

FACE ORIENTATIONS

IN

ATHOL FUGARD'S *THE ROAD TO MECCA, MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!*
AND *VALLEY SONG*

S.L. KIKAMBA

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IN
ATHOL FUGARD'S *THE ROAD TO MECCA, MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!*
AND *VALLEY SONG*

by

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, this work is fondly dedicated.

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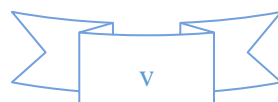
ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to address the multiple ways *face* or one's public self-image is attacked, supported and maintained in Athol Fugard's *The Road to Mecca*, *My Children! My Africa!* and *Valley Song*, and through this discussion demonstrate how the notion of *face* can make a contribution to the study and understanding of Athol Fugard's work. In the pursuit of their goals/objectives, interactants perform speech acts which may threaten the *face* of other participants. The choice of strategies available to participants in the performance of these face-threatening acts (FTAs) includes going on record, off record (indirectly) or avoiding the FTA altogether (saying nothing). Each text offers a fresh perspective from which *face* can be analysed: rebelliousness against conformism (*The Road to Mecca*); the perspective of the cross-racial, cross-cultural relationships (*My Children! My Africa!*); and the context of a closely-knit family relationship (*Valley Song*).

Keywords: *adjacency pairs, Athol Fugard, face, facework, face-threatening-acts (FTAs), implicatures, politeness, turn-taking.*

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Topic

The current study has been motivated by the facts that (1) drama theory has been “the neglected child” (Culpeper *et al.* 1998:3) of literary theory, considering that theoretical research has always been dominated by the sister fields of narratology and poetry theory; and that (2) within drama itself theoretical studies on its “language” are also relatively few, with the exception of Herman’s (1995) work, which has made a substantial contribution to the field. My study will hopefully contribute to a specific aspect within the field of dramatic language, namely by focusing on the notion of *face*. To analyse and understand language of this nature, drama theorists often make use of linguistic frameworks. This can be explained by the fact that drama “largely consists of character-to-character interaction, and it is for this reason that the most profitable areas of language analysis to apply to drama are those developed by linguists to describe *face-to-face* interaction and how we infer meaning in context” (Short 1996:168). It is in the wider context of linguistics that the notion of *face* must be understood.

To study how *dramatis personae* orient to *face* is, in fact, to seek to understand the very fabric of dramatic action. This is so because, firstly, dramatic action can only occur within the context of social interactions during which “public self-images are also transacted” (Herman 1995:190). One’s public self-image is one’s *face*, a concept Brown and Levinson (1987:61) subdivided into *negative face* or “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition”, and *positive face* or “the positive consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.” Secondly, both *face* and dramatic action are connected to one’s goals. *Face* is goal-oriented because, as Herman aptly puts it, “in ‘positive face’ the claim to have one’s self-image respected is also a want that one’s goals and self-image in interaction are positively promoted, while considerations of ‘negative face’ presuppose the want not to be impeded or imposed upon by others” (Herman 1995:190). Dramatic action would not make much sense without goals to impel characters to action for the attainment of those goals. But in the study of dramatic language “dramatic action” is perhaps a more familiar concept than *face*. It would therefore be worthwhile to shed some light on the origins of the concept.

The concept of *face* originated in China as early as the first half of the nineteenth century before appearing in translated expressions in English (e.g. “to lose *face*” and “to save *face*”) later that century. Today, it has become such a “universal feature of interaction” (St. André 2013:68) that the *Journal of Pragmatics* published at least five special issues focusing on *face* and politeness between 1978 and 2010 alone. The year 1978 is in fact a milestone in the study of *face* because during it Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson published their ground-breaking *face*-saving model of politeness in a book titled *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*, in which for the first time the notion of *face* was linked to politeness. Despite the various criticisms the model has received, it remains “the most influential model to date” (Mohsen Shahrokhi *et al.* 2013:22), and it will be the main focus of my dissertation.

My choice of Athol Fugard is justified by the fact that not only is he, according to *Time* magazine in 1989, “the greatest active playwright in the English-speaking world” but he also commands a thematic variety likely to broaden and enrich the analysis of *face*. This is in line with Helen Spencer-Oatey’s postulation that: “multiple perspectives can offer a richer and more comprehensive understanding of *face* and the frameworks needed for analyzing it” (Spencer-Oatey 2007:639).

Harold Athol Lannigan Fugard was born in Middelburg, in the South African Karoo region on 11 June 1932. His father was of Irish-Huguenot origin; his mother, an Afrikaner. Although he considers himself an Afrikaner, Fugard writes his plays in English and uses his country South Africa merely “as a setting for more universal examinations of human life, human interactions, and powers of art” (Wertheim 2000:xi). His long writing, directing and acting career earned him, among other awards, the 2011 Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre (*The American Theater Wing’s Tony Awards* 2016).

Selecting the plays on which to base the current study has not been an easy task, given the fact that Fugard has written so many titles that any combination of three plays would have been as effective for my purposes. Bearing in mind the fact that Fugard has been as productive in the new South Africa as he was in the old apartheid country, I felt it necessary to present not just the iconic anti-apartheid writer but also the post-apartheid playwright. I trust that my selection of the three plays, *The Road to Mecca* (1984), *My Children! My Africa!* (1989), and *Valley Song* (1995) is thematically diverse enough to lend the study of *face* the various contexts it requires.

In her work, Herman refers to the “social pressures” at work during interactions, arguing that “the rights, responsibilities, taboos, of speech with respect to status, race, gender, age, of the participants affect the way language can be used in contexts of communication” (Herman 1995:189-90). All these issues are catered for in the three plays in a way that is able to broaden and enrich analysis of *face*. *The Road to Mecca* deals with “the isolation of the artist and other rebels and the ability of an artist to nurture younger friends” (Heller 1993:473). *My Children! My Africa!* portrays the author’s “customary analysis of the soul of man [*sic*] under apartheid, and the appalling social tensions generated by the political system” (Durbach 1987:3). According to Wertheim (2000:177), in the play “there is a recognition that apartheid’s days are numbered and that a new generation of young people, black and white, stand on the threshold of the future. They will soon throw off the shackles of racism either to turn South Africa into a bloodbath or to forge a new society never envisioned by their parents.” In *Valley Song*, Fugard’s first post-apartheid play, the author’s role in the new South Africa is explored. As Gerard (1995) puts it, “if there was any question about what would happen to Athol Fugard’s writing once the driving force behind his art was gone, that question is put firmly to rest with his poignantly beautiful new play *Valley Song*, his first work since the end of apartheid.” These different contexts, which the three plays bring to the study, will be discussed in more detail when each play is analysed.

1.2 Research Questions

This dissertation addresses the following main question, namely: how is *face* attacked, supported and maintained in *The Road to Mecca*, *My Children! My Africa!* and *Valley Song*?

The sub-questions are:

- How was *face* conceptualised in its native China and how has it since then been conceived outside of its birthplace?
- What are the leading theories of *face* and politeness and which theory or theories form the basis of this investigation and the reasons for this choice?
- What is a *face*-threatening act (FTA) and which *face*-threatening acts affect each of the selected plays?
- What strategies do the characters adopt to carry out their *face*-threatening acts, what factors account for their choice of strategies, when and why do they change their strategies, and how do they develop as a result of those changed strategies?

- How do the systematics of turn-taking, turn sequencing, turn-allocation techniques: turn length, topic shift and repair mechanisms affect the analysis of *face* in my chosen plays?

1.3 Aims

My main goal is to explore the notion of *face* within the broader context of dramatic language and also to demonstrate, through my discussion of the three plays of Fugard, how this notion could make a contribution to the study and understanding of his work.

Other aims are:

To explore the varying ways *face* is conceptualised by the different models of politeness, and select the most suitable framework for any given context.

To identify the FTAs performed in each text or part thereof, and discuss the strategies used to counter these threats, to support or save *face* and maintain social comity.

To determine the influence of factors such as *sex*, *age*, *race*, *class*, and *status* of interactants on the speaker's choice of a particular strategy when performing the FTAs.

To demonstrate that the concept of *face* is a useful tool for reading and interpreting dramatic language in plays.

To reach these goals I have adopted the following approach.

1.4 Methodology

For the theoretical frameworks, the various models of politeness will be discussed, and the underlying concepts explained and illustrated with a corpus of eighteen examples taken from a variety of dramatic texts and ordinary speech. Special attention will be given to Brown and Levinson's *face*-saving view of politeness, given the fact that the current study deals with how characters orient to *face* in my chosen plays. Each play will be analysed individually, with the theoretical concepts relevant to the play summarised and illustrated by extracts from the play. To show how my approach differs from all the other approaches to my chosen texts, each summary of the play will be followed by reviews and previous analyses of the work. Of particular interest in the study is how norms of politeness are observed or abused, and how this may affect the relationship between participants and their goals. The pragmatics of language has to do with questions of content and meaning as they emerge in individual utterances. However, for the sake of thoroughness, my study will focus not simply on what participants say to each other or what they leave unsaid, but also on the systematics of turn-

taking, turn construction units, adjacency pairs and turn sequencing, because issues of structure such as these cannot be left out of account without impacting adversely on the content and meaning of utterances. The plays will be studied in the order in which they were written so that the author's own progression as a writer, especially his transition from an anti-apartheid to a post-apartheid playwright, can be appreciated.

1.5 Scope of Research

Given the complexity of the notion of *face* and the amount of interest it has generated amongst theorists, especially following the publication of the ground-breaking book just mentioned, by Brown and Levinson (1987), it will be impossible to base this study on all existing perspectives of *face*, however interesting they may sound. The study will therefore be grounded on the model of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson, for being "the most influential" (Eelen 2001:3) model and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the most practical. No exhaustive analysis of the selected plays will be attempted, given the fact that the analysis is not an end in itself, but serves the purpose of extrapolating some insights for the general principles guiding the work of Athol Fugard. Sources include Fugard's texts as primary sources, the whole range of articles from the Athol Fugard issue (Winter, 1993) of the *Twentieth Century Literature* journal, the various articles on *face* and related fields of sociolinguistics and linguistic politeness from the *Journal of Pragmatics*, Brown and Levinson (1987), and Herman (1995).

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of five chapters including this introduction as Chapter 1. Chapter 2 focuses on the theories that form the backbone of my inquiry, including the speech act theory (see section 2.2), that on cooperative principles and its maxims (section 2.3), ethnomethodology and conversational analysis (section 2.4). The politeness theories include Brown and Levinson's *face*-saving view of politeness (see section 2.5.3); Lakoff's rules of politeness (see section 2.5.4); Leech's politeness principle (see section 2.5.5); the social-norm view of politeness (see section 2.5.6); The conversational contract view of politeness (see section 2.5.7); Scollon and Scollon's intercultural communication model (see section 2.5.8); Arndt and Jamney's supportive facework and interpersonal politeness (section 2.5.9), and Ide's notions of *wakimae* (discernment) and *volition* (section 2.5.10). Chapter 3 analyses *The Road to Mecca* as the first play in the study. The emphasis will be placed on how the three characters, Helen Martins, her friend Elsa and Dominee Marius deal with the central question

of whether the ageing artist, Martins, should be transferred to the church-run old age home or be allowed to keep her house and her sculptures. Chapter 4 focuses on *My Children! My Africa!* in which Fugard explores the cross-cultural, cross-racial and cross-gender relationship between an underprivileged black student from the township by the name of Thami Mbikwana and his schoolmaster Mr Anela Myalatya (or simply Mr M), and Isabel Dyson, a white student from a middle-class white family. Chapter 5 analyses *Valley Song*, Fugard's first post-apartheid play, which focuses both on the possibilities open to the play's central character, the young Veronica of mixed race, opportunities once denied to her kind, and on Fugard's own future as an artist, in the absence of his perennial theme of apartheid. Each chapter begins with previous analyses and reviews of the play in question in order to demonstrate why my approach is different to and perhaps more comprehensive than traditional approaches. The insights drawn from each play are summarised in the conclusion to each chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1. Introduction

The main question my dissertation seeks to answer is how *face* is threatened in the selected Fugard's play-texts and what strategies are used to support and maintain it. This chapter deals with the frameworks for understanding and analysing *face* and the correlative concept of politeness. The frameworks I have used are varied and not restricted to politeness theories, in order to afford the analysis of face the multifacetedness it requires.

A helpful starting point for a review of politeness theories is the classification proposed by Fraser (1990), which outlines how politeness has been systematically approached by researchers in the field. It includes the *face-saving view*, the *social norm view*, the *conversational maxim view*, and the *conversational contract view*. The *face-saving view* is indebted to Brown and Levinson (1987), who were the first to define politeness in terms of *face-maintenance*. The notion of *face* being central to my study makes the *face-saving view* a core model in my investigation (see section 2.5.3 for a detailed discussion of the model). Whereas, according to the *social norm view*, politeness entails the observance by members of a given society of the socially-prescribed set of norms or rules in that society (see section 2.5.6), in terms of the *conversational maxim view*, to be polite means that one should adhere to the cooperative principle and its maxims as championed by H.P. Grice (see section 2.3). The *conversational contract view*, on the other hand, views politeness as a contract with rights and obligations binding co-participants in a conversation, according to which, to be polite requires acting within the terms of the contract (see section 2.5.7). To broaden the approach to *face* and politeness, more perspectives have been included, namely those employed by Scollon and Scollon's (2001) *intercultural communication model* (see 2.5.8), Arndt and Jamney's *supportive facework and interpersonal politeness* (see 2.5.9), and Ide's *notions of discernment and volition* (see 2.5.10).

Brown and Levinson (1987) base their analysis of politeness squarely on speech acts as these threaten the speaker's or the addressee's face or both. The chapter begins with a discussion of the speech act theory drawing from the work Austin and Searle did in the field. The contributions that ethnomethodology and conversation analysis have made to the study of dramatic language have not been overlooked. I believe that the structural approaches which these methods offer will complement the speech act and politeness theories and enrich the

current investigation. Herein the focus will fall on how the systematics of turn-taking, including turn allocation, length, topic control as well as adjacency pairs (see ethnomethodology and conversation analysis under 2.4) come to influence the interpretation and understanding of my selected plays. Since, as just mentioned, Brown and Levinson's (1987) study is based on speech acts, it is appropriate to begin with a discussion of this theory.

2.2. Speech Act Theory

The traditional approach to language had it that "human utterances consist exclusively of true or false statements about the world" (Baldick 2008:314). This view of language was challenged by the English philosopher J. L. Austin who posited that by saying something, one also does something, that human utterances consist not only of constatives (true or false statements) but also of performatives – a performative being "a kind of utterance that performs with language the deed to which it refers (e.g. *I promise to come*), instead of describing some state of affairs" (*Ibid.*:252). Austin's findings were published posthumously as *How to do things with words* (1962) which, together with the work that Austin's pupil the American John Searle did in the field, laid the foundations of what is known as the speech act theory.

This section begins by describing the distinction between a locution, an illocution and a perlocution of a speech act on the one hand, and direct and indirect speech acts on the other (see under 2.2.1), before the different categories of speech acts are discussed (see under 2.2.2). These categories will help narrow the field of inquiry to some specific speech acts as they occur in the chosen play-texts.

2.2.1. Locution, illocution and perlocution

In his speech act theory Austin (1962) investigated why it is that in ordinary speech people can mean more than they say. He distinguishes between a locution or "the actual words uttered" (Thomas 1995:49), an illocution or "the force or intention behind the words" (*Ibid.*), and a perlocution or "the effect of the illocution on the hearer" (*Ibid.*). The importance of this distinction lies in the fact that speech acts such as requesting, ordering, commanding, threatening or inviting are not always stated explicitly, and need to be inferred. For example, the following speech act instantiates a threat in disguise:

Example (1) *“I hear you’re the foreman of the jury in the Soprano trial. It’s an important civic responsibility. You have a wife and kids. We know you’ll do the right thing.”* (Lee and Pinker 2010:785).

