but she refuses:

Boesman: Forget it. Now is the only time in your life.

Lena: No! Now. What’s that? I wasn’t born yesterday. I want my life’ where is it?

Boesman: In the mud, where you are, Now. Tomorrow it will be there too, and the next day. And if you are still alive when I have had enough of this, you will load up and walk somewhere else. (182)

Lena’s assertion, “I want my life” expresses her consciousness that she has been deprived and dispossessed. Lena is not an isolated instance but is fate of every colonized, whoever aims to negotiate postcolonial future.

Boesman sees his life tied to the mud of apartheid. He remains oblivious of the transformative nature of history. From the beginning to the end of the play, he is shown as ideologically stationary. By doing so, Fugard wants to convey the message that we cannot be ‘here’ from nowhere. If we are ‘here’ it means we are coming from somewhere and may be going to somewhere. On the contrary, Lena is aware of the transformative nature of history and she transforms herself by remembering her past, singing and dancing. She insists Boesman to “Remember the times I used to sing for us?”, “Da…da….da….” (177). Then “she starts singing, shuffling out a few dance steps at the same time.”

*Ou blikkie kondens melk.*

*Maak die lewe soet;*

*Boesman is ’n Boesman*

*Maar hy dra ’n Hotnot hoed. ’*(177)

And she provokes Boesman: “Look at this! Lena’s still got a *vastrap* in her old legs. You want to dance, Boesman. Not too late to learn. I’ll teach you” (178). This is the reason we see her at the end of the play at a higher level of political challenge. She
has inverted the hierarchical power structures because she denies following Boesman when he says ‘come’. By doing so she is challenging his authority.

Marcia Blumberg asserts “Lena performs meta-theatrical moments of song and dance to rejoice for an instant despite her onerous circumstances” (133). On the other hand, Frantz Fanon argues, in his essay ‘On Violence’, that “it is through song and dance that the violence of the oppressor is “canalized” transformed and conjured away…the circle of dance is permissive circle” (19). Lena’s actions can be described as postcolonial transformation as contemplated by Bill Ashcroft. Remembering, dancing and singing, in Ashcroft sense, are postcolonial transformation. These are the ways to survive in apartheid regime. Lena often remembers in order to remind herself that she is still alive. Though Boesman allows himself to live in perpetual present, Lena expresses her desire for better life because she is well aware of the fact that life was not like this before as it is today, as she says, “It was not always like this. There were better times” (182). This shows that Lena is aware of her history because history plays pivotal role in shaping one’s dreams. Lena expresses her desire for better life in future because she has experience better times in past. It is Lena’s awareness of the past that inspires her to state, “one day something is going to happen” (180). The statement does not clarify what is going to happen. It may be she is predicting that the apartheid regime is going to come to an end or it may be women are going to be free from patriarchal bondage. We can gauge traces of optimism in Lena’s prophetic statement, “nights are long but they don’t last forever” (199). The implication is that possibly the night of apartheid will not last forever, one day will come when it will come to an end.

The approach of the couple in dealing with the prevailing circumstances also varies. If Lena keeps away her frustration through remembering, dancing and talking, Boesman gets relief by beating his wife. This act of beating indicates that he is psychologically transferring the burden of oppression to his wife who is double burdened. Fugard tells us in one of his plays The Blood Knot (1989), “Boesman and Lena is not as simple as Lena being the victim and Boesman the oppressor. Both are ultimately victims of a common shared predicament, and of each other, which of course makes it some kind of love story”. Boesman and Lena are victims because both of them have been labelled ‘rubbish’ by the colonizers. Though Lena is victimized, she is hopeful and looks forward to that victimization. She recognises
herself when she is beaten by her husband as she says, “when I feel it I’ll know I am Lena” (182).

At the end of Act I, Fugard has introduced an old African man as a spectator to ‘bear witness’ in most unusual way that makes Lena’s epiphany believable. The old man does not speak in the play. He only observes the actions of Boesman and Lena and listens to their conversation. His only contribution to the dialogue of the play is Lena’s name. Lena gets Outa, the old man, as her witness. Outa appears on the stage putting ‘hat on his head, the rest of him lost in the folds of a shabby old overcoat. He is an image of age and decrepitude’. Lena quickly diverts her attention from Boesman to him and realises that the old man is thirsty. When Lena wants to offer water to the old man, Boesman refused to give, because Outa belongs to other community as it is clear from the following conversation:

Lena: ……May be he is thirsty.