The speaker is not explicitly threatening the addressee but by stressing that the foreman of the jury had “an important civic responsibility” and by dragging the foreman’s wife and children into the conversation, the speaker is implying that the latter could suffer dire consequences, should he not do the “right” thing, that is, act as it is being hinted of him. Herman (1995:243) is right that “the unsaid can hover” and “can function as weapon and could be used for power, manipulation, deceit...” Speech acts can be indirect, as in the above example, or direct. What distinguishes an indirect speech act from a direct speech act is, according to Searle (1969, 1976), following in Austin’s footsteps, the fact that in the former the force of the act (its illocutionary force) is not restricted to the linguistic code (the propositional content, in Searle’s terms), whereas in a direct speech act there is an unambiguous link between the code and the force.

2.2.2. Classification of speech acts

Austin classified speech acts as “verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behavetives, and expositives” (Oishi 2006:4), which he explains as the passing of judgment (verdictive), exerting of influence or power (exercitive), assuming of obligation or declaration of one’s intention (commissive), expressing of feelings or attitude (behavetives) and arguing or simply communicating (expositive) (*Ibid.*). Since Austin himself “was far from happy with his classification” (Herman 1995:168), I will use the following classification as systematised by Searle:

2.2.2.1 Representatives

These “commit the speaker to the truth of the proposition expressed, as in stating, asserting” (*Ibid.*). A clear example is to be found in the following extract from Eugene Ionesco’s *Victims of Duty* (1958) cited by Simpson in Culpeper *et al.* (1998:43):

Example (2)

DETECTIVE: ... do you know where she [the concierge] is? Do you know if she’ll soon be back? (...)

CHOUBERT: The concierge should soon be back, Monsieur. Theoretically she only goes out on Saturday nights. Goes dancing, you know, every Saturday night, since she married her daughter off. And as this is Tuesday

night...

DETECTIVE: Thank you, Monsieur, thank you very much (...)

Choubert's answer to the detective is a true-or-false statement that only Choubert can attest as to its truth. Through his statement, Choubert "represents the world as he (...) believes it is, thus making the words fit the world of belief" (Huang 2007:106).

2.2.2.2 Directives

These "attempt to get the interlocutor to do things for the speaker as in requests" (Herman 1995:168) and include "advice, commands, orders, questions, and requests" (Huang 2007:107). The following extract from the same play by Eugene Ionesco abounds with directives as in the form of questions:

Example (3)

DETECTIVE: Is this Mallot? I'm being very patient.

CHOUBERT: [after a moment's silence] You know, Monsieur Inspector, I...

DETECTIVE: Chief Inspector!

CHOUBERT: I'm sorry, you know, Monsieur Chief Inspector; I can't really tell [...] it certainly seems it could be him...

DETECTIVE: When did you know him and what did he talk to you about?

CHOUBERT: [lowering himself on to a chair] Forgive me, Monsieur Chief Inspector, I'm terribly tired! ...

DETECTIVE: My question is: when did you know him and what did he talk to you about?

CHOUBERT: When did I know him? [...]

DETECTIVE: Answer!

CHOUBERT: What did he talk to me about? ... What did he ... But when on earth did I meet him? ... When was the first time I saw him? When was the last time?

DETECTIVE: It's not my job to give the answers.

(Ionesco in Culpeper *et al.* 1998:44)

In all his turns the detective either asks a question or orders Choubert to answer, which shows he holds the power in the exchange, a shift from the previous one. I will come back to this exchange when I analyse politeness strategies.

2.2.2.3 Commissives

Commissives "commit the speaker to some future course of action. They express the speaker's intention to do something" (Huang 2007:107) such as "offers, pledges, promises, refusals and threats" (*Ibid.*) In the following extract from Act One of Fugard's play *Boesman*

and Lena, Boesman makes his intention clear that the next time they walk he will not stop to wait for Lena, which is virtually a threat:

Example (4)

*BOESMAN: [Shaking his head as he finally breaks his silence].
Yessus, Lena! I'm telling you, the next time we walk...
LENA: Don't talk about that now, man.
BOESMAN: The Next Time We Walk! ...
LENA: Where?
BOESMAN: ... I'll keep on walking. I'll walk and walk...
LENA: Eina!
BOESMAN:... until you're so bloody moeg [exhausted] that when I stop you can't open your mouth!*

(Fugard 2000:195)

2.2.2.4 Expressives

Expressives “express a psychological attitude or state in the speaker such as joy, sorrow, and likes/dislikes” (Huang 2007:107) and include speech acts such as “apologizing, blaming, congratulating, praising and thanking” (*Ibid.*) A useful example is to be found in the following extract from Shakespeare’s *Othello*, through the exchange between Cassio and Iago, who are praising the beauty of Desdemona:

Example (5)

*CASSIO: She is a most exquisite lady.
IAGO: And, I'll warrant her, full of game.
CASSIO: Indeed, she is a most fresh and delicate creature.
IAGO: What an eye she has! Methinks it sounds a parley of provocation.
CASSIO: An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest.
IAGO: And when she speaks, is it not an alarm to love?
CASSIO: She is indeed perfection.*

(2.3.12-27 in Herman 1995:149)

Desdemona’s beauty is praised (and magnified) by means of a series of attributes *expressing* the actors’ psychological state, their feelings and emotions.

2.2.2.5. Declarations

This class of speech acts involves “institutional authority and effect[s] changes in institutional or public states of affairs, like declaring war, naming ships, etc.” (Herman 1995:168). To be included in this category of speech acts are “bidding in bridge, declaring war, excommunicating, firing from employment, and nominating a candidate” (Huang 2007:108).

Such institutional acts being beyond the scope of the current inquiry, no further discussion of this type of speech acts is necessary.

2.2.3. Felicity conditions

Felicity conditions are “conditions under which words can be used properly to perform actions” (*Ibid.*:99). According to Searle (1975), the successful performance of a speech act hinges on the following four conditions:

2.2.3.1. Propositional content

This condition determines what is required of the speaker or the hearer by the act. For example a promise requires that the speaker undertakes to perform a future act on behalf of the hearer. The speech act of request, as a directive (see section 2.2.2.2 above), “requires that the propositional content of an utterance refer to a future act A of H” (Herman 1995:169), whereas apologising, when expressed directly, is realised through

An explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), which selects a routinized, formulaic expression of regret (a performative verb) such as: (be) sorry; apologize, regret, excuse, etc. The IFID fulfils the function of signalling regret (on the S’s part) for X (the violation), and thus is intended to placate H.

(Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984:206).

2.2.3.2. Preparatory condition

In the case of a request, the speaker must believe that the addressee has the ability to do what is asked of him/her, and that what is requested is not something the addressee was going to do anyway. Therefore, telling someone to leave when it is clear s/he is leaving would not qualify as a genuine request. The questioning by the detective in example (3) above seems to meet the preparatory condition in that it is evident, to infer from his growing frustration, that the information he is seeking is not going to be given by Choubert voluntarily.

2.2.3.3. The sincerity condition

The speaker must be sincere. A request, for example, must count as the speaker's attempt to persuade the addressee to do something on the speaker's behalf. In the case of an apology, there must be no doubt that the speaker is being sincere, that s/he truly regrets what he has done. It is clear from example (1) that the speaker means business by his careful choice of words to show how important the case is to him (*it is an important civic responsibility*, he says), while the fact that he invokes the addressee's family increases the force of the threat, with the family seen as a potential target for retribution, should the addressee fail to act accordingly.

2.2.3.4. The essential condition

The speaker intends that the act counts as such and the addressee recognises that intention on the part of the speaker. As regards a request, for example, the addressee must recognise that something is being asked of him/her and that this is what the speaker intends. It must be clear to the addressee in example (1) that he is being threatened and that the act is not a pat on the back.

Sometimes the same propositional content may have, depending on the context, more than one illocutionary force. The felicity conditions could help determine which particular illocutionary force an utterance carries. For example, the utterance "*I will come to your house at 8pm*" might count as a promise (if the act is in the best interest of the addressee, that is, if the addressee wants to be visited) or as a threat (if the speaker is not welcome). Speech acts, especially felicitous ones, can also serve to determine the power relations between characters in an interaction. For example, the issuer of a felicitous order must be someone with more power than the executer of the order, as in example (3) above, in which the detective is more powerful than Choubert. If the issuer of the order has no such power over the addressee, the order will be infelicitous, and if the order is issued anyway, it will amount to an exercise of power with consequences for *face* (for more on power, see section 2.5.3.3 below). Austin's ideas were advanced by the work H. P. Grice carried out on the cooperative principle. A discussion of this principle and its maxims will now follow.

2.3. The Cooperative Principle (CP) and its Maxims

Thanks to Grice, pragmatics is today established as a separate discipline within linguistics (see Watts 2003:57 and also Pfister 2010:1266). In fact, three of the leading politeness theories (Robin's *rules of politeness*, Leech's *politeness principle*, and Brown and Levinson's *face-saving view of politeness*) are all grounded on the Cooperative Principle (CP) in accounting for reasons for people's deviations from its maxims, although as I will argue later one can comply fully with the CP maxims and still come across as impolite. According to Watts (2003:203), "Grice's Cooperative Principle was the cornerstone of models that explain polite utterances as one way of achieving mutual cooperation or contributing towards the establishment and maintenance of mutual face." Therefore, understanding those models presupposes knowledge of the workings of the CP and its underlying maxims.

The CP is formulated so as "to make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1989:26). To explicate the general principle Grice posited four maxims (quality, quantity, relation and manner). These maxims account for cooperation in interaction both when they are observed and when they are flouted, to generate what Grice called *implicatures* (I will discuss this concept under 2.3.2 below).

2.3.1 Maxims (quality, quantity, relation and manner)

I summarise these maxims as follows:*The Maxim of Quality*

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically,

- (i) Do not say what you believe to be false
- (ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

The Maxim of Quantity

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange
- (ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

The Maxim of Relevance

Make your contribution relevant

The Maxim of Manner

- (i) Be perspicuous, and specifically

- (ii) Avoid obscurity
- (iii) Avoid ambiguity
- (iv) Be brief.

(Levinson 1983:101-2 in Herman 1995:174)

In the following extract from Arnold Wesker's *Chicken soup with barley* all four maxims seem to have been observed:

Example (6) *Sarah: You took the children to the Lottie's?*
Harry: I took them.
Sarah: They didn't mind?
Harry: No. They didn't mind.

(Wesker [1959] 1985:13-16 in Herman 1995:125)

Providing that the truth which is conditional on the hearer's proposition is met, in other words that the children have truly been taken to the Lottie's, the hearer has been truthful (maxim of quality), informative (maxim of quantity), satisfies the speaker's goal in asking (maxim of relevance) and is clear and unambiguous (maxim of manner). When all maxims are observed as per example (6), no inference is necessary because there is no mismatch between what is stated and what is meant. Full compliance with the CP maxims is similar to what speech act theory refers to as direct speech acts. Compliance as well as non-compliance with any of the maxims may be consequential in the interpretation of characters in plays. For example, in the following short extract from George Bernard Shaw's *You never can tell* (1898), cited by Leech (2008:121), the young lady (Dolly), by being truthful in full compliance with the maxim of quality, has caused offence to the dentist.

Example (7)

DENTIST... Why didn't you let me give you gas?
YOUNG LADY. Because you said it would be five shillings extra.
DENTIST. [Shocked] Oh, don't say that. It makes me feel as if I had hurt you for the sake of five shillings.
YOUNG LADY. [With cool insolence] Well, so you have.

The CP and its maxims "function as rules of linguistic behaviour governing linguistic production and interpretation" (Eelen 2001:2). Hence, full compliance with these rules, that is when "maximally informative communication or clarity is reached" (*Ibid.*) may be

consequential to characterisation as may any deviation from the said rules through the generation of implicatures (see next section).

2.3.2 Implicatures

A speaker can flout one or more of the CP maxims with the intention of generating *implicatures*, which are defined as “a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker’s utterance without being part of what is said” (Horn 2004:3), in other words, that which is implied in speech/conversation.

Example (8) *Speaker: What time is it?*
Hearer: Lunch is ready.

If the speaker assumes that the hearer is cooperating despite the appearances, meaning must be found outside the linguistic code (lunch being ready). The hearer, by answering the way s/he did, must have known that the intention of the speaker is less to know the exact time than to establish whether lunch was ready, perhaps because it is long past lunch-time and the speaker is too hungry to wait. Here is an even more interesting case, owing to the degree of the apparent irrelevance of the answer to a seemingly simple question (the example is taken from Yule 1996:43):

Example (9) *Bert: Do you like ice-cream?*
Ernie: Is the Pope Catholic?

To Bert’s question, Ernie’s response seems overtly irrelevant. A simple *yes* or *no* would suffice to answer. Assuming Ernie is being cooperative, since this is the condition for the generation of implicatures, an interpretation is needed here. If it is *obvious* that the Pope, as head of the Catholic Church, is Catholic, it would follow, by inference, that Ernie *obviously* likes ice-cream. These examples show how crucial implicatures are to understanding conversational speech and, drama being the conversational mode *par excellence*, the language of any play. Herman strikes a similar note:

The concept of implicature is important because it enables us not to restrict a concept of meaning in communication only to the code. The use of contextualized implicatures means that “meanings” can be created with respect to the particular context and the conditions that obtain within it.

(Herman 1995:176)

To illustrate how implicatures function in dramatic discourse, an extract follows, taken from Shaw's *You never can tell* as cited in Leech (2008:130):

Example (10)

M'COMAS. ... Miss Clandon: it is my duty to tell you that your father has also persuaded himself that Mr Valentine wishes to marry you –
VALENTINE. [Interpoising adroitly] I do.
M'COMAS. [Huffily] In that case, sir, you must not be surprised to find yourself regarded by the young lady's father as a fortune hunter.
VALENTINE. So I am. Do you expect my wife to live on what I earn?

There are two implicatures generated in this extract that are worth considering. By saying “your father has also persuaded himself...” M'Comas seems to be implying that the young lady's father was not convinced about the idea of her daughter marrying someone he accuses of being “a fortune hunter” but had managed to accept the fact. Valentine chooses to reject the accusation indirectly by means of an implicature, which seems to imply that the accusation is misguided, that his future wife had a legitimate claim to her father's fortune but so did he, as her future husband. By turning the fortune-hunter accusation on its head by means of an implicature, making it sound like an act of generosity, Valentine managed to “get us from what is said to what is meant but with respect not only to communicating illocutionary goals, but also to social goals – of maintaining social comity and equilibrium,” which Herman (1995:194) cites as being the function of implicatures.

Implicatures arise not only from flouts of the maxims but also from the speaker showing awareness of the maxims. This awareness is often expressed through hedges that can be grouped according to the kind of maxim being invoked. For example, hedges such *as far as I know, I may be wrong but...* signal the speaker's awareness of the maxim of quality; for the maxim of quality, hedges include, *as you probably know already, let me reiterate the fact that*, etc.; for the maxim of relation, *Oh, by the way, I am not sure if this is relevant*, etc.; and for the maxim of manner, *I am not sure if this is clear, but...*

Grice distinguishes between conversational implicatures which are “derived by making use of the maxims of the Cooperative Principle” (Watts 2003:275) as opposed to the more

conventional implicatures, which are generated through “implications attached by convention to the linguistic structure of an utterance.” (*Ibid.*) As such, the conventional implicatures are simply too numerous to account for within the scope of the current study and will therefore not be the focus. To this point, the emphasis has been on the pragmatic approach to speech acts. In the following section, attention shifts to a more structural approach with ethnomethodology and conversational analysis.