Boesman: And us?

Lena:Only water.

Boesman: It’s scarce here.

Lena: I’ll fetch from Swartkops tomorrow.

Boesman: To hell! He doesn’t belong to us.

[grabs the bottle away from her and together with the other one puts it inside the pondok.] (186)

But Lena is insistent: ‘I’m going to take it, Boesman’ as the stage direction shows: “she moves forward impulsively to where the bottles are hidden. Boesman lets her take few steps then goes into action”. Boesman grabbing a stick says, “Okay!” (187) implying that it does not approve Lena’s action. As a result, he starts beating her.

Lena considers the old man a suitable witness for her life, because her predicament resembles that of the old man much. When Boesman grabs a stick and tries to beat Lena, she, running quickly to the old man, requests him to, “Watch now, Outa. You be witness for me. Watch! He is going to kill me” (188). Boesman stops
beating and throws down the stick after realizing the presence of the old man. Lena challenges him and shouting:

Go on! Why don’t you hit me? There is no White *basses* here to laugh. Does this old thing worry you?

*(Turning back to the old man.)*

Look, *Outa*. I want you to look.

*(showing him the bruises on her arms and face.)*

No, not that one. That is an old one. This one. And here. Just because I dropped the sack with the empties. I would have been dead if they hadn’t laughed. When other people laugh he gets ashamed. Now too. I would have got it hard from him if you…(188)

Lena shows her bruises narrating her pathetic story to the old man to invoke sympathy for herself. Boesman does not listen to Lena’s endless conversation, while the old man hears her pathetic story and repeats her name. Lena’s repeated assertion: “My name is Lena” (188) is significant because this reiteration is not without meaning. It is to foreground her identity. She is, in actuality, throwing gauntlet at those who deny her a space, an identity and a reality. Moreover, Lena realises that though she has been separated from the old man because of the racial categorisation of apartheid, she is similar to him. Consequently, she fulfils his basic needs in the form of providing blanket, food (tea and bread) and fire. The act of sharing water symbolises that she is sharing her life with her. The old man plays the role of an audience who listens to her silently and provides her an opportunity to purge her emotions. The old man’s interface with Lena acts as a cathartic moment:

We have been walking a long time, *Outa*. Look at my feet.

Those little paths on the veld…Boesman and Lena helped write them.

I meet the memory of myself on the old roads. Sometimes young. Sometimes old. Is she coming or going? From where to where? All
mixed up. The right time on the wrong road, the right road leading to the wrong place. (192-193)

Moreover, she shares the experience of motherhood to him:

‘Yessus, Outa! You are asking things tonight. (Sharply)

Why do you want to know?

(Pause.)

It’s a long story.

(She moves over to him, sits down beside him.)

One, Outa, that lived. For six months. The others were born dead.

(Pause.)

That all? Ja. Only a few words I know, but a long story if you lived it.

(Murmuring from the old man.)

That’s all. That’s all.

Nee, God, Outa! What more must I say? What you asking me about? Pain? Yes! Don’t Kaffers know what that means? One night it was longer than a small piece of candle and then as big as darkness. Somewhere else a donkey looked at it. I crawled under the cart and they looked. Boesman was too far away to call. Just the sound of his axe as he chopped wood. I didn’t even have rags! (193)

Thus she tells the old man that the joy of motherhood is for six months only and the tragedy of miscarriages. Lena illustrates the experience of childbirth through this speech that resembles many of the oppressed mothers from Black and Coloured community.
In spite of Boesman’s persistent opposition, Lena gives shelter and food to the old man. She shares her bread with the old man and thinks that her bread should ‘have bruises’ because it symbolises her life, as she tells the old man:

Look at this mug, Outa…old mug, hey. Bitter tea, a piece of bread.

Bitter and brown. The bread should have bruises. It is my life (199).

Fugard wrote in his Notebooks:

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 tea and piece of bread- kept hearing her say, ‘This mug…This bread … My life’ Suddenly, and almost irreverently, remembered Lisa the other day reading a little book on the Mass – and there it was - Lena’s Mass… the moments and its ingredients (the fire, the mug of tea, the bread) because sacramental – the whole a celebration of Lena’s life. (Nb 173)

The implication in Lena’s sharing her predicament with the old man is to reiterate that they are part and parcel of potential league of marginalized races and they must raise their voice against apartheid South Africa anytime. Lena and Outa’s closeness to each other for the attainment of warmth gives clear picture of two oppressed people who share a common fate-that is their suffering, ‘Hotnot and Kaffer got no time for apartheid on a night like this’ (207). The friendship of Lena and Outa suggest that there is an affinity between ‘hotnot’ and ‘kaffer’ (Coloureds and Blacks) because of sharing common difficulties. Circumstances necessitate their standing together. It is the need of the hour that they have to back up each other in difficult circumstances. Lena starts dancing for warmth and invites the old man: “sit close now I am warm” (208). “They huddled together….under the blanket. Boesman is watching from the shelter. He lets them settle down before speaking”. (208) Durbach opines that “In sharing warmth with the old man, Lena has established a chain of sympathy that transforms the camaraderie of the damned into a community of sympathy” (71).

Lena is subjected to interrogation with two enemies in her life, first the apartheid regime, second her husband. At one stage, we observe Lena asking her husband to beat her in order to show the old African man what her husband is doing
to her, “Hit me please Boesman. For a favour” (211). And then the very next moment addresses the old man: “I have shown you the bruises. Now watch” (210). Boesman’s hitting his wife is observed on one occasion by a White man who instead of coming to the rescue of Lena rather laughs at it. His laughter indicates his satisfaction with what apartheid has instilled in Boesman’s mind and secondly suggests indifference towards the predicament of the colonized. Boesman ‘stopped hitting when the White man laughed’ (209). While the White man’s laughter may suggest his satisfaction, Boesman’s stoppage signifies that the White man has become a moral ideal for the subject people.

The beatings and bruises of Lena is reminder of the colonized’s marginal existence as Marcia Blumberg affirms that Lena’s bruised body is “a visual mark of racial and gender oppression and evidence of Boesman’s attempted silencing” (133). Boesman beats his wife can be interpreted in relation to the impact on the psyche of the colonized by the apartheid regime. Boesman hits Lena in order to keep his life warm. When Boesman asks Lena why he beats her, she replies, “to keep your life warm” (210). Lena has been provided voice to define herself while the old man is completely voiceless. This probably is symptomatic of the way some Blacks were made speechless by apartheid regime: “The old man’s voiceless state metonymically conveys the political silencing of the Black South African majority who effectively gained legitimate voice with their first votes in April 1994” (Blumberg 133). As we are aware of the fact that Fugard has written plays aiming to ‘bear witness’ on behalf of the oppressed, Outa occupies his place in Boesman and Lena forwarding his campaign of ‘bearing witness’. Though Outa is unable to speak for himself, yet his action bears witness to the lives of the people who are silenced. When Outa is completely silenced by death and Boesman does not show any involvement in the old man’s demise, Fugard enables Lena to speak symbolic words: “Now you want a witness too” (215). Alan Shelley’s statement regarding the silence of Outa and that of Boesman, to some extent, is very pertinent:

The silence that is Outa- and to some extent Boesman, who is described in one of his stage directions as ‘…in a withdrawn and violent silence’ [p 232]- also represents, in the wider context, the silencing of the entire non-White population of South Africa, silenced
socially and politically by the equally silent but all-seeing ‘eyes behind their backs. (Shelley 84)

However, in some plays of Fugard, this act of ‘silencing’ has been broken. For instance, Winston, representing the non-White community in The Island, breaks the silence by telling Creon that the people of his state see her brother’s burial as an action of honour, and they would say so, “if fear of you and another law did not force them into silence…” (The Island 226). Boesman and Lena have not been provided the courage to speak out but during that night on the mudflats, Lena shows her ability to understand herself as well as the world around her. Consequently, in one way or the other, she has spoken out against the patriarchal system and racial policies of apartheid regime.

Although Outa does not speak in Boesman and Lena and merely repeats Lena’s name, his presence affects the events and strength of the play as that of unseen Ethel in The Blood Knot. He demonstrates how inconsistent is the positions of the Coloureds in South Africa where, in accordance with racist hierarchy, they consider themselves superior to the Blacks. However, it is important to note that his presence serves as the sounding board that awakens Lena. Here at least she meets Outa face to face, while with Boesman she often beholds only his back. She accepts the difference between Outa and herself but it was different from prejudice of Boesman.