2.4. Ethnomethodology and Conversational Analysis

Ethnomethodologists, the most prominent amongst whom are Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks (see Herman 1995:77), are a group of scholars who, instead of keeping to the old method of using questionnaires to analyse conversational behaviour, decided to study actual interactions in order to abstract the “regularities” and “mechanisms that underlie such regularities” (*Ibid.*) Most useful to the current study is perhaps the set of norms or conventions governing turn-taking as structured into the so-called systematics of turn-taking, to which I will now turn.

2.4.1 Systematics of turn-taking

In drama speech acts do not occur in isolation. They are part of larger units called “turns” through which speakers control speech in an interaction in a process called turn-taking. There are norms or conventions governing turn-taking. An investigation carried out in this field by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978) found out that:

- (1) Turn changes when speakers alternate
- (2) The norm is that one speaker speaks at a time
- (3) Instances of two or more speakers speaking at the same time are rare but they do occur
- (4) Alternation from one turn to another can happen without a gap or overlap
- (5) There is variation in turn order
- (6) There is variation in turn size
- (7) Turn length is neither predetermined nor fixed
- (8) The topic of discussed is neither predetermined nor fixed
- (9) Turn distribution is neither predetermined nor fixed
- (10) The number of interactants can vary

- (11) Talk can flow smoothly or be discontinued
- (12) Turn allocation is governed by rules such as the current speaker selecting the next the next speaker selecting him- or herself
- (13) Turn units are constructed differently and their size can vary from one word to full sentences
- (14) When an error has occurred in turn taking, the error can be repaired through a repair mechanism.

(Sacks *et al.* 1978)

Dramatic discourse is characteristically dialogical, that is, “characterized or constituted by the interactive, responsive nature of dialogue rather than by the single-mindedness of monologue” (Baldick 2008:88): for this to take effect the *dramatis personae* must have more or less equal rights to the floor. Speech is, according to the systematics of turn-taking, broken into turns, with one speaker speaking at a time and stopping before another speaker takes over the speech, when the current turn ends at the *transitional relevance place*. Turn-taking includes a set of rules for distributing turns and other rules for constructing turns. Turns are distributed as follows: the current speaker selecting the next speaker, or the next speaker self-selecting, or the turn lapsing and being incorporated by the current speaker as a pause. Meanwhile, turn units can vary from one word to a sentence.

Failure to observe rule (1), for example when a speaker fails to take up a turn as expected, could have implications for the interpretation of the extract in question.

The one-speaker-at-a-time rule (rule 2) is important because, unlike real-life conversations, “dramatic speech is generally regarded as tidied up speech, and smooth turn change would be the required norm, given that stage speech needs to be audible to the audience” (Herman 1995:93). This is because “if compared to real-life talk, dramatic texts generally exhibit no paralinguistic features; similarly, overlaps, false starts and unintended obscurities are absent and in general, interaction in fiction seems characterized only by medial exchanges, while opening and closing sequences are generally left out” (Piazza 1999:1001). This aspect will be discussed in more depth in subsequent chapters when the plays are considered.

Intra-turn interruptions and overlaps are possible and these may be significant to the interpretation of the balance of power between the characters, whereby the more powerful speaker should be the one interrupting the less powerful speaker. But as with any other rule, this can be abused with consequences.

Turn order varies as per rule (5) and in a multi-party exchange the order should be A, B, C etc. However, should one speaker drop out in the course of the exchange, an interpretation needs to be pinned to the speaker's silence.

Although turn distribution is neither predetermined nor fixed as per rule (9), "how turn rights are distributed in the who-speaks-to-whom, who-is-not-spoken-to dimension, can be consequential" (Herman 1995:114).

All the above rules will further be clarified in the subsequent chapters when the selected texts are analysed. For the moment, I cite two excerpts from Henrik Ibsen's play *A doll's house*, the first from Act One illustrating Nora as being as submissive to her husband as she could be, the second from Act Three showing Nora turning the tables of her husband's dominance. This can be done by merely studying the structure of the turns, for example who takes the longest turns, who initiates conversation and who controls the topic of discussion, etcetera.

Example (11)

- (1) *Helmer [from his study]: Is that my little skylark twittering out there?*
- (2) *Nora [busy opening the parcels]: It is.*
- (3) *Helmer: Scampering about like a little squirrel?*
- (4) *Nora: Yes.*
- (5) *Helmer: When did the squirrel get home?*
- (6) *Nora: Just this minute. [She slips the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.] Come in here, Torvald, and you can see what I've bought.*
Helmer: I'm busy! [A moment later he opens the door and looks out, pen in hand.] Did you say 'bought'? What, all that? Has my little featherbrain been out wasting money again?

(Ibsen 1965:148)

In the above example the turns are easily allocated in the form of question and answer, so that the selection of speaker is equally easy. When a question is asked, an answer is expected, which Nora provides wholeheartedly. Speech flows because there are just two characters involved. As for turn-length, an indicator of power relations, Helmer's are long, whereas Nora's are comparatively short, monosyllabic in some cases. It need hardly be mentioned that Helmer is the dominant character here. It is obvious that he is in control of the talk, belittling his wife, with which the latter simply acquiesces. The fact that she does not even dare to reject her husband's attempts to denigrate her with attributes like "my little skylark", "a little

squirrel”, “my little featherbrain” seems to attest to her role of a submissive, obedient housewife. However, in the following excerpt Nora becomes more assertive:

Example (12)

(Herein Nora makes it clear to Helmer, her husband of eight years, that she is leaving him, turning him into a frightened and helpless man)

- (1) *Helmer [at the open door]: (...) Why, what's this? Not in bed? You've changed your clothes!*
- (2) *Nora [in her everyday things]: Yes, Torvald, I've changed my clothes*
- (3) *Helmer: But why? At this hour!*
- (4) *Nora: I shan't sleep tonight*
- (5) *Helmer: But, my dear Nora –*
- (6) *Nora [looking at her watch]: It's not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald – you and I have a lot to talk over. [She sits down at one side of the table.]*
- (7) *Helmer: Nora – what is all this? Why do you look so stern?*
- (8) *Nora: Sit down – this'll take some time. I have a lot to talk to you about.*
- (9) *Helmer [sitting across the table from her]: Nora, you frighten me – I don't understand you.*
- (10) *Nora: No, that's just it – you don't understand me. And I've never understood you – until tonight. No, you mustn't interrupt – just listen to what I have to say. Torvald, this is a reckoning.*

(Ibid.:224-5)

The exchange continues with Nora's turns, unusually long and Helmer's, uncharacteristically short, until she leaves him.

A study of the excerpt reveals how Nora has developed as a character from who she was at the beginning of the play. Although Helmer still asks questions as in turns (1) and (3), Nora no longer contends herself with pleasing him as before. Her answers to his questions in turns (4) and (5) are unexpected, which instantiates her disenchantment. She no longer conforms to the role of a subservient housewife, as demonstrated by her answers to his questions (shifting from expected answers to unexpected ones). Nora has gone from being a wimp in the first part of the play to being assertive in the second part. There are other structural details that have changed such as the average length of her turns, which are distinctly longer in the last Act of the play than they were earlier on in the play.

Understanding the workings of turns, how the rules of turn-taking are observed or flouted in talk exchange, can indeed enrich understanding dramatic language in a way that a study focused on speech acts alone cannot do.

2.4.2 Adjacency pairs

Dramatic dialogue does not consist of isolated speech acts but rather of a chain of turns flowing smoothly, one after another, such as when a question is asked and an answer is expected, when a request is made and an acceptance or refusal is given, when a complaint is formulated and an apology follows (Short 1996:205). Such paired sequences are called *adjacency pairs*, a term which refers to “utterances produced by two successive speakers in such a way that the second utterance is identified as a follow-up to the first” (Holmes 2008:378).

In the example (11) above, Nora’s turns (2), (4) and (6) are instances of “structurally expected next act[s]” (Yule 1996:79) following on Helmer’s turns (1), (3) and (5), respectively.

Preferred acts are less interesting than when, as in example (12), the second parts provided are unexpected or “dispreferred” (*Ibid.*), in which case conflict arises. Such conflict is what characterises drama in which “the interactants – fictitious as they are – try to assert themselves, insult each other, ignore each other, refuse to do what they are asked to do, don’t bother to be polite, create unnecessary obstacles and so on.” (Burton cited in Piazza 1999:1002).

In example (12) above Nora, in the light of her changed behaviour, has become more interesting as a character. I argue that she now has “character” in that she is able to stand up to her domineering husband.

In the following example (cited in Culpeper *et al.* 1998:89) taken from the film *Scent of a woman* (1992) (directed by Martin Brest, the film is a remake of the 1974 Italian film *Profumo de donna*) Charlie (abridged CH) is at the receiving end of a flurry of verbal abuses from the blind colonel (COL) he is supposed to be looking after:

Example (13)

(1) CH: Sir?

(2) COL: Don’t call me Sir.

(3) CH: I’m sorry, I mean mister, Sir.

(4) COL: Uh–ooh, we’ve got a moron here, is that it?

- (5) *CH: No mister... I ... er ... that is ... er ... lieutenant, yes sir, lieut –*
 (6) *COL: Lieutenant-Colonel. Twenty-six years on the line, nobody ever busted me four grades before. Get in here, you idiot.*

The colonel's turns can be scrutinised for asymmetrical conversational behaviour in relation to Charlie's turns. In turn (2) the colonel orders Charlie to stop calling him "sir", insults him in turn (4) and calls him an "idiot" in turn (6). Later in the film, Charlie changes his conversational behaviour, becoming more assertive, forceful and even abusive. The circumstances have changed. The colonel is threatening to kill himself with a gun. Charlie is trying to stop him:

Example (14)

- (1) *COL: Get out of here.*
 (2) *CH: I'm staying right here.*
 (3) *COL: Get out of here.*
 (4) *CH: I'm staying right here.*
 (5) *COL: I'll blow your fucking head off.*
 (6) *CH: Do it. You want to do it, do it. Let's go. [Pause]*
 (7) *COL: Get out of here.*
 (8) *CH: Look, you fucked up, alright, so what? So everybody does it. Get on with your life would you.*
 (9) *COL: What life? I got no life. I'm in the dark here, you understand? I'm in the dark, you understand? I'm in the dark.*
 (10) *CH: So give up. You want to give up, give up. Because I'm giving up too. You say I'm through, you're right, I'm through. We're both through. It's all over. So let's get on with it. Let's fucking do it. Let's fucking... pull the trigger... you miserable blind motherfucker. [Pause] Pull the trigger.*

(Ibid. :92)

I will come back to these examples for the discussion of politeness strategies in the next section.

2.5. The Notion of *Face* and Politeness Theories

This section starts with an explanation of the notion of *face* as the central piece of the inquiry, with perspectives from China, where the notion of *face* originated in the early nineteenth century, including contributions from Hu (1944), Ho (1976), Hwang (1987), Gu (1990), Mao (1994) and Zhai (2004). Discussion of the modern conceptualisations of face begins with Goffman's notion of *face*, followed by Brown and Levinson's *face*-saving view of politeness, Lakoff's rules of politeness, Leech's politeness principle and its maxims, The social-norm view of politeness, the conversational contract view, Scollon and Scollon's intercultural communication model, Arndt and Jamney's supportive facework and interpersonal politeness and Ide's notion of *wakimae* (discernment) and volition. Of all models, Brown and Levinson's has received the most attention, and is the model on which I am anchoring my study. The notion of African *face* will be invoked alongside the Chinese concept of *mianzi* (face) with which it appears to share a common understanding of *group face* and *individual face* (see Grainger *et al.* 2010:2160).

2.5.1 The Chinese concept of *mianzi*

The concept of *face*, together with the expressions “to give face” and “to lose face”, has its roots in nineteenth-century China (see Mao 1994:454), where it was seriously examined for the first time by the Chinese scholar Hu (1944). Hu (1944:45) defines *face* as an individual's “prestige”; Ho (1976:883) describes it as “respectability and/or deference”; Gu (1990:239) ties it to the maxims of “respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement,” and Mao (1994) explains it as “the harmony of individual conduct with the views and judgement of the community.” All these definitions highlight the interconnectedness of the individual to her/his group, a characterisation of *face* well captured by Chinese scholars Ming He and Shao-Jie Zhang (2011:2361):

Mianzi [face] claims are closely linked to factors such as position, wealth, power, ability, family status, personal ties, knowledge, and character. Some of these factors, such as ability, wealth, knowledge, and character, belong to an individual whose *mianzi* is at stake, while some are not directly related to the individual. But related to others with whom the individual is closely associated, or even to the individual's social group that are defined by position, status, or other factors.

According to this definition there is, on the one hand, the individual whose *face* is being analysed and, on the other hand, both the people and the factors that he/she holds dear. Attention to an individual's *mianzi* centred on the person's private desires, without due consideration of the interests of the group to which the individual belongs, does not comply with the above definition of *face*. This view of *face* seems to reach to the very core of what it means to be a human being:

Being human is not about being an individual at all – it is about belonging to a particular group of individuals. At a very basic level, who we are is defined by the social networks and communities to which we belong. When asked to describe ourselves, we reply by talking about our relationships to people and places – as sons, mothers, husbands, or friends; as members of nations, ethnic groups, or neighbourhoods, as employees, as consumers of certain brands and the lifestyles that go with them.

(SIRC 2007:7)

In a group orientation the embryonic notion of *African face* (see Grainger *et al.* 2010) can find fertile ground on which to thrive, given the scarcity of independent research into this field. Of the little work there has been on African politeness, mention must be made of Nwoye (1992), Kasanga (2006) and Ige (2007), (all three cited in Grainger *et al.* 2010). Investigating the Igbo of Nigeria, Nwoye (1996) found that for the Igbo, there is not only a *group face* and *individual face* but that, most importantly, *group face* is superordinate to *individual face*. This may be consequential to the interpretation of some speech acts as employed by Africans who adhere to *group face*. As Nwoye (1996) discovered, in societies such as the Igbo of Nigeria individuals do welcome criticisms and requests from fellow members, rather than consider them as an imposition. In the same vein, cooperation with one's group is preferable to being sincere and truthful as an individual. Kasanga (2006) found that the Sepedi people of northern South Africa tend to use direct speech acts in making requests. Investigating black South Africa students for her PhD thesis, Ige (2007) established that men were more collective-oriented than were women, who focused more on individual *face*. Since the three Fugard plays I am studying are set in Africa, I cannot afford to overlook these findings on an African perspective of politeness, however rudimentary they may be.

2.5.2 Erving Goffman's concepts of face and facework

In 1955 the sociologist Erving Goffman reformulated the concept of *face* in his paper “*On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction*,” making several attempts to deracinate the notion of its Chinese roots (St. Andre 2013:75). Abandoning the Chinese expressions “to lose face” and “to save face,” Goffman introduced the following expressions to express how an individual feels at a given moment: *to have, be in, or maintain face, to be in wrong face, and to be out of face* (see Goffman 1967:6-8). He describes *face* as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself... by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes” (Goffman 1967:5), wherein “line” is “a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (*Ibid.*). In example (13) above, the colonel wishes his rank to be respected as his *face* want or approved social attribute. The fact that Charlie calls him “Sir” and then “Lieutenant” is therefore damaging to his *face*, prompting the colonel’s correction and complaint: “Lieutenant-Colonel. Twenty-six years on the line, nobody ever busted me four grades before.” While Charlie has taken the line of one who is ignorant about military grades, the colonel takes the line of one who is jealous of his rank.

A participant is said to *be in face* when the image of himself that he presents is consistent with the “positive values which (he) claims not only to have as a specific individual but to be assumed by other participants as having” (Culpeper 2011:28). The realisation that she is *in face* can make a participant confident and secure about whatever topic she is addressing, whereas that sense of confidence and security can be compromised in a participant who finds herself *in wrong face* or *out of face*. Threats to a participant’s face are very likely but the participant can choose to avoid interactions that may present threats to face, a process that Goffman (1967:15) calls “the avoidance process”, and which he describes as a kind of facework or “the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Facework serves to counteract incidents – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face” (Watts 2003:125). Skouhous (2013:10) states that facework occurs

When one says things that show respect and politeness, extending to others ceremonial and politeness that might be their due; when one does not say or instead leaves unstated facts that might implicitly or explicitly contradict and

embarrass the positive claims made by others; when one employs circumlocution or roundabout expression, a form of indirectness for evasion.