It is imperative to note that the old man has, metaphorically replaced Lena’s lost dog and he, as the lost dog, witnesses Lena’s suffering. He often sits by the fireside and calls Lena’s name repeatedly. “All the things I did- making the fire, cooking, counting bottles or bruises, even just sitting, you know, when it’s too much…he saw it” (190), Lena utters when she recalls her lost dog. She compares the old man to her lost dog because of his underdog position within the racist apartheid. Boesman’s attitude towards Outa reminds us of his attitude towards Lena’s lost dog. We are informed that Boesman often used to throw stones at the dog as Lena says:

So every time Boesman saw the dog, he throws stones. He does not like dogs. They don’t like him. But when he was not looking I threw food. (190)
Boesman did not like dogs in the past, likewise at present, he does not like the old man to live in ‘his premises.’ Interestingly the qualities Lena remembers about her dog, she finds in the old man. For instance the old man is witnessing her suffering as did the lost dog. In spite of Fugard’s tireless efforts to articulate the difficulties of the Black population in South Africa, the silent death of the old man requires introspection. The old man does not share his experience and he dies without uttering a word. Fugard himself is ambiguous regarding the silent death of the old man. The old man’s silent death may symbolise some kind of passive resistance. Many of the protest writers like Alex LaGuma in A Walk in the Night have tried to represent protest merely as opposition, but they must not forget that there are a number of subtle ways to protest against the injustice. The old man’s silent death leaves a lasting impression on Lena’s memory. Bill Ashcroft considers these subtle nuances more effective “because they are the most difficult to combat” (20). Fugard has portrayed the old man as silent because his role is that of a mere spectator. His only responsibility is to capture the events as they happen. But the great South African writer and critic Zakes Mda describes this as a misrepresentation of history. His argument is that in Boesman and Lena the ‘spirit of defiance is non-existent’ and the oppressed, ‘endowed with endless reservoir of stoic endurance,’ ‘suffer in silence’ (qtd. Blumberg 137). Durbach’s statement regarding Fugard’s role is also remarkable:

Every relationship in Fugard’s play, every action… resonates politically and critics according to their value systems, will pronounce Fugard more or less politically correct insofar as he conforms to or deviates from their belief. (62)

Similarly Spivak has discussed that the nationalist historicism, like western historicism, has isolated the subject people once again, emphasizing on the struggle as the grand narrative and neglecting the subtle ways of resistance of the common man. Thus, in a way the silent witness of the old man is not meaningless in the play.

The relationship among Boesman, Lena and Outa is of immense significance in the play because they not only undermine as being the prerogative of colonial master but also throws light on its working, how it is mediated by various hierarchical power structures. Boesman is placed within that system, though his role causes the
destruction of his own family. Ashcroft’s argument regarding imperial power is noteworthy:

if imperial power is constituted rhizomically, the acts of interpolation which characterize postcolonial discourse may be seen to be diverse, unsystematic, unpredictable, scattered and quotidian rather than programmatic and organized. (52)

In the play, Lena expresses her ‘acts of interpolation’ through dancing and singing, while Boesman expresses it through beatings. Boesman does not acknowledge Lena’s value in his life and avoids his responsibilities by continuously showing anger on his wife. He does not explain things to Lena. For instance, he avoids telling her where they are going, and what will happen to them. He is the determinant. As matter of fact his pent up frustration is released in anger all the time. He is himself uncertain and in the dark about his destination. He is deceived by the idea that he is a patriarchal man and, therefore, he does not realize that he has lost his power. Following the tradition, he puts on mask of manhood and shows his fist in response to all the ‘bloody’ question of his wife. Since Lena accepts the beating submissively considering it as the lot of subaltern, boosts Boesman’s ego and his manhood. It must be noted, “when Boesman does not understand something, he hits it” (218). Lena reveals the psychology of her husband. It means hitting is a way of avoiding reality and a mask for his ignorance. He fails to understand Lena who asserts herself by speaking out. This can be validated by citing one their various occasions Fugard has enlisted in the play. Like Lena’s refusal to follow Boesman:

Boesman: Are you coming? It is the last time I ask you.

Lena: No. The first time I tell you. No. That was a word in my mouth. No! Enough! (218)

Lena’s outburst is her expression of angst against the system prevalent in society whether it is patriarchal or apartheid. This, by the way, is the intention that Fugard wants to give through the portrayal of the society’s “two rejects”. By raising her voice against the patriarchal and apartheid system, Lena seems to be capable of superimposing her story as well as the story of the colonized onto the colonizer’s discourse.
Boesman represents self-hatred and shame: “Barely controlling his panic...He stands before LENA, a grotesquely overburdened figure” (218). Hovering between anger and uncertainty, he decides to leave nothing for Lena. This is the reason why he tries to carry all their belongings on his shoulders. As a result, he feels ‘overburdened’ physically. Through this act, Fugard wants to convey the message that Boesman’s burden on is symbolic of the fear that has percolated in the subconscious mind of the Blacks and Coloureds people in South Africa as a result of racism operated in the apartheid regime. A glimpse of rejection and fatalism is manifested in Boesman’s delineation of the tragedy of their stillborn children much before the death of the old man and Lena’s desire to accompany him:

…We are not people any more. Freedom’s not for us. We stood there under the sky…two crooked Hotnots.

So they laughed.

Sies wereld!

All there is to say. That’s our word. After that our life is dumb. Like your moer. All that came out of it was silence. There should have been noise. You pushed out silence. And Boesman buried it. Took the spade the next morning and pushed our hope back into the dirt. Deep holes! When I filled them I said it again: Sies. One day your turn. One day mine. Two more holes somewhere…(212).

Boesman’s statement, “Freedom is not for us” (212) reveals his deep pessimism. Since he is representing the entire Black community, he is articulating the hopelessness of the entire community.

In contrast to Lena, Boesman has acknowledged his present life as the life. That is why he is neither able to predict better future nor expect it so. He is so ashamed of himself that he does not like to be witnessed or remembered. His request to the old man not to observe him, ‘musa khangela’ (212) testifies it. He is of the firm belief that freedom is only possible in the grave, where he will lie with Lena: “two dead hotnots living together” (212). This defeatist attitude has been inculcated in Boesman by apartheid ideology. Though freedom is perversely and ironically a
recurrent theme in the play *Boesman and Lena*, nobody can believe that Boesman has achieved any real form of freedom. He is so oppressed by the State machinery that he cannot even imagine freedom or better future: “you want to live in a house. What do you think you are? A White madam?” (182). This is a manifestation of the discourse of colonial domination that has successfully perpetuated the false notion in the mind of the colonized that the houses cannot belong to the colonized. They are only for Whites. For him, freedom is complete illusion. Just as Morris is unable to purchase two-man farm in *Blood Knot*, Boesman cannot obtain any remnants of freedom, though Lena’s optimism at the end of the play benefits him somehow. It is Lena who acquires strength and freedom to choose to stay with him. Boesman sees his freedom disappear when his two bottles of wine are finished. On the other hand, Lena gains her freedom within herself as well as in her relationship with Boesman. At the beginning of the play, we had observed that Lena was jealous with the freedom of the birds, but towards the end we find Lena declaring that she has finally attained freedom from the weight of her past life:

What is your big word? Freedom! Tonight it’s Freedom for Lena. White man gave you yours this morning, but you lost it. Must I tell you how? When you put all that on your back. There wasn’t room for it as well. *(All their belongings are now collected together in a pile.)* You should have thrown it on the bonfire. And me with it. You should have walked away *kaal!* That’s what I am going to be now. *Kaal.* The noise I make now is going to be new. May be I’ll cry!!...Or laugh? I want to laugh as well. I feel light. Get ready, Boesman. When you walk I’m going to laugh! At you! *(219)*

Lena’s freedom has not changed her material position. It reflects a change in attitude. She has decided to be different in order to tackle and negotiate her situation and circumstances.

In Act Two, Boesman’s talks of freedom are simply making a mockery of the meaning of freedom. Ignorant to the core, he considers his homelessness as freedom and celebrates it, as he tells Lena when his shack was bulldozed and set fire on it:

White man was doing us a favour. You should have helped him. He wasn’t just burning *pondoks*...... There was something else in the fire,
something rotten. Us! Our sad stories, our smells, our world! And it burnt, boeta. It burnt. I watched that too.

The end was a pile of ashes. And quite.