(Skouhous 2013:10)

In this sense facework is a preview of some of the politeness strategies to be discussed in the next section.

2.5.3 Brown and Levinson's face-saving view of politeness

As intimated, the notion of *face* took centre stage in pragmatics and related fields with the pioneering work by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson in 1987, generating “the most clearly articulated and most thoroughly worked out” (Fraser 1990:219) model of politeness, known as the *face-saving* model. According to Haugh (2010:2073-7), “it has been Brown and Levinson’s (1987) application of face in the context of politeness that has dominated much of the debate thus far”. What seems to account for the popularity of the model is the fact that “their detailed description of linguistic strategies for interpersonal effect is unprecedented” (Locher 2013:3). The model includes concepts such as *positive* and *negative face*, *face-threatening acts*, as well as terms related to the model’s politeness strategies such as *bald-on-record*, *off-record*, *redressive action*, and the so-called *socio-cultural variables* (power, distance, rate of imposition) that influence the speaker’s choice of the most efficient politeness strategy. These concepts will now be discussed.

2.5.3.1 Negative face and positive face

Brown and Levinson define *face* as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson 1987:61), which they then divide into two components: *negative face* and *positive face*.

By *negative face* they refer to “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (*Ibid.*). For example, respect for the negative face of the addressee requires that the speaker abstain from interrupting the addressee, if the latter is speaking, or refrain from requesting the addressee to do something, when the latter could use the time to do something else. By *positive face* Brown and Levinson allude to “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants” (*Ibid.*...). For example, being congratulated on a good performance at school will

enhance one's positive face, whereas being criticised will constitute a threat to that positive face.

The distinction between positive and negative face is also important for drama as one could observe in the extracts from Ibsen's *A doll's house* above (Helmer denigrating his wife Nora) and from the film *Scent of a woman* (the colonel insulting his keeper Charlie). While insulting and denigrating someone are acts that threaten that person's positive face, in the specific case of Nora, her freedom of action and choice (her negative face) is severely restricted by her abusive and domineering husband, so that her decision to leave him towards the end of the play is a *coup de grâce* that sees Nora regain her freedom and independence and become emancipated.

2.5.3.2 Face-threatening acts (FTA)

Brown and Levinson define the FTA as "acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or the speaker" (*Ibid.*:65). According to them,

We threaten face in a variety of ways, by putting pressure on, by orders, requests, suggestions, giving advice, reminders, threats, warnings, dares, showing contempt, disapproval, complaints, reprimands, insults, contradictions, challenges, ridicule, bringing bad news, raising taboo topics, being offensive, expressing violent emotion, apologizing, thanking, accepting, excusing, being unwilling, by confessions, admissions of guilt, loss of control and so on.

(*Ibid.*:65f)

Brown and Levinson (*Ibid.*:67-68) also make a distinction between acts that primarily threaten positive *face* (expressions of disapproval, accusations, criticism, disagreements and insults), those that threaten negative *face* (advice, orders, requests, suggestions, and warnings), and those that threaten both positive and negative *face* (complaints, interruptions, and threats). There are also acts that threaten the speaker's *face* (accepting compliments, expressing thanks, and making confessions) and those that threaten mainly the addressee's *face* (advice, reminding, and strong expression of emotions). As can be noted, the list of FTAs is so long that it is hard to conceive of any interaction that is totally free of risk to the speaker's or the addressee's *face*. The question is no longer whether or not an FTA is likely to occur, but rather what strategies are available for mitigating or eliminating the almost-

inevitable threat to *face* “as the most efficient, rational way of fulfilling their goals” (Herman 1995:191). Attending to the other’s *face* can pay off with one’s own *face* being attended to. On the other hand, a threat to another person’s *face* can result in retribution with a similar threat to one’s own *face*. Therefore, attending to another person’s *face* is in everyone’s best interest (see Herman 1995:190). People will do everything to protect their image, if they feel that this image is being jeopardised. Hence supporting a co-participant to an interaction is a way of forestalling risks to one’s own image. In drama, however, given its conflict-driven nature, *dramatis personae* “try to assert themselves, insult each other, ignore each other, refuse to do what they are asked to do, don’t bother to be polite, create unnecessary obstacles and so on” (Burton *in* Piazza 1999:1002). In the film *Scent of a woman*, for example, the colonel did not have to wait too long to see a changed Charlie who not only defies his orders but who can also trade insult for insult.

2.5.3.3 Power, distance and size of imposition

The different politeness strategies available to participants can only be grasped within the framework of the socio-cultural variables that influence the speakers’ choice of the strategies: power (P), rate of imposition as estimated in the culture or society in question (R), and social distance between the speaker and the addressee (D). The weight of the FTA is determined by the total values of the variables according to the formula $Wx=D(S,H)+P(H,S)+Rx$, where x represents the FTA (Watts 2003:96). I will turn to each variable, beginning with power.

- (a) **Power:** Power and politeness are so interlinked (Ermida 2006:843) that in Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness theory, *power* has been discussed at great lengths. There are many theories of power, but discussing the whole gamut of existing theories is not within the scope of the current study. I will therefore limit myself to a definition of concepts such as *power*, *power to*, *power over*, *legitimate power*, *referent power* and *expert power* and discuss how these may influence the speaker’s choice of politeness strategies.

According to Watts (1991:60)

An individual A possesses power if s/he has the freedom of action to achieve the goals s/he has set her/himself, regardless of whether or not this involves the potential to impose A’s will on others to carry out actions that are in A’s interests.

Defining power in terms of freedom of action, sometimes involving imposing one's will on others, as per the above, is very relevant to the analysis of the concept of *face*, especially of the *negative face*, which has been defined exactly as one's freedom of action. However, the exercise of power can also imply imposing one's will on others, that is, infringing on others' freedom of action (their *negative face*). The following interaction showcases power relations between Kate and her daughter Joss (the example is taken from Thomas 1995:127):

Example (15)

Kate has been living with her lover for seven years; now she intends to move out and take Joss, her daughter, with her.

"I don't want to," Joss said. "Right? You can do whatever bloody stupid thing you want, but you're not making me do it too. I'm not coming."

"You have to," Kate said. "You're under sixteen and you're my daughter, you have to come and live with me."

It is evident that Kate is trying to exercise power over her daughter Joss, which the latter is attempting to resist, resulting in a power struggle between mother and daughter. Joss is outright rude: according to Culpeper (2011:227), following Beebe (1995), a speaker may use rudeness to exercise power in order to appear superior and to influence the addressee to act in a certain manner, which is a form of imposition on and infringement of the addressee's *negative face*. An extreme case of rudeness is evident in the use of taboo words by Charlie in example (14), another instance of exercise of power. Locher (2004:31) has a point in stating that "interactants with low status can decide to exercise power over people with relatively greater status" such as Joss over her mother Kate, and Charlie over the colonel. Kate's goal of leaving her lover clearly conflicts with Joss's intention to stay. By virtue of being Joss's mother, Kate possesses power over her daughter, which she invokes [although as pointed out by Locher (*Ibid.*) people with power can refrain from the exercise of this power]. This kind of power is called *legitimate power*, which Thomas (1995:127) describes as "the right to prescribe or request certain things by virtue of role, age or status." Kate also mentions the fact that Joss is under sixteen, in other words a minor, and therefore unable to exercise freedom of choice without parental consent. This kind of institutionally or socially legitimated power is what Ng and Bradac (cited in Watts 2003:213) call *power over*, which is the kind of power individuals derive from "complex institutionalised latent networks such as school, family, local and national government, in some instances, the church, financial institutions, etc"

(*Ibid.*). How this *power over* is used to exercise power during a verbal interaction is known as *power to* (*Ibid.*). Thomas (1995:127) also distinguishes between *referent power* and *expert power*, which she describes as the power “one person has [*sic*] over another because the other admires and wants to be like him/her in some respect” (referent power) and the power a person possesses because of “some special knowledge or expertise which the other person needs” (expert power).

If Kate can claim legitimate power over her underage daughter, in Ibsen’s *A doll’s house* Helmer cannot legally prevent his wife Nora from leaving him because she, as an adult, has the right to self-determination, a right which Joss, as a minor, does not possess. While Kate is able to wield an “institutionally or socially legitimated power” (Weber in Culpeper *et al.* 1998:114) over her daughter, the latter can exercise the so-called “discursively constructed power” (*Ibid.*), which she tries to achieve by turning her mother down.

- (b) **Ranking of imposition:** How a speech act ranks varies from culture/society to another. What counts as an imposition for one culture may not be so for another. According to Nwoye (1992), for example, “social acts which may be regarded as an imposition in western societies (such as requests or criticism) in Igbo society are considered to be a demonstration of one’s group allegiance and therefore bolster one’s group face.” Therefore, whereas in Western societies requests and criticisms will require some form of indirectness, in such societies as the Igbo of Nigeria, directness would be appropriate when requesting or criticising because such acts are welcome.
- (c) **Social distance:** The third variable of distance is related to how close or distant the speaker is to or from the hearer. *Oxford English Dictionary* (2010) define social distance as “the perceived or desired degree of remoteness between a member of one social group and the members of another, as evidenced in the level of intimacy tolerated between them”. Distance is an equally determining factor in the speaker deciding as to which strategy is the most appropriate. In terms of distance, the rule seems to be that the more distant the speaker is from the addressee, such as an interaction between two complete strangers, the more polite the interactants tend to be towards each other. A four-member family comprising father, mother, son and daughter affords a clear example for illustrating how the three elements interact. As members of the same family who have been living together, the four may be socially close (low D), but as parents the father and the mother will be more powerful (high

P) in relation to their children, whereas there is no power differential between the two siblings. This being the case, the siblings would need to be more polite to their parents when making a request than if they were making such a request to each other. By virtue of their parental role, both parents may be direct when asking their children to do something on their behalf. Obviously the amount of politeness required would be determined by the rate of the imposition inherent in the request.

Once the speaker has assessed the size of the FTA, taking into account the hearer's power, the distance between him/her and the hearer, and the rating of imposition, he or she can now rationalise the choice of the most suitable strategy for the situation. The first choice that the speaker faces is whether to do the FTA or, in case of the risk of threat to the hearer's *face* being just too great, to opt out altogether. If a FTA must be performed, the choices available to the speaker include *doing the FTA without redress (bald-on-record)*, *with redress (positive politeness)*, *with redress (negative politeness)*, and *using off-record politeness*. These strategies will now be discussed.

2.5.3.4 Doing the FTA bald-on-record

To say something baldly, according to *MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2007), is "to say something in a direct way without trying to be sensitive or polite." The bald-on-record strategy has to do with directness of speech "in full conformity with the Gricean maxims" (Thomas 1995:170) as "in emergencies or in highly task-oriented situations" (*Ibid.*), or other situations in which "the maximally functional or expedient strategy is required" (Herman 1995:191) or "where the speaker is the more powerful participant" (*Ibid.*).

Concerned with the blind colonel's life (not just his *face* alone), Charlie in example (14) goes blunt in order to stop the former from committing suicide. The strategy works because Charlie successfully shocks him out of wanting to shoot himself. Charlie's discursive strategy is justified because preserving the colonel's life is more of a priority than any consideration for the latter's status. But such a rule can be abused as demonstrated in the extract from Bernard Shaw's *You never can tell* in which the young lady Dolly tells the truth quite baldly in a face-threatening way to the dentist (see example 7 above).

2.5.3.5 Doing the FTA with redress (positive politeness)

An FTA can be performed on record with redress to the addressee's positive face. Brown and Levinson posit fifteen strategies for addressing the hearer's positive face which may take various linguistic forms including "personal information, use of nicknames, sometimes even abusive terms (particularly among males), and shared dialect or slang expressions" (Yule 1996:65). These fifteen strategies as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and cited by Watts (2003:89-90) are:

- (1) *Noticing/attending to the interlocutor's interests, needs and desires*
- (2) *Exaggerating (interest/approval, sympathy with the interlocutor)*
- (3) *Intensifying that interest/approval*
- (4) *Using in-group identity markers*
- (5) *Seeking agreement in safe topics*
- (6) *Avoiding disagreement*
- (7) *Asserting common ground*
- (8) *Joking to lighten up the interlocutor*
- (9) *Showing concern for the interlocutor's wants*
- (10) *Offering/promising*
- (11) *Asserting common interests*
- (12) *Including the interlocutor in the activity being undertaken*
- (13) *Giving/asking for reasons*
- (14) *Exchanging/reciprocating*
- (15) *Giving gifts to the interlocutor.*

Basically, an individual's positive *face* includes, according to Herman (1995:190), "a want that one's goals and self-image in interaction are positively promoted". These strategies boil down to expressing solidarity with the interlocutor by promoting the interests, wants and desires of the latter. Holmes (1995:116) cites compliments as "prime examples of speech acts which notice and attend to the hearer's interests and needs," that is their positive *face*.

To illustrate this, an example mentioned by Holmes (*Ibid.*:115) follows:

Example (16)

Liz: *Hi Jill. How's things?*
Jill: *Hi Liz. Oh not bad. You look as if you had a good holiday!*
Liz: *Mm did we ever! Lots of sun and sailing – it was great.
You're nice and brown too.*
Jill: *Thanks. We went to Taupo. Those new togs?*
Liz: *Mm, I needed some – the others had faded.*
Jill: *They're a great colour. Shows off your tan.*

This short exchange exemplifies three of the fifteen strategies for addressing positive face as posited by Brown and Levinson *inter alia*, attention to the hearer's interests (*How's things?* strategy one); exaggerating interest (*You look as if you had a good holiday!* and *Shows off your tan*: strategy two). One can imagine how bolstered the two must have felt their images to be after the exchange of compliments. Another strategy proposed by Brown and Levinson is the use of in-group identity markers (strategy 4) which is justified by the fact that, according to SIRC's research (2007:4), as humans "we have timeless needs for social bonding, loyalty, security and acceptance." These strategies emphasise the closeness between the speaker and the addressee, and may be of great relevance in dramatic discourse because, as Herman (1995:6) argues, "the principles, norms and conventions of use which underlie spontaneous communication in everyday life are precisely those which are exploited and manipulated by dramatists in their constructions of speech types and forms in plays."

To be included in this section are the so-called "convivial acts like inviting or thanking or offering" (Herman 1995:194) because through such acts "intrinsic politeness is enhanced and so this class serves positive politeness functions" (*Ibid.*).

2.5.3.6. Doing the FTA with redress (negative politeness)

Brown and Levinson propose ten politeness strategies for addressing negative *face*, which highlight the independence between the speaker and the addressee through the use of indirectness, hedging, deference or formal politeness.

The ten strategies for addressing negative face as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) are:

- (1) *Be conventionally indirect*
- (2) *Do not assume willingness to comply. Question, hedge*
- (3) *Be pessimistic about ability or willingness to comply. Use the subjunctive*
- (4) *Minimise imposition*
- (5) *Give deference*
- (6) *Apologise*
- (7) *Impersonalise the speaker and the hearer. Avoid the pronouns I and you*
- (8) *State the face-threatening act as an instance of a general rule*
- (9) *Nominalise to distance the actor and add formality*
- (10) *Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting the hearer*

(Watts 2003:90-1)

Conventional indirectness is conveyed by such forms as the use of the past tense of the modal auxiliary “*could*” accompanied with the politeness particle “*please*” as in “*could you please shut the door*”, which is conventionally more polite than, for example, “*shut the door!*” The difference is that in the former there is an increased degree of optionality, whereas in the latter case the hearer is given no option. According to Herman (1995:195) it is rather “those forms that provide options for the hearer and leave it open for H to choose the course of actions [that] are the truly polite uses of indirection. As optionality increases, politeness increases.” (For more on indirectness, see section 2.5.3.7 below.)