Then…. ‘Here!’….then I went back to the place where our pondok had been. It was gone! You understand that? Gone! I wanted to call you and show you……. I could stand there! There was room for me to stand straight. You know what that is? Listen now. I am going to use a word. Freedom! Ja, I have heard them talk it. Freedom! That’s what the White man gave us. I have got my feelings too, sister. It was a big I had when I stood there. That’s why I laughed, why I was happy. When we picked up our things and started to walk I wanted to sing. It was freedom! (203)

Fugard has thus attempted to problematize the concept of freedom. It is worth explicating what constitutes freedom. Is it freedom without having the knowledge of what one is free from and what one is free for? Is it freedom for a man who is walking without destination? Boesman is such a man in the play who claims his freedom yet he does not know his destination. Can it be called freedom? Freedom has multi-layer connotation. Fugard wants to suggest that freedom does not come from outside, rather it comes from within. To Lena “We had to go somewhere. Couldn’t walk around Korsten carrying our freedom forever” implies that freedom should have destination (204). Lena’s statement reminds us of Frantz Fanon’s essay ‘On National Culture’ in The Wretched of the Earth, where he envisages freedom for African countries as ‘an empty shell’ because its leaders lack ideological insight and foresight. The implication is that freedom must have a purpose. When Boesman says, “freedom is a long walk” (204), he echoes Nelson Mandela’s Long Walk to Freedom. It implies that freedom comes with a price. His utterance “our days are too short” (204) suggests that freedom is unattainable. On the other hand, Lena tries to get freedom from Boesman when she refuses to enter his pondok. Boesman’s pondok symbolises debased life. Lena considers it as a coffin in which he wants to bury her:

That’s not a pondok, Boesman.[Pointing to the shelter.] It’s a coffin. All of them you bury my life in your pondoks. Not tonight. Crawl into
darkness and silence before I’m dead. No! I am on this earth, not in it.

(206)

Lena’s refusal is a symbol of freedom that she has got from Boesman. Earlier, Boesman treated Lena as his subordinate because as a husband he was responsible for her basic needs. But now, Lena has got a way of living her own life independently. Conscious of his manhood, he continues to feel accountable for her welfare. Despite her refusal to enter his pondok, he insists on kicking her out and by doing so he satisfies his patriarchal instincts. His insistence to provide shelter for Lena is just to endorse his manliness.

However, Fugard clearly shows that in spite of their differences in attitude vis-a-vis freedom, this wretched couple have a strong relationship that resembles blood knot that binds Morris and Zachariah in Blood Knot. Throughout the play, they argue and drink. Their lives, under the influence of apartheid, have been characterized by meaningless repetition and despair. Yet these two untethered characters find in each other love, affection and support. Within one night on the mudflats, Lena transforms herself and it is this transformation that makes their relationship stronger.

In accordance with race relations in apartheid South Africa, Boesman and Lena’s predicament seems to be complex one. Since they belong to the lower strata of South African Coloureds, they are considered to be a disgrace to the White South Africa because of their penury. Durbach has brilliantly describes Boesman as:

an inferior Coloured who exist[s] in the lower depths of racial and genetic coding, bearing in his very name the generic abuse heaped upon those Coloureds whose stature and features suggest a predominance of aboriginal blood. (66)

Boesman’s attitude towards the old man justifies Durbach’s statement that “the greater the marginalization, the more brutal the struggle for power and position in the jungle of apartheid” (66). While Boesman is considered rubbish by the White man, the old man is assumed rubbish by Boesman. Lena is also sies for both the White man and Boesman. Boesman calls Black people bastards. It is evident that Boesman considers himself superior to the Blacks. It is his idea of superiority under the influence of racial categories prevailed by apartheid regime that he denies to give
water to the old man to drink. He justifies his action by saying that the old man does not belong to them (Coloureds). Boesman accepts apartheid’s racial caste system because it gives him right to think himself superior to the Black one. However, he is unable to understand the racial categorization instituted by the apartheid regime whose chief aim is to keep him away from the politics and economy of the country.

Though Lena herself is oppressed by patriarchal and racial system, yet she is influenced by the stereotypes of apartheid. She names Outa’s language ‘baboon language’. The implication is that she is imitating the White man’s strategy of elimination by stereotyping. It is noteworthy that the inter-group stereotype is not the product of colonizers: rather, it was prevalent in pre-colonial South Africa. What the colonialists have contributed is that they have, particularly through apartheid, made it systematic and scientific. Boesman and Lena are unable to speak Xhosa and the old man is unable to speak Afrikaans yet they are living together isolated from society. This shows the damage done by the racist policy of apartheid. Apartheid policy of racism inherent in Boesman’s attitude is evident when he expresses his fear that Lena may attract other Blacks from the darkness. Consequently, they will interrupt his private space. He warns Lena, “Pull another one in here and you will do the rest of your talking with a thick mouth” (187). His attitude shows his struggle for power and status among the marginalized. Boesman is afraid of the fact that Blacks will turn his place into ‘kaffernes’. Similarly, the White man tries to protect his space from the culture of Blacks and Coloureds by saying ‘loop hotnot’. However, Boesman’s need for private space seems ironic because we are aware of the fact that this place actually does not belong to him, the colonizers may come any time and take it away from him.

Boesman and Lena does not narrate the story of only apartheid repression, but it tells the love story of a couple. Boesman and Lena are in love with each other in such a way that one cannot do without the other. They resemble very much Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot. At the opening of the play, they appear on the stage for the first time one after the other. Wertheim describes the nature of Boesman and Lena’s relationship in this way: “the most important word in Fugard’s title is “and”, for the two characters are a bound unit- the word “and” defines their interdependence” (58). We are informed that, while running away from White man, Boesman and Lena never leave each other. When they part ways, they wait for each other and meet again. They can tolerate the loss of all their items, but they are unable
to lose each other. Before meeting the old African man, Lena always follows Boesman. This is the reason she sees nothing but Boesman’s back. By narrating the love story of Boesman and Lena, Fugard enables us to think beyond patriarchal system. Moreover, Fugard shows how the oppressed couple reciprocate love and romance in spite of their homelessness and displacement. Fugard also reveals how they share their traumatic experience living without home under the open sky as husband and wife. Through Boesman and Lena’s relationship, the playwright articulates the complexity of life intensified by apartheid regime, for example, when Boesman beats Lena in front of the White man, the latter does not interfere because he thinks that they are husband and wife. Frantz Fanon says that such type of internal disputes among the oppressed are significant for the colonizers because they confirm their stereotypical view of the subject people. These internal disputes weaken the colonized’s ability to resist. According to Fanon:

Such behaviour represents a death wish in the face of danger, a suicidal conduct which reinforces the colonist’s existence and domination and reassures him that such men are irrational. (18)

Boesman is preoccupied with the discourse of apartheid in such a manner that when he meets the old African man for the first time, he addresses him as ‘kaffer’. It means he is from superior caste from the view point of racial hierarchy of apartheid. The word ‘kaffer’ is a derogatory term that refers to someone inferior. It is remarkable to note Boesman’s mockery of Lena. When Lena says that she wants somebody, Boesman replies, ‘you wanted somebody. There is a black one’ (185). Boesman’s tones indicates that Black is not human enough. Wertheim states:

Boesman and Lena’s noticeably names- Lena, a Eropean name and Boesman or ‘bushman’ (one of the worst things a South African Black man can be called )-ironically remind us that they are a mixed breed, unwanted, unaccepted by either race responsible for their being. For a coloured man, Boesman is a kind of ‘everyman’ and the name ‘Lena’ is European as it derives from Helena, i.e. Helen of Troy and supposedly the most beautiful woman in the world. This is ironic given the manner in which Lena has been turned into Boesman’s punching bag. (57)
Fugard’s *Notebooks* reveals his doubts about doing justice in bringing out adequately the insidious mechanism pursued by the apartheid government that had made the lives of many like that of Boesman and Lena terribly pathetic. As Fugard himself admits:

> The ‘social’ content of Boesman and Lena, nagging doubts that I am opting out on this score, that I am not saying enough. At one level their predicament is an indictment of this society, which makes people ‘rubbish’. Is this explicit enough? (181)

Many critics agree upon Fugard’s stance. A close reading of the play also establishes how dexterously the political and sociological impact of Group Areas Act has been inter-woven in *Boesman and Lena*. The political scenario of racist regime of apartheid is the background for the play, the relationship between two frantic people whose distress is the outcome of the politics of the country of their birth. As Fugard himself has admitted, ‘it has been desperate people who have fascinated me’, but his marriage has played no less significance role:

> I am on record on saying that Boesman and Lena is the story of my marriage. I have never beaten my wife in my life, and I have no intention of doing that. It’s a profound marriage- it has lasted forty odd years- but in the sense of a selfish male and of a woman who has to try and fight for her identity against that suffocating selfishness of the male- the relationship. That is the story of my relationship with Sheila, and Sheila liberated herself in a way that I tried to suggest that Lena might, because I think, at the end of Boesman and Lena, Boesman is defeated and Lena has actually risen above her predicament. (Personal Interview, November 2002)

Lena rises above her predicament when she makes her exit. Her exit underscores victory over apartheid.