Strategy (2) can be achieved by means of “play-downs” used to “tone down the perlocutionary effect an utterance is likely to have on the addressee” (House and Kasper 1981 in Watts 2003:183). Amongst the play-downs they list “the past tense (*I wondered if...*), progressive aspect together with past tense (*I was wondering whether... I was thinking you might...*), an interrogative containing a modal verb (*would it be a good idea..., could we...*), a negative interrogative containing a modal verb (*wouldn't it be a good idea if..., Couldn't you...*)” (*Ibid.*).

Because the subjunctive as used in strategy (3) is “the form of a verb that is used for expressing doubts and wishes” (*MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007), its use best conveys the speaker’s pessimism about the hearer’s ability or willingness to comply with what is being asked of him/her, in the case of a request.

Strategy (4) is best expressed by means of one of the following tone-downers designed to reduce the impact of the perlocutionary effect of the imposition such as perhaps, just, really, simply, etcetera.

Deference in strategy (5) “refers to the respect we show to other people by virtue of their higher status, greater age, etc.” (Thomas 1995:150); consequently its use is perceived as increased distance between the speaker and the addressee, a politeness mark, whereas its absence can be interpreted as closeness between the speaker and the hearer, for which politeness stereotypes are not needed.

For strategy (6), although apologising “only refers to what the speaker is doing, without providing any indication as to whether or not she or he is sincere,” (Lowe *in* Culpeper *et al.* 1998:131) it can modulate the perlocutionary effect of the speaker’s utterance by the mere recognition of the intrusion into/encroachment on the addressee’s space and the inconvenience caused.

In example (13) above, Charlie not only defers to the colonel by calling him “*sir*” (strategy 5) as in turn (1), but he also apologises (strategy 6) in turn (3), after the colonel ordered him not to call him “*sir*”. The conflict here arises not from the fact that Charlie is not deferential or respectful to the colonel but rather from the issue that the boy keeps using the incorrect address form, prompting the colonel’s excessive reaction in turns (4) and (6), when he calls the boy a “moron” and an “idiot” respectively.

In the following extract from Noel Coward’s *Conversation piece* (cited in Herman 1995:243), negative politeness is used by Paul in his reply to Edward.

Example (17)

EDWARD [firmly] *I have not proposed marriage to Melanie.*

PAUL *That does credit both to your upbringing and your personal integrity. I unfortunately am not in a position to put your fears entirely at rest. I cannot tell you for certain whether or not she really loves you, but if you will take the advice of an old man, don't give up hope, don't despair too soon.*

The speech act of advising as in Paul’s “*but if you will take the advice of an old man...*” does interfere with the addressee’s desire to be left alone (negative *face*) and therefore requires redress to the addressee’s negative *face* with the use of a conditional “*but if you will...*” instead of Paul’s enjoining Edward to take his advice, which would have been impolite. The use of the conditional does increase optionality for the hearer, which modulates the impact of the force of advising.

These strategies, beyond recognising the hearer's right to autonomy and freedom of choice (including the right to turn the speaker down in the case of a request or advice), underlie the fact that sometimes such encroachment upon another person's space cannot be avoided; hence the need for redressive action to negative face.

2.5.3.7 Doing the FTA using off-record politeness

Strategies for off-record politeness or indirectness include hinting, use of metaphors and implicatures, and or being vague. By definition "indirectness occurs when there is a mismatch between the expressed meaning and the implied meaning" (Thomas 1995:119) and it can be employed "to avoid hurting someone else ... or appearing *pushy*" (*Ibid.*:122). Although indirectness is not coterminous with politeness, in other words "degrees of indirection cannot be mapped on to degrees of politeness in a straightforward fashion," (Herman 1995:195), yet "the more indirect one is, the more polite one is, and the more likely to avoid conflict" (Ermida 2006:844). Being indirect can pay off as much as it may present a risk to the speaker. The fact that more than one inference can be drawn from one statement may offer the speaker a chance to evade responsibility for intending one particular meaning. In Herman's (1995:243) terms "the speaker cannot be made liable for the words which have not been spoken, and even when words are spoken, implicatures, especially unintended ones, can be counter-used to silence a speaker in turn."

On the other hand, producing and interpreting an indirect illocution can be time-consuming (see Thomas 1995:120). In the extract from Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* (example 10), Valentine used an implicature to indirectly refute the charge levelled against him that he was a "fortune hunter" without the risk of giving offence by means of a blunt remark.

In the above excerpt (example 17) Paul tells Edward: "*I unfortunately am not in a position to put your fears entirely at rest. I cannot tell you for certain whether or not she (Melanie) really loves you...*" This is also an instance of an off-the-record politeness strategy that has a clear pay-off for Paul. If it turned out that Melanie did not love Edward, Paul cannot be held accountable for saying the contrary.

The off-record politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson do instantiate violations of the maxims of the CP. For example, by using hints, one flouts the maxim of relation; understating/overstating means non-observance of the maxim of quantity; vagueness and ambiguity fly in the face of the maxim of manner. In example (17), when Paul says "*I*

cannot tell you for certain...” he is vague and therefore violates the maxim of manner. This is further evidence that Brown and Levinson based their model on H. Paul Grice’s CP; hence understanding Brown and Levinson’s model presupposes understanding the workings of the CP whose relevance to dramatic discourse was already discussed in section 2.2 above.

2.5.3.8 Not doing the FTA (opting out)

Besides doing the FTA in terms of the different strategies discussed above, according to the Brown and Levinson’s model, the speaker can choose not to do the FTA at all. Not to do the FTA, that is to say nothing, especially if the threat to the addressee’s *face* is just too great to redeem, may present the least risk to *face* loss, but by the same token achieving one’s conversational objectives is hampered. To say nothing means to remain silent. Silence as a discursive strategy has been extensively explored (see Ephratt 2008.). According to Sifianou (in Nakane 2006:1812), silence has many functions. It may be a sign of solidarity and support (positive politeness strategy); it might be used to show restraint (a negative politeness strategy); it could also function as the most indirect speech act (off-record strategy), although it might also come across as the least polite of strategies because it places a heavy burden on the hearer who must infer its meaning. Jacobson (in Ephratt 2008:1916), on the other hand, highlights the emotive function, which is “a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about. It tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion whether true or feigned” (*Ibid.*) This type of silence expresses how the speaker feels about something. In example (4) from Fugard’s *Boesman and Lena*, cited earlier, the stage directions point to a silence preceding Boesman’s turn: [*shaking his head as he finally breaks his silence*] (Fugard 2000:195). The silence is characterised by a number of questions by his partner Lena which he chose to leave unanswered: “*Here? (...) Why did you walk so hard? In a hurry to get here? (...)*” (Fugard 2000:193-4).

Taking into account the ensuing threat, the silence fulfils an emotive function in that it expresses how annoyed Boesman is with his partner for walking too slowly to keep up with him, so that he has to stop to wait for her. Boesman’s failure to answer Lena’s questions, on the other hand, is damaging to Lena’s desire to be approved (her positive *face*).

2.5.3.9 Criticisms of the model

Brown and Levinson's definition of *face*, as we saw under 2.5.3.1 above, centres on the individual's wants or desires. This seems to reduce the other participant in the interaction to a mere instrument whose sole purpose is to service the private desires of the individual-subject (the desires to be approved, as in positive *face*, and to be unimpeded, as in negative *face*). Mao voices the criticism of Brown and Levinson's definition of *face* as a "self-image" in no uncertain terms:

By defining face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself", Brown and Levinson centre their definition upon the individual – rather than the communal-aspect of face; that is, face becomes, in the last analysis, a self-image. The self is the principal constituent that informs and contextualizes the content of face; it acts like an "epicenter" toward which others (that is, "they") converge, and against which they are measured.

(Mao 1994:459)

Goffman's (cited in Mao 1994:460) concept of *face*, on the other hand, being a public image that is "on loan... from society" is close to the Chinese community-based concept of *face*. My analysis of speech acts for *face*-threats will not be restricted to positive and negative *face* as proposed by Brown and Levinson. I will include an individual's group *face*. This approach can be validated by the fact that, in line with the Chinese concept of *face*, which as I mentioned earlier is close to the concept of *face* in the African context from which the texts in the current study are drawn, individuals have networks of relationships with relatives, friends, colleagues, possessions and concepts that they cherish. These must all be considered when analysing that individual's *face*.

Working on the Gricean framework (CP and its maxims) for which their politeness model attempts to explain the reasons for constant deviations from those maxims, Brown and Levinson seem to suggest that politeness may be incongruent with full compliance to the maxims. And yet one can be literal and still be polite (For example, answering with a simple *Yes, I have* to the question *Have you completed the task?*). On the other hand, lack of clarity

in one's answer, where a simple *yes* or *no* is required, can annoy the hearer in a face-threatening way.

The distinction between positive and negative *face* is not always clear-cut, so that a threat to a hearer's negative face can be mitigated with a positive politeness strategy. For example, giving a gift to the addressee (Strategy 15 in Brown and Levinson's taxonomy of positive politeness strategies) can be effective in weathering the pragmatic force of a request (a threat to negative *face* that, according to Brown and Levinson, requires negative politeness). If I want to borrow a friend's computer, thus threatening the latter's negative face as it interferes with his or her freedom of action (their being unable to use the computer in the meantime), I can preface the FTA by offering a small gift to my friend or even boost his or her positive *face* by attending to his or her wants or interests, both of which strategies are listed as positive *face* strategies. The fact that *group face* has not been accounted for in the Brown and Levinson's model is a major omission from the model that has motivated some of the harshest criticisms against it. To reiterate what I have already discussed under 2.5.1, understanding the underpinnings of *face* for Eastern societies (e.g. China, Japan) and parts of Africa requires taking into account the people and things the individual holds dear (her *group face*). The notions of negative and positive face as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) are just too exclusively centred on the individual.

2.5.4 Lakoff's rules of politeness

Professor Robin Lakoff is one of the first to study politeness from a purely pragmatic viewpoint, marking a departure from a view of interactions based squarely on the CP and its maxims. She invented the so-called *Rules of Politeness* to cater for speakers' constant deviations from the said principle. It is not for nothing that she is called "the mother of modern politeness theory" (Eelen 2001:2), and her views are worth considering. According to her, politeness is "a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange" (Lakoff 1990:34). She posits two rules: *the rule of clarity* and *the rule of politeness*.

2.5.4.1 Rule of clarity

According to Lakoff (1973:296 as cited by Eelen 2001:2) the *rule of clarity* is achieved "if one seeks to communicate a message directly, if one's principal aim in speaking is

communication,” so that one’s intention in speaking is clear, that is, if the CP is fully observed.

2.5.4.2 Rule of politeness

The *rule of politeness* operates differently, by catering to the social issues. Clarity is not the goal where “the speaker’s principal aim is to navigate somehow or other among the respective statuses of the participants in the discourse indicating where each stands in the speaker’s estimate” (*Ibid...*). The politeness rule consists of sub-rules such as *don’t impose*, *give options* and *be friendly* (Mohsen Shahrokhi *et al.* 2013:20).

Strategies for implementing the *don’t-impose* rule include the use of formal forms of address, the use of honorifics (e.g. Sir, Madam, Mr, Dr, or Professor) and indirect illocutions. These strategies mark the *status differential* between the speaker and the addressee. Hence, calling one’s superior by his or her first name would interfere with this rule and make the relationship informal, which is impolite. To be polite in terms of this rule, on the other hand, means to keep oneself at a distance from the addressee. The second rule (*give options*) is implemented by the speaker giving or appearing to be giving options to the hearer. This so-called *rule of hesitancy* is implemented through the use of politeness markers such as *please*, hedges such as *kind of*, *sort of*, *somehow*, hesitators such as *ah*, *well*, whose effect is to mitigate the force of the imposition in an utterance. The third rule (*be friendly*) is achieved through the use of expressions that mark a sense of solidarity or friendliness between the speaker and the addressee. Where the status of the speaker is higher than that of the addressee, the former may choose to treat the latter as an equal, as a make-feel-good gesture. I once attended a conference during which the first speaker kept addressing the second speaker as “my colleague”, while the latter always referred to the former as “Mr Director”. The first speaker was being friendly (third rule), whereas the second speaker was enforcing distance (*don’t impose*) rule. This seems to make sense because “it is considered negative to impose on others (1st rule), to leave people without any choice (2nd rule), or to make them feel uncomfortable (3rd rule).” (Locher 2013:2).

2.5.5 Leech’s politeness principle

Geoffrey Leech followed in Lakoff’s footsteps by positing the Politeness Principle (PP) to explain why interlocutors often violate the CP and make constant use of indirect speech acts. He formulated the PP as “minimise (other things being equal) the expressions of impolite

beliefs; maximise (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs” (Leech 1983:81). Parallels can already be drawn here with the politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson’s model: between Leech’s concept of minimisation and negative politeness, and between Leech’s maximisation and positive politeness.

The PP consists of the maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy, defined in terms of a cost-benefit scale, whereby “an action which is beneficial to H (hearer) is more polite than one that is at a cost to H” (Mohsen Shahrokhi *et al.* 2013:21). Each maxim will be discussed and examples used to demonstrate their workings.

2.5.5.1 Tact maxim

The tact maxim is implemented when the speaker minimises the expression of beliefs which imply cost to the addressee and maximises the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to the addressee (Thomas 1995:160). According to Mohsen Shahrokhi *et al.* (2013:21) “the tact maxim is used for impositives (e.g. ordering, commanding, requesting, advising, recommending, and inviting) and commissives (e.g. promising, vowing, and offering)” and this maxim “may be evaluated in terms of its cost or benefit to S or H” (Leech 1983 cited by Mohsen Shahrokhi *et al.* 2013:21) by employing a cost-benefit scale. A speech act that conveys greater benefit to the hearer tends to be more polite than one that expresses greater cost to her or him. For example, saying (a) *have another beer* is definitely more polite than (b) *buy me a beer*. This is because in (a) the hearer is the beneficiary, which implies cost to the speaker, whereas in (b) the speaker is the beneficiary, implying cost to the hearer. Therefore, tact requires that (b) be prefaced with a politeness marker such as *please*. It can also be implemented by hedging with minimisers like *a bit*, *just a second*, or expressions like *would you mind....*

Speech acts such as ordering, commanding, requesting, advising, and recommending, which I discussed as part of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) negative politeness strategies, do imply cost to the hearer in terms of the cost-benefit scale and therefore should be performed with tact. Tact can also be achieved by giving options to the hearer or appearing to do so. This is similar to Rule 2 (“*give options*”) in Lakoff’s politeness model discussed earlier (see section 2.5.4.2 above).

In example (14) the colonel's order for Charlie to "get out" in turns (1), (3) and (7) is tactless and utterly impolite because it not only lacks any politeness marker or hedges to mitigate its force but also gives the latter no option. This cannot be said of Charlie's order to the colonel to "give up" in turn (10) because Charlie's act is an attempt to prevent the colonel from shooting himself and since the act is beneficial to the hearer it is therefore not as impolite as the colonel's order. However, one might still argue that in the eyes of the colonel, who thinks that he has no prospects of life because of his condition (being blind), there is therefore no apparent benefit in being saved by Charlie.