The ending of *Boesman and Lena* exposed Fugard to severe criticism from the neo-Marxist school. Besides exposing the injustices of apartheid, they expected him to help bring about change. This becomes patent possibly at a metaphysical level, because Lena, at the end of the play, stands free but Boesman remains burdened as he
was at the beginning of the play. At the end of the play, it is Lena who though stands at a higher level of political challenge still has overtones of pessimism because Boesman and Lena, the two ‘reject characters’, are once again on the move that epitomises their long walk to freedom.

In *Boesman and Lena*, there are occasions when several minutes lapse without any dialogue. About this play, Fugard has said: “My whole sense of the play is that it must have a core of silence”. In *The Blood Knot* we get silence for a longer period that is only broken by the alarm clock, when Zachariah comes back home, he meets his brother without words as stage directions say: “*Their meeting is without words*”. It can be said that ‘silence’ is a deliberate device used by Fugard to advocate that, even before any violation of the dispossessed, the racist regime of apartheid has silenced them. In *The Island* John and Winston are not permitted to speak but the audience is given with a mimed dumb show which lasts for fifteen minutes.

Though Fugard is White and assumed to be potential oppressor, his endeavour to represent the marginalized and identify himself with them is remarkable. Discussing writers’ responsibility in ‘Writers in Politics’ Ngugi Wa Thiongo says that a writer is supposed not only to record injustice but also to assist change oppressive systems. However, in Fugard’s opinion, the two are not unrelated. Fugard argues that witnessing is itself a means of using discourse in order to tell the story of the people who have been marginalized by racist society of apartheid. Some critics have conceptualized Athol Fugard as ‘barking dog’ that merely irritates. Dennis Walder says that “any ideological reading of Fugard is in itself parochial because it will necessarily delimit his complexity and push him towards the either/or formulations of propaganda” (61). Fugard’s mission is, as it is obvious in his plays, to ‘witness’ the lives of poor people who have been deprived of fundamental rights though living in their own country. His plays in Black townships adequately bear witness to his mission. Unlike Ngugi, Fugard does not show interest in any particular ideological position rather he witnesses what he perceives in his surroundings. The local context of apartheid South Africa is so important for his plays that even his existentialism cannot be interpreted without it. Dennis Walder supports Fugard’s view of witnessing and says that witnessing, remembering and survival are part and parcel of any resistance to oppression. Fugard favours not only direct opposition but also the subtle ways adopted by the marginalized to resist racial oppression. Fugard is aware of the
fact that violent opposition may be regressive because the colonizers have all the technical and ideological machinery to smash any kind of political opposition. That is why subtle ways of resistance seems to be more appropriate than the direct one. Subtle opposition becomes obvious in *Boesman and Lena*, when Lena refuses to forget and to be forgotten and thus endeavours to perpetuate her ‘self’ within racist society of apartheid South Africa.

Many critics have considered *Boesman and Lena* to be “homage” to Beckett’s *Waiting For Godot* in a South African setting. However, many differ with this view. Craig McLuckie in *Twentieth Century Literature* classifies the play as “a response to the institutionally created absurdity inherent in the lives of Africans, Coloureds, and Indians under the policy of apartheid” (4). He goes on describing essential difference that Fugard’s play presents. Though both accept Camus’ path of ‘absurdity’ but there is basic difference:

Beckett produces a stark world that can be understood as a universal metaphor for the absurd nature of existence in both the physical and metaphysical realms. Fugard, less engrained in the metaphysical, offers exact information on his characters’ spatial locale and hence defines absurdity as a condition resulting from the human power structures that govern life, not as the condition of life itself. (5)

The world of Fugard’s play is effective, because it brings out the human struggle of a couple visible on the road in the landscape of domination very poignantly. Fugard’s play characterizes the psychological pathology of living and surviving of the two wanderers. Fugard’s characters do not “wait” rather they continue their walking. “It is the walking . . . that is most important” (5). Survival for them proves to be a different kind of freedom from domination. Despite the deterioration of their wills, bodies and spirits, Boesman and Lena struggle for their survival. Lena remembers past locations while moving, along with Boesman, from place to place. They get support from each other and from the memory of where they began. Depicting the predicament of these marginal figures, “Fugard extrapolates from the situation under apartheid to more universal concerns about the relationship of human beings to each other” (McLuckie 4).
Works Cited


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Personal interview with Mr. Fugard in May, 2001 at Princeton University at the time of the premiere of *Sorrows and Rejoicings*.