2.5.5.2. Generosity maxim

Expressed as "minimize the benefit to self; maximize the cost to self" (Leech 2008:92), the Generosity maxim ranks second to the tact maxim, which it complements to some degree, in that the two maxims are pegged to the same cost-benefit scale. For to minimise the cost to the other (the first component of the tact maxim), one needs to maximise the cost to self (the second component of the generosity maxim). And to maximise the benefit to the other (the second component of the tact maxim) one needs to minimise the benefit to self (the first component of the generosity maxim). In terms of the latter maxim it is polite to say, for example, *use my car*, without any politeness accessories, whereas to say *I want to use your car* would require some form of indirectness. This is because in *use my car* the speaker, by offering his car, is maximising the benefit to another and maximising cost to self (the speaker cannot use his own car while it is being used by others), but in *I want to use your car* the speaker is likely to minimise benefit to the other and therefore needs to cloak his request with politeness. In other words, no tact is necessary when the generosity maxim is already in force, whereas an ungenerous act would need to be conveyed tactfully or indirectly.

Charlie's decision to stay in the room in example (14) in spite of the threat by the colonel to "blow your fucking head off" is a generous act through which Charlie maximises the cost to self by putting himself in a situation that posed a serious risk to his life in order to preserve the hearer's life.

2.5.5.3. Approbation maxim

Also known as the flattery maxim, the approbation maxim means to "minimize dispraise of others; maximize praise of others" (*Ibid.*). An expression like "*you are such a good driver*" observes the approbation maxim, whereas to say to someone "*you are such an awful cook*"

would contravene this maxim and is therefore impolite, even if it is the truth. While speech acts such as thanking, congratulating, praising, and condoling will flatter the other, such speech acts as blaming and complaining are unflattering to the hearer and need to be marked with politeness or expressed with some form of indirectness. Helmer's belittling his wife Nora in example (11) is unflattering to her because it maximises dispraise of her rather than minimises such dispraise as required by the approbation maxim. This belittling is what caused Nora to eventually leave her husband at the end of *A doll's house*.

2.5.5.4. Modesty maxim

To observe the modesty maxim in Leech's terms is to "minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self" (*Ibid.*). In the following example, the speaker expresses modesty: "*I just finished reading your book. What a story! I wish I could write as well as you did.*" The speaker belittles himself in order to praise the addressee. The case for modesty would be furthered if the person being praised added something like "*Don't mention it! I am sure there are better written stories out there!*" The following example by Holmes (1995:124), an exchange between two friends, also illustrates the modesty maxim:

Example (18)

Helen: What a neat outfit!

Gerry: It's actually quite old.

It would be a bit immodest for Gerry to say, for example, that the outfit is very expensive. What seems to foreground the conversational behaviour of the colonel in example (13) above is the fact that he keeps maximising praise of self in breach of the modesty maxim while at the same time insulting Charlie in violation of the approbation maxim. The fact that these violations result in conflict is important for characterisation and plot development because "conflict frequently leads to a shift of character in its resolution" (Culpeper 1998 in Culpeper *et al.* 1998:87) and "matters of characterization often move in tandem with plot developments" (*Ibid.*).

2.5.5.5. Agreement maxim

During an interaction, the conversational goals of the speaker and the addressee may be in conflict; yet focusing on points of disagreement will only make matters worse. The maxim requires the expression of disagreement between self and others to be minimised and the expression of agreement between them to be maximised (Leech 2008:92). The exchange

between Cassio and Iago which I cited earlier (see example 5 in section 2.2.2.4) does illustrate agreement between the interlocutors in their praise of Desdemona's beauty.

Seeking agreement and avoiding disagreement appear in Brown and Levinson's model as positive politeness strategies (5) and (6), respectively.

2.5.5.6. Sympathy maxim

The maxim is observed when antipathy between self and other is minimised and sympathy between self and other is maximised (*Ibid.*:67).

Three of Leech's maxims (approbation, modesty and generosity) are invoked by Paul in his reply to Edward in example (17). Paul begins his turn by praising the latter's upbringing and personal integrity. Given the nature of Edward's confession, which betrays his psychological state, being that of one who is uttering laments, Paul refrains from blaming him and therefore minimises dispraise of him. Paul's next line exemplifies the modesty maxim. Paul minimises praise of himself by admitting that he is unable to allay Edward's fears (whether or not Melanie loves him). That sense of modesty continues in the first half of Paul's next line ("I cannot tell you for certain whether or not she really loves you"). He is being generous by recommending that Edward should not give up hope.

2.5.6. The social-norm view of politeness

According to Anderson (cited in Culpeper 2011:35), a social norm is "a standard of behaviour by a social group, commonly understood by its members as authoritative or obligatory for them." Social norms or conventions constitute a particular society's code of conduct that prescribe what is appropriate behaviour as opposed to inappropriate, in such a manner that "a positive evaluation (politeness) arises when an action is in congruence with the norm, a negative evaluation (impoliteness = rudeness) when an action is to the contrary" (Fraser 1990:220). According to the social norm view, it is rude, for example, to raise painful topics during an interaction.

2.5.7. The conversational contract view of politeness

According to this view, proposed by Bruce Fraser and William Nolen, politeness entails respect, by the parties in a conversational contract, for the rights and obligations binding them (Eelen 2001:13). The terms and conditions of such a conversational contract are wide and include such factors as turn-taking strategies, the status and power of the participants, and even previous interactions (I have already discussed this under 1.3, Ethnomethodology and

Conversational Analysis, and will not repeat myself here). Although some of these terms can be renegotiated in the course of an interaction, to violate them, as I have already highlighted, can be threatening to the other party's *face*.

2.5.8 Scollon and Scollon's intercultural communication model

The *intercultural communication model* was proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2001) in (Mohsen Shahrokhi *et al.* 2013:24), who introduce the terms (involvement and independence) as substitutes for Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive and negative terms. These two terms are introduced in order "to avoid any misunderstanding of the terms positive and negative as good and bad respectively" (*Ibid...*). There are three types of *face* in this model: *deference face*, whereby "participants maintain a deferential distance from each other" (*Ibid...*), which is similar to *negative face* in Brown and Levinson's model; *solidarity face*, in which "participants feel or express closeness to each other" (*Ibid...*), which resembles *positive face* in Brown and Levinson's model; and lastly *hierarchy face*, in which the status of participants and their social differences are recognised and respected.

2.5.9. Arndt and Jamney's supportive facework and interpersonal politeness

In this model, Arndt and Jamney shift the emphasis on the actual participants in an interaction, away from external factors such as "linguistic forms, social conventions or situational variables" (Eelen 2001:15). They base their theory on "emotive communication", which accounts for the levels of confidence of speakers, their positive-negative affect towards each other, and their emotional involvement in the topic being discussed. This is the first theory that takes into account paralinguistic features such as the participants' tone of voice, and body language. Although the current study does not discuss any production of the plays, which best accounts for such paralinguistic features, the right cues can still be found in the stage directions of the texts.

2.5.10. Ide's notions of wakimae (discernment) and volition

To begin with it is worth noting the fact that by introducing the notion of *wakimae* (discernment) into politeness research Ide (1989), following Hill *et al.* (1986), was reacting to the individualistic bias in the politeness models proposed by Lakoff (1973, 1975), Leech (1983) and, especially, Brown and Levinson (1987). To reiterate, the latter models centre on the self's desire to be approved (*positive face*) and to be left alone (*negative face*). Both positive and negative *face* are unilaterally addressed by the individual who employs

politeness strategies. There is a distinct gap in these perspectives on politeness, which leave no room for group-orientated politeness and the rule-bound systematic use of honorifics in Japanese society that the notion of *wakimae* accounts for. *Wakimae* consists in a set of rules or norms that the individual has to observe in order to get along in Japanese society. These rules or norms include “honorifics, address terms, pronouns, and speech forms” (Ide 1989:298), the use of which calls for full compliance by the individual. Even *Collins English Dictionary*’s definition of “honorific” as “indicating the speaker’s respect for the addressee or his [*sic*] acknowledgement of inferior status” seems to comply with the observation of *wakimae* that lies “in the choice of proper honorific forms and speech formulas” (Ide 1989:299). This conformity to social norms appears to be absent in the aforementioned models proposed in the West, prompting the wave of criticisms against the models which was orchestrated by scholars conducting research into Eastern perspectives on politeness. It is true that even in the West there are etiquette books and protocols that signify table manners, which essentially require conformity to certain norms. As far as *wakimae* is concerned, the individual seems restricted to respect for the set rules without any chance to express her or his individuality. Ide compares *wakimae* to the rules of a game which need to be observed by anyone wanting to get through the “game of life” normally. She described two ways in which *wakimae* can be implemented. The first is taking into account the speaker’s position *vis-à-vis* the addressee’s status, while the second concerns the speaker’s position *vis-à-vis* the situation s/he occupies in the society. For the expression of the speaker’s individuality, there is what is called “*volition*” (Hill *et al.* 1986), a concept defined by *Collins English Dictionary* as “the faculty or capability of conscious choice, decision, and intention”. Volitional politeness is achieved through the individual speaker’s choice of how polite he or she intends to be in a particular context. Volitional orientation to the *face* of the addressee as an individual is the same as positive politeness à la Brown and Levinson.

2.6 Conclusion

My main goal in undertaking the current study is to explore the notion of *face* within the broader context of dramatic language and also to demonstrate, through my discussion of the three plays of Fugard, how this notion could make a contribution to the study and understanding of Fugard’s work. Chapter Two (Theoretical Frameworks) has discussed the notion of *face* in general terms within the frameworks of politeness theories, and although the theories covered represent only a fraction of the range of existing approaches to *face* and

politeness, I believe they are diverse and detailed enough to both inform and enrich my discussion of the three plays of Fugard in subsequent chapters.

From the theories discussed two major communicative goals have emerged that seem to motivate the speaker's choice of whether to be direct or indirect in using language: this choice is consequential because politeness has often been associated with indirectness, while directness has been considered impolite. On the one hand, there is clarity of intent, which has been associated with directness of expression, full compliance with the CP maxims and bald-on-record politeness strategies. On the other hand, there is the goal of maintaining the interpersonal relationship with the addressee, for which the norm seems to be the use of indirect speech acts, implicatures and off-record politeness strategies. Although politeness sometimes requires that the speaker be indirect, especially if the addressee is the more powerful interactant and where the risk to the addressee's face is great, one can be indirect and still come across as rude. For example to say to someone, after a poor performance on his or her part, "Well done!", which is rather sarcastic, does not mitigate the force of the criticism; it intensifies it instead (see Dynel 2009:32). Likewise, one can be direct or bald-on-record, that is, in full compliance with the CP maxims, and still be polite, even when dealing with a more powerful addressee like a daughter telling her mother, "Your blouse is dirty. You must change" in an example by Dynel (*Ibid.*), which is direct but shows that the daughter cares for her mother's image (positive *face*). Similar insights seem to emerge from the speech act theory. Not only must felicity conditions obtain first, for a speech act to count as such, but speech acts are not monolithic either; in other words, the illocutionary force of an act cannot be tied to its locutionary act on a one-on-one basis. In other words, one act is able to generate more than one force. Besides the pragmatic approaches to *face* and politeness in the speech act and politeness theories, I have also looked at how the way speech is structured (systematics of turn-taking and adjacency pairs) might be a determinant for understanding the power dynamics in plays.

I have anchored my study on Brown and Levinson's (1987) *face*-saving view of politeness, the notion of *face* being central to my study and to their (1987) model, also bearing in mind the fact that this model, despite the various criticisms it has so far received, remains the most influential. Besides, their concepts of negative and positive *face*, together with the underlying negative and positive politeness strategies, are relatively easy to work with. However, I will complement their individualistic view of *face* (the negative and positive *face* being squarely based on an individual's desires to be unimpeded and approved respectively) with the notion

of *group face*, making use of insights drawn from the original Chinese context of the notion of *face*, a view of *face* not dissimilar to the way *face* is conceptualised in Africa, the setting of the plays I am studying.

I have given an overview of the most important insights, concepts of the theories on *face*. My aim is not to provide extensive theoretical discussions of these concepts, but rather to explicate them somewhat for my main purpose: to determine what insights such an approach brings to my study of the specifically chosen Fugard's plays, and to establish how valuable these perceptions are.

CHAPTER THREE: *THE ROAD TO MECCA*

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter laid out the theoretical frameworks for understanding and analysing the notion of face in general terms, furnishing examples both from ordinary conversations and a variety of dramatic texts. Some of these insights will now be used to investigate *The road to Mecca* as the first of the three plays that constitute the topic of the current study. To contextualise the study, a summary of the play is given below (point 3.2), together with an overview of reviews and previous analyses of the text. These will be followed by a discussion of Helen's letter to Elsa (see point 3.3 below) for the strategies used. Not only does the letter explain Helen's plight, but it also sheds light on why Elsa has to travel all the way from Cape Town to Nieu-Bethesda on such short notice. The "real" Helen cannot be grasped without an understanding of her Mecca – a series of multi-form sculptures in her garden, all facing east towards the Muslim Mecca, to which she has devoted her artist's creativity in building them, after the untimely death of her husband. The meanings of these sculptures are discussed in section 3.4 below. The goal and strategies of Elsa, as the only person who understands and appreciates Helen's world, are considered in section 3.5. Although Marius is Helen's longtime friend, he is in the play to represent the church, which stands in opposition to Helen's artistic project and intends to lock Helen away in an old-age home. He uses a number of strategies, not only to neutralise the perceived influence of Elsa on Helen but also to persuade Helen to sign the form giving permission for her transfer to the old-age home (see section 3.6). Failure to destroy the friendship between Helen and Elsa, and Marius' inability to convince Helen to sign the transfer form to the old-age home, leads to the consolidation of the bond between the two women (see section 3.7).

3.2 The Road to Mecca

The Road to Mecca is a two-act play that premiered on 21 February 1985. It tells the story of a mother-to-daughter-like relationship between septuagenarian widow Helen Martins, a reclusive sculptress from Nieu-Bethesda (a small village in South Africa's Karoo region), and her much younger friend Elsa Barlow, a school teacher from Cape Town. Helen is at a crossroads, having to decide whether or not to sign the form permitting her transfer to an old-age home. To sign the form would mean to abandon her beloved "Mecca". Not to do so would mean to continue facing a hostile local community which regards her artwork as

“monsters” and considers her as an outcast. Unable to decide what to do on her own, she summons her friend Elsa all the way from Cape Town to help her. But her wilful support of Helen’s freedom and human right to be left alone places Elsa on a collision course with Helen’s friend pastor Marius Byleveld, who is at Helen’s place precisely to see to it that she signs the form. In the end the bond between the two women proves too strong for Marius to break. Helen refuses to sign her life away and Marius leaves the scene, defeated.

Since its publication *The Road to Mecca* has generated a great deal of interest in critics and reviewers alike. The play marks a departure from the author’s “customary analysis of the soul of man [*sic*] under apartheid, and the appalling social tensions generated by the political system” (Durbach 1987:3) as in *Blood knot* (1961), *The island* (1972), *Sizwe Bansi is dead* (1972), *Boesman and Lena* (1978), “*Master Harold*” ... *and the boys* (1982), *My children! My Africa!* (1989), etc. Most importantly, as Durbach (1987:3) observes, “for the first time in Fugard’s drama, two women provide the focus of the whole event.”

In an article Heller (1993:473) explores the theme related to “the isolation of the artist and other rebels and the ability of an artist to nurture younger friends.” She demonstrates why, despite the forty-year age difference between the two ladies, their bond of friendship is strong, so strong that it survives Marius Byleveld’s attempt “to test the relationship between the two women” (*Ibid.*:474). Albert Wertheim strikes a similar chord by focusing on how the play “uses the drama to contemplate the nature of art and of the artist” (Wertheim 2000:156). According to him,

The Road to Mecca (...) presents a particular artist and the struggle between her vision and the insensitivity of her Afrikaner community. It is, further, work about artistic inspiration, the responsibility of the artist to her vision, the subjugation of the artist to the will of her vision, and the interaction between that enlightened vision and the conformity of the everyday world.

(*Ibid.*)

In “Paradise Lost in the Great Karoo: Athol Fugard’s ‘*Road to Mecca*,’” Errol Durbach contrasts Elsa Barlow’s “800-mile journey from Cape Town through the God-deserted wilderness of the Karoo to New Bethesda” (Durbach 1987:3) with Helen Martins’ “road to a fantastically reconstituted Paradise in the midst of wilderness, destitution, loneliness and spiritual distress” (*Ibid.*), the two journeys running parallel to the desolate journey to Cradock by the widowed child-bearing black woman to whom Elsa gives a ride. Elsa’s 800-mile drive

may seem daunting but Helen's "spiritual and visionary pilgrimage to an artistic ideal" (Wertheim 200:160) is "much more ambitious" (*Ibid.*) Elsa is drawn to Helen "in part to learn from the artist how to travel the more spiritual road to Miss Helen's Mecca" (*Ibid.*). Through her journey Helen breaks with conformity by daring "to countermand her faith, her history, and her culture through the dissident and heretical vision of an 'unchristian' Mecca" (Durbach 1987:6). Although the play does not address apartheid head-on, the plight of Patience, the widowed black woman, mirrors that of black people in racially segregated South Africa. Patience is, in Durbach's words, "the paradigm of woman's soul under the Afrikaner regime, incapable of resisting subjection, overwhelmed by the spirit of the Karoo, whose response to her fate is to endure it with the stoicism that characterises so many of Fugard's social victims" (*Ibid.*:6-7).

Durbach (1987:8) also speaks about "three such roads" (*Ibid.*), one for Elsa, one for Helen, and one for Patience, "a destitute African woman forced to leave the white baas's farm after her husband's death" (*Ibid.*), to whom as mentioned Elsa gives a lift. Despite the different natures of these three roads (Elsa's 800-mile journey from Cape Town to Nieu-Bethesda, Patience's long walk to Cradock – her deceptively shorter journey (80 miles as opposed to Elsa's 800 miles), and Helen's hard road to building her Mecca), the three do merge into one long journey for women's emancipation. Towards the end of the play Elsa tells Helen: "(...) *That baby is mine, Helen. Patience is my sister, you are our mother*" (Fugard 1985:77). Durbach characterises this merging of the three roads, the fate of these three women as

The triadic pattern, the nexus of almost allegorical relationships in the play. Helen Martins, through her dissident art and her spiritual revolution, is the "mother" of the liberal conscience of white South Africa, the inspiration and the model for a form of emancipation that transcends sectarian politics and the polemical issues of women's liberation. But she is also the "mother" of Patience, which she believes to be a virtue and a grace.

(Durbach 1987:7)

Helen is "the mother" of Patience to the extent that she "has perpetuated her rebellion in a slow, sedulous, stubborn way" (Wertheim 2000:159), first by abandoning her religion and then by labouring at her Mecca for years on end. This is a quality that Elsa lacks and for which she "is ineluctably drawn to Miss Helen, the relentless artist and visionary" (*Ibid.*). Elsa lacks the courage to take Patience all the way to Cradock, dropping her half way there with 80 miles still to be walked by her, a distance ten times shorter than Elsa's 800-mile trek from Cape Town to Nieu-Bethesda but in reality longer and more arduous, considering that

Patience is walking. She tells Miss Helen that she had aborted her boyfriend David's child, lacking the patience to see to its term, as she puts it herself, "the first real consequence my life has ever had" (*Ibid.*:76).

These and other approaches to the text can help the reader appreciate what is at stake in the play. But by focusing on how the characters orient to both negative and positive *face* and the linguistic strategies employed "to minimise or eliminate face threat as the most efficient, rational way of fulfilling their goals" (Herman 1995:191), my approach does deepen understanding of the text in that it takes into account not just what the characters say to each other but also how they say it. This is grounded in the fact that

Users and uses of language in communication are also subject to social pressures since participants rarely engage with each other in the discourse roles of speaker and hearer. They confront each other in social roles as well. The rights, responsibilities, taboos, of speech with respect to status, race, gender, age, of the participants affect the way language can be used in the contexts of communication. Also, norms of social behaviour require attention since linguistic behaviour in interactions is often assessed socially.

(Herman 1995:189-90)

For example, it will be interesting to see how Elsa's social background (her age, her profession and her being English) influences her linguistic choices in her interactions with her much older Afrikaner friend Helen and the conservative Marius. While Elsa owes her liberal views to her being of English descent and her coming from the more liberal cosmopolitan city of Cape Town, it is Helen's rebellion that stands out against the Dutch Reformed conservative Afrikaner's background as found in the small town of Nieu-Bethesda.

Since the play begins with Elsa's arrival from Cape Town, I will turn to what causes Elsa to make the long trip: Helen's letter.

3.3. Helen's Letter to Elsa

Considered a mad woman by the people of Nieu-Bethesda because of her eccentric art, "Helen Martins, in near-suicidal despair, is on the point of capitulating to the will of the church and to the deep and abiding need of the Dominee to bring her back to the faith and the volk" (Durbach 1987:7). She expresses her despair and goals in a letter to Elsa.

Helen's letter and the underlying plea constitute an FTA, an imposition that interferes with Elsa's negative face or her "freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (Brown and

Levinson 1987:61). The weightiness of this imposition is compounded by the fact that Elsa is in the middle of examinations and also by the fact that Nieu-Bethesda and Cape Town are separated by an 800-mile distance. As Elsa reveals, “(...) *We’re right in the middle of exams. I’ve got to be in that classroom at eight-thirty on Monday morning. As it is I should be sitting at home right now marking papers*” (Fugard 1985:16). But instead, she is in the village to assist her friend Helen, who is, as indicated earlier, in near-suicidal despair.

I will now study the strategies Helen uses in her letter.

My very own and dearest little Elsie,

Have you finally also deserted me? This is my fourth letter to you and still no reply. Have I done something wrong? This must surely be the darkest night of my soul. I thought I had lived through that fifteen years ago, but I was wrong. This is worse. Infinitely worse. I had nothing to lose that night. Nothing in my life was precious or worth holding on to. Now there is so much and I am losing it all... you, the house, my work, my Mecca. I can’t fight them alone, little Elsie. I need you. Don’t you care about me anymore? It is only through your eyes that I now see my Mecca. I need you, Elsie. My eyesight is so bad that I can barely see the words I am writing. And my hands can hardly hold the pen. Help me, little Elsie. Everything is ending and I am alone in the dark. There is no light left. I would rather do away with myself than carry on like this.

Your ever-loving and anguished

Helen.

(Fugard 1985:38-9)

Uppermost in the address form “*my very own and dearest little Elsie*” is a blend of “in-group markers” (see Watts 2003:89) (little Elsie) and expressions of endearment (“*my very own and dearest...*”), which demonstrate how much Elsa means to Helen and why Helen is turning to her and not anybody else. The letter does not consist of praises alone. In fact, this *face-giving* to Elsa could be read as a cushion for the accusation/criticism to follow – the impression Helen has that Elsa has deserted her. It is interesting to note that Helen uses a question rather than an assertion (a question is less forceful than an assertion). Instead of just whingeing and whining, Helen is polite enough to give the reasons why (positive politeness strategy 13 in Brown and Levinson’s model) (see *Ibid.*:90) she thinks the way she does. She then asks “*have I done something wrong?*” By saying this Helen humbles herself (in keeping with the modesty maxim: see section 2.5.5.4 above for more) in order to elevate Elsa. To exaggerate the situation she finds herself in (she would later admit to having exaggerated a bit), Helen uses a superlative (“darkest” as in “*the darkest night of my soul*”), an intensifier (“infinitely” as in “*infinitely worse*”) and an expression of confidence (“*surely*”). The expression “darkest

night of my soul” is, in fact, a hint of her lifelong struggle against darkness (see section 3.4.2 below).

By prefacing her troubles with a series of positive politeness strategies, Helen is pursuing two goals. The first is to make it hard for Elsa to turn her down, the second to forewarn her friend about the possible consequences of her being turned down. The letter then turns to the specifics of what Helen stands to lose, her personal preserves (her group *face*): “*you, the house, my work, my Mecca*”. To reiterate, group *face*, as discussed in section 2.5.1, extends to “others with whom the individual is closely associated” (Ming He and Shao-Jie Zhang 2011:2361). This sets out Helen’s goal in the play: her struggle to preserve the things she cares for, Elsa, her house, her work and her Mecca. What makes it even harder for Elsa to turn down Helen’s plea is the fact that Elsa is part of what Helen is fighting to keep and the means with which Helen is waging her struggle. Helen’s reliance on Elsa is stronger in the following line: “*it is only through your eyes that I now see my Mecca.*” (Fugard 1985:39). Mecca being Helen’s world (see point 3.4 below), this admission emphasises her dependence on Elsa. The latter does have her own troubles for which she looks to Helen. In a face-giving compliment Elsa admits the following about Helen: “*she challenges me into an awareness of myself and my life, of my responsibilities to both that I never had until I met her*” (Ibid.:66).

Repetitions such as “*I need you*”, “*I need you, Elsie*”, and “*Help me, little Elsie,*” have made Helen’s interpretation of her plight direr, causing her plea to be irresistible to the addressee. Such repetitions have, in Herman’s argument, an “evaluative function and thus signify speaker attitude, when something is repeated for emphasis or invested with an iconic function which may weave in an emotional overtone to a description, while making the description itself more vivid” (Herman 1995:153).

The statement “*I would rather do away with myself than carry on like this*” has the pragmatic force of a threat, while the fact that it is placed in a final position adds to its illocutionary force, the final position being used for such a purpose. Helen’s closing remark “*ever-loving and anguished*” achieves two purposes, addressing Elsa’s positive face (“*ever-loving*”) and at the same time reiterating Helen’s anguish and urgent need for help. As Heller notes, “Helen needs Elsa to renew her faith in herself” (1993:474).

Through her strategies Helen has asserted common ground with Elsa (see Brown and Levinson 1987:103), while minimising the imposition inherent in her plea. In the meantime, Elsa’s response to this plea, her decision to make the trip to Nieu-Bethesda, is a form of

noticing and attending to Helen's desires. This ranks as positive politeness strategy 1 in Brown and Levinson's model (*Ibid.*).

The play's first Act abounds with instances of asserting common ground. The two friends not only gossip but also make self-disclosures. Elsa speaks about the African woman to whom she had given a lift, about her break-up with a married man and also about her disciplinary hearing before the board of directors of the Cape Town School. In her turn Helen fills Elsa in with some village news such as Old Getruida having "*the whole village up in arms*" (Fugard 1985:24) for her decision to open a liquor store, and Koos continuing to abuse his wife Katrina. Such gossip or small talk ranks as positive politeness strategy 7 on the model put forward by Brown and Levinson. According to them: "The value of S's spending time and effort on being with H, as a mark of friendship or interest in him, gives rise to the strategy of redressing an FTA by talking for a while about unrelated topics" (Brown and Levinson 1987:117). In fact, both Elsa and Helen avoid raising the issue that has brought the two of them together until about half-way through Act 1.

In her letter, Helen writes, "*(...) I am losing it all... you, the house, my work, my Mecca.*" There is such an interconnection between these four (the house being where Helen works at her Mecca and Elsa being the person through whose eyes Helen now sees her Mecca) that to lose one would mean to lose everything else. For example, upon declining to sign the transfer form, Helen says, "*I can't reduce my world to a few ornaments in a small room in an old-age home*" (Fugard 1985:73). At the centre of Helen's world is her Mecca, to which the focus of the analysis now turns.

3.4. Mecca as Helen's World

Helen's world is linked to her true self, which she describes in her own words to Elsa as follows:

You see, when I lit the candles you were finally going to see all of me... I mean the real me, because that is what this room is... This is the best of me, Elsa. That is what I really am. Forget everything else. Nothing, not even my name or my face, is me as much as those Wise Men and their camels traveling to the East, or the light and glitter in this room. The mermaids, the wise old owls, the gorgeous peacocks... all of them are me.

(Fugard 1985:34-35)

Helen's idea of replicating Islam's holiest city amidst "the powerful presence of the Dutch Reformed Church, its authority, and its power" (Durbach 1987:5) is in Carol Brown's words

(2007) “an act of rebellion”. She argues that “this desire for the exoticism of the east is in itself an act of rebellion against the stark, Dutch Reformed Christianity practised by the local community who shun her (Helen), and particularly the Dominee Marius who is trying to have her put into an old age home.” Helen’s rebelliousness is spelt out in her intent to “*misdirect all the good Christians’ souls around here and put them on the road to Mecca*” (Fugard 1985:79). This freedom to be her true self without lying to please society is what constitutes Helen’s negative *face*, that is her “basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (Herman 1995:190). It is the expression of this freedom through the creation of a Mecca which puts her at odds with the people of Nieu-Bethesda, especially Marius. Rich (1988) links Helen’s unconventional behaviour to the very core of artistry. He notes the following,

Artists are driven to forge their vision of truth even when they have no hope of an audience, even when they must work with the most humble of materials in the middle of nowhere. Artists are dangerous because they won’t deviate from that truth, no matter what pressure to conform is applied by the society around them. Artists are frightening to those who suppress freedom because to be an artist is to exemplify freedom.

This is exactly the point Elsa is trying to make to Marius, that Helen is frightening to the people of Nieu-Bethesda, which is why they would not leave her alone:

MARIUS: (...) If now at last you understand why we were trying to persuade Helen to move to the home, then on her behalf I am indeed appealing to you. We don’t persecute harmless old ladies, Miss Barlow.

ELSA: And one that isn’t so harmless?

MARIUS: Now what are you trying to say?

ELSA: That Helen isn’t harmless, Dominee. Anything but that. That’s why you people can’t leave her alone.

MARIUS: For fifteen years we have done exactly that.

ELSA: Stoning her house and statues at night is not leaving her alone. That is not the way you treat a harmless old lady.

(Fugard 1985:65)

While Elsa hails Helen’s sculptures as an expression of her freedom (see Fugard 1985:67), complimenting being an instance of giving positive *face* (see Holmes 1995:116), Marius does the exact opposite, calling the sculptures “*a nightmare*,” “*cement monstrosities*” or even “*idolatry*.” Marius’ *face*-damaging stance reflects the attitude of the entire community of Nieu-Bethesda. According to Wertheim, “Neither Marius nor the townsfolk of New Bethesda can fathom Helen’s visionary statuary, which represents an individualistic, and therefore

dangerous, religious experience wholly in opposition to the rote religiosity of their organized community church-going” (Wertheim 2000:162).

What the people of the village fail to understand is the fact that Helen has changed, or rather, has rediscovered herself through her vision. The old Helen “died” on the night her husband Stephanus did. As Helen herself puts it, “(...) *My black widowhood was really for my own life, Marius. While Stephanus was alive there had at least been some pretence at it... of a life I hadn't lived*” (Fugard 1985:71). As Helen’s friend, Marius is sympathetic towards her. Although as a dominee he considers her sculptures as “*idolatry*” and cannot accept them, he does care for her personally and tries to understand her artworks. This fact must have been determining in the choice of Marius as the person to persuade Helen to sign the transfer form. Wertheim (2000:165) postulates that “Helen is indeed embodied in her art and her room.” Therefore, contrary to LaPenta’s suggestion that “the meanings of the statues facing Mecca (...) are strained and empty” (LaPenta 1984:526), these statues, as will now be demonstrated, do have meanings worth uncovering in order to understand why Helen has chosen to sculpt these specific figures. Besides, her world, her true self, cannot be understood without an understanding of the meaning of each sculpture she has made.

3.4.1. The sculptures and their meanings

Of the many and varied sculptures Helen made, the owl is perhaps the most significant. Not only did she have to “break the habit of a lifetime” (Fugard 1985:68) in order to attend to the vision of her first owl, there is now a museum dedicated to the owl called “*The Owl House*”, which is now a tourist attraction.

MARIUS: (...) The moment I stood up there in front of the congregation, I knew your place was empty. But even then, you see, I thought you were sick. After the service I hurried around here, but instead of being in bed there you were outside in the yard making yet another..... (at a loss for words)... I don't really know what to call them.

HELEN: (A small but calm voice. She is very still) It was an owl, Marius. My first owl (...)

(Ibid.)

According to J.E. Cirlot’s *A Dictionary of Symbols*, “the owl symbolizes death, night, cold and passivity. It also pertains to the realm of the dead sun, that is, of the sun which has set below the horizon and which is crossing the lake or sea of darkness” (Cirlot 1971:247). This

image resonates with Helen, an ageing artist (the sun which has set below the horizon) who is combating darkness by means of light. In the extract above, not only does she break the habit of a lifetime, she also disrupts Marius' stereotypical characterisation of her as being a meek widow. The stage directions (*a small but calm voice*) and (*she is very still*) demonstrate the central place the bird occupies in Helen's world.

Equally significant to Helen's art is the image of the Three Wise men because of the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that they offered to the infant Jesus (see Matthew 2:11). As such these three gifts may be a metaphor for the role of Christian faith in the play, an institution that Helen is trying to subvert by "journeying" to Mecca through her art, symbolically away from the Christian religion, with Mecca as the holy pilgrimage site for Muslims standing in opposition to Christianity. Besides, the Wise men came from the East, the very destination of Helen's visionary journey and location of Mecca. According to Cirlot (1971:120), "in Hindu doctrine, gold is the mineral light." Light is obviously what Helen is obsessed with.

Peacocks are known for their beautiful colours and in the play they may symbolize the fact that Helen has revealed her true colours (as those of a peacock) by admitting that she never really loved her husband and by turning her back on her church. Asked by Marius why she has abandoned the life she had and her faith, her reply is revealing for who she really is:

HELEN: What life, Marius? What faith? The one that brought me to church every Sunday? (Shaking her head) No. You were much too late if you only started worrying about that on the first Sunday I wasn't there in my place. The worst had happened long, long before that. Yes. All those years when, as Elsa said, I sat there obediently next to Stefanus, it was all a terrible, terrible lie. I tried hard, Marius, but your sermons, the prayers, the hymns, they had all become just words. And there came a time when even they lost their meaning.

Do you know what the word 'God' looks like when you've lost your faith? It looks like a little stone, a cold, round, little stone. 'Heaven' is another one, but it's got an awkward, useless shape, while 'Hell' is flat and smooth. All of them – damnation, grace, salvation – a handful of stones.

(Fugard 1985:70)

A pyramid, as a symbol of "death and immortality" (Cirlot 1971:267) on the one hand and "as a symbol expressing the whole of the work of creation" (*Ibid.*), does resonate with the

argument that Helen has indeed reached the pinnacle of human development through the creation and completion of her Mecca.

There is also the half-cock half-man, which seems to reinforce the feminist perspective of this play, and which points to a subversion of patriarchy. In this play male figures are mostly silent, starting with the only on-stage male character Marius, who enters the play late and leaves early. With the exception of Aletta, Marius's dead wife, all the other dead or silenced characters are men: Helen's husband Stefanus, Patience's husband, Elsa's boyfriend David following their break-up, Koos who cannot live up to his duty as husband and father [he drinks heavily and occasionally beats his wife Katrina and he "still doesn't believe (the child) is his" (Fugard 1985:23)], and finally there is also the father in Elsa's tale who does not make a move to catch his little boy, about to jump from high up, breaking his promise to catch him and as a consequence, leaving the little boy hurt. Another silence is characterised by Marius's defeat and exit from the scene to leave both women alone on stage. To add to the text's anti-male propensity Helen sculpts a half-cock, half-man figure as part of her Mecca, the very nature of which mocks the idea of man as the centre. In a staunchly conservative community such as Nieu-Bethesda Helen's act is an act of rebellion. For example, regarding the people there Helen laments to Marius, "(...) *They've all become strangers to me. I might just as well not know their names. And they treat me as if I were a stranger to them as well*" (Fugard 1985:60). But Marius passes the buck to Helen herself. He says,

To be very frank, Helen, it's your manner which now keeps them at a distance. I don't think you realize how much you've changed over the years. You're not easily recognizable to others any more as the person they knew fifteen years ago. And then your hobby, if I can call it that, hasn't really helped matters. This is not exactly the sort of room the village ladies are used to or would feel comfortable in having afternoon tea. As for all of that out there... the less said about it, the better.

(Ibid.)

Meanwhile the different interpretations Helen and Elsa give to the look on the creature's face, the question of whether it is pulling up its trousers (Helen's interpretation) or dropping them (Elsa's interpretation), point up each woman's individuality. In spite of the fact that the two women have so much in common, there are areas in which they disagree and exhibit their individuality, such as the present. The expression of anticipation (the libidinal act of dropping one's trousers) is telling as regards Elsa's youth and the sense that she still has a lot to live for, while Helen's "pulling up of trousers" could be saying something about her satisfaction with the completion of her Mecca and the sense of fulfilment associated with the action.

3.4.2. Light as opposed to darkness

In her review of the 2007 production of *The Road to Mecca* at Seabrookes Theatre (Durban) Brown (2007) writes,

The big theme of the play is about Helen's fear of darkness and the need to always have light in her life to allay this fear. She made her house a trap for light by covering her walls with broken mirrors and coloured glass which made light dance and flicker.

For Helen, "light represents her personal, artistic and spiritual vision" (Britts 2006), a vision she realises through the creation of her Mecca, which she calls "*a city of light and colour more splendid than anything I had ever imagined.*" (Fugard 1985:72).

Helen's struggle against darkness reaches to the very core of her existence. According to Wertheim, "Helen's existence opposes darkness with light – the light of her candles, the enlightenment of her art. Hers is a vision that enables her to transcend her geographic location in the South African Karoo to perceive the outlines of her visionary ideal, the realms of her Mecca" (Wertheim 2000:162).

Mecca as Helen's visionary destination is therefore a path away from darkness, which is the opposite of light. In the play darkness is represented by a blind conformity to "her faith, her history, and her culture" (Durbach 1987:6). Because he represents the Christian church, Marius embodies that darkness. Wertheim speaks of Marius' association with darkness as follows:

Like his flock in New Bethesda, Marius tills the soil of the Karoo to bring forth his potatoes. His life is one of coping with defeat and sorrow, eking out his existence. Rather than oppose darkness, he serves it: on one level, by growing his tubers and roots, his humble potatoes and radishes; on another level, by affirming the restrictive attitudes of his parishioners. His is a vision that gives thanks for the routine, known, and status quo.

(Wertheim 2000:162).

Helen's struggle against darkness does not begin with Stefanus's death. As a child, Helen had been fearful of darkness. However, it is only after her husband's death that Helen does something about it by creating the city of light in her own backyard to combat, with light, the haunting fear of darkness. Towards the end of play, Helen, emboldened by Elsa's face-giving appreciation of her Mecca, becomes so radiant with her vision that even Marius gives her face by complimenting her as follows: "*(...) I've never seen you as happy as this! There is*

more light in you than in all your candles put together” (Fugard 1985:74). This appraisal is very important not only because it is the first time that Marius has appreciated Helen’s art but also because it indicates that Marius has developed as a character in his relationship with Helen.

3.4.3. The theme of death

According to Cirlot (1971:77) “symbolically, death represents the end of an epoch, particularly when it takes the form of sacrifice or the desire for self-destruction in the face of unendurable tension.” For Helen, particularly, it is her husband Stefanus’s death that sets the tone for her visionary journey to “Mecca”. So Stefanus’s death marks the end of an epoch, that of Helen in marital bondage to someone she confesses she did not love. It also marks the end of her church-going life. To Marius she will later admit the following:

Your words of comfort didn’t help. But that wasn’t your fault. You didn’t know I wasn’t mourning Stefanus’s death. He was a good man, and it was very sad that he had died so young, but I never loved him. My black widowhood was really for my life, Marius. While Stefanus was alive there had at least been some pretence at it... Of a life I hadn’t lived. But with him gone...

(Fugard 1985:71).

With Stefanus gone, Helen found her true self, dedicating herself to journeying to “Mecca” through art. As a result, Helen’s admission that she did not love Stefanus makes his death sound like good riddance, some form of liberation.

There is also the end (symbolic death) of Elsa’s affair with David, a married man with whom she should not have been involved in the first place. After the break-up, she learns to never trust any man any longer. As she puts it to Helen: “(...) *It needs a betrayal to get you going.*” (*Ibid.*:32).

For Patience, it is the death of her husband that sets her free from the yoke of a white “baas”. She is told to leave the farm where she had been living with her husband after the latter’s death. The death also liberates her from a probable marital bondage. Although her long walk to the Cradock district only offers a semblance of freedom, given the fact that there is no certainty of a place to live for her and her baby, freedom it still is, freedom from the apartheid-era oppressions under the white baas.

The threat of death is equally important; Helen’s possible suicide and Elsa risking her life through abortion.

3.5. Elsa, Her Goal and Strategies

3.5.1. The bond with Helen

Elsa Barlow may be forty years younger than Helen, yet the two are good friends. Heller (1993:473) attributes their strong bond to the fact that

Both are rebels against social conventions: Elsa teaches radical material to her coloured students, and Helen's exotic artwork defies the traditional pieties of Afrikaner life. Both women are childless and seek self-fulfilment outside of conventional motherhood. Both women have black friends and sympathize with Patience, the widowed black woman with a baby whom Elsa finds walking alone across the Karoo.

(Ibid.:473)

Ageing and battling with arthritis, Helen has lost faith in herself and cannot complete her Mecca. She needs Elsa to renew her faith in herself. The fact that it is to Elsa that she turns in times of distress such as the present, when she is faced with a life-or-death question of whether to move to the old-age home or keep her house, demonstrates how much she values her friendship. And the fact that Elsa does interrupt her schoolwork and trek for 800 miles all the way from Cape Town to be at her friend's side shows how Elsa values her friendship with Helen. The text portrays many instances of the strong bond between the two women, some of which take the form of their mutual praise. For example, Elsa praises Helen to Marius in the following terms:

(...) Have you ever wondered why I come up here? It's a hell of a long drive, you know, if the only reason is sympathy for a lonely old lady whom nobody is talking to any more. And it's also not for the scenery. She challenges me, Dominee. She challenges me into an awareness of myself and my life, of my responsibilities to both that I never had until I met her. There's a hell of a lot of talk about freedom, and all sorts of it, in the world where I come from. But it's mostly talk, Dominee, easy talk and nothing else. Not with Helen. She's lived it. One dusty afternoon five years ago, when I came walking down that road hoping for nothing more than to get away from the flies that were driving me mad, I met the first truly free spirit I have ever known.

(Fugard 1985:66-7)

As for how much Elsa means to Helen, the latter's letter is very revealing (see section 3.3 above). Although this bond is tested by Marius, it is consolidated towards the end of the play.

3.5.2. Elsa's strategies

Elsa employs various strategies to stop Helen from signing the application form for her transfer to the old-age home. In the first act, she empowers Helen to face Marius. This is what Elsa tells Helen:

(...) So when the Dominee comes around, you're going to put on a brave front. Let's get him and his stupid idea about an old-age home right out of your life. Because you're going to say No, remember? Be as polite and civil as you like – we'll offer him tea and biscuits and discuss the weather and the evils of alcohol – but when the time comes, you're going to thank him for all his trouble and consideration and then hand this back to him with a firm 'No, thank you.'

(Fugard 1985:44)

Elsa issues her strongest defence of Helen's right to keep her house by describing the act of sending Helen to an old-age home as "dumping" her. Elsa declares, *"(...) Dumping you with a lot of old people who've hung on for too long and nobody wants around any more? You're still living your life, Helen, not drooling it away."* (Ibid.:43).

The very name "*Sunshine Home for the Aged*" seems to make a mockery of everything Helen stands for. It is ironical that the place should be called "sunshine" at all. Sunshine connotes "light" and seems to resonate with Helen's ideal of light (her group *face*). But since a move to the old-age home would mean she will have to abandon her real city of light (her Mecca), there is actually no way she can "shine" as an artist while confined in *Sunshine Home for the Aged*. When she turns Marius down, as indicated she actually declares: *"(...) I can't reduce my world to a few ornaments in a small room in an old-age home"* (Ibid.:73), implying that a move to the old-age home will impede her, rather than make her "shine". Helen's refusal to sign the form is part of her struggle to preserve her space or her freedom to be unimpeded (see Brown and Levinson 1987:62). Elsa shows no appreciation for the home when she remarks: *"there are always a few old folk in their 'twilight years' sitting around enjoying the sunshine (...) It looks very restful"* (Fugard 1985:40). Connoting death/the end are adjectives like "twilight", "restful", and "old" or "old-age". Darkness is exactly what Helen has been fighting against through her artistry. Therefore, by refusing to move to the old-age home she is being consistent with her ideals.

Therefore, when Marius finally comes in to fetch the form, Elsa strategically leaves Helen alone to deal with him. She is confident Helen will do the right thing. By leaving her alone

Elsa is in fact upholding her friend's negative *face* or her rights to non-distraction (see section 2.5.3.1 above).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:70),

Negative politeness (...) is essentially avoidance-based, and realizations of negative-politeness strategies consist in assurances that the speaker recognizes and respects the addressee's negative-face wants and will not (or will only minimally) interfere with the addressee's freedom of action. Hence negative politeness is characterized by self-effacement, formality and restraint, with attention to very restricted aspects of H's self-image, centring on his want to be unimpeded.

The act of according Helen some space (negative politeness) is not in contrast with Elsa's goal of empowering Helen against Marius. In other words, Elsa must refrain from doing the exact opposite of the reason why she is travelled to Nieu-Bethesda: to renew Helen's faith in herself.

But Helen's failure to stand up to Marius, perhaps because he "*is such a persuasive talker,*" (Fugard 1985:42), and because "*Miss Helen's emotional state has deteriorated steadily*" (*Ibid.*:61) forces Elsa to shift her strategy. Helen has just turned to her to help her not to sign. Helen has just proven that she cannot stand up to Marius on her own, not as yet. As it were, "*Marius' fountain pen has ended up in her hand. She looks down at the application form. A few seconds' pause and then a desperate cry*" (*Ibid.*).

- (1) HELEN: *Why don't you stop me, Elsa! I'm going to sign it!*
- (2) ELSA: *(Abandoning all pretence of being absorbed in her work)*
Then go ahead and do it! Sign that fucking form. If that's what you want to do to your life, just get it over and done with, for God's sake!
- (3) ELSA: *(Ignoring him) What are you waiting for, Helen? You're wasting our time. It's late and we want to go to bed.*
- (4) HELEN: *But you said I mustn't sign it.*
- (5) ELSA: *(Brutally) I've changed my mind. Do it. Hurry up and dispose of your life so that we can get on with ours.*
- (6) HELEN: *Stop it, Elsa. Help me. Please help me.*
- (7) ELSA: *Sorry, Helen. I've had more woman-battering today than I can cope with. You can at least say no. That woman on the road couldn't. But if you haven't got the guts to do that, then too bad. I'm not going to do it for you.*
- (8) HELEN: *I tried.*
- (9) ELSA: *You call that trying? All it required was one word – no.*
- (10) HELEN: *Please believe me, Elsa... I was trying!*

(11)ELSA: *No good, Helen. If that's your best, then maybe you will be better off in an old-age home.*

MARIUS: *Gently, Miss Barlow! In Heaven's name, gently! What's got into you?*

(*Ibid.*)

The fact that Elsa abandons “*all pretence of being absorbed in her work*” (*Ibid.*) marks her change of strategy from self-effacement (in order to empower Helen to speak for herself) to going bald-on-record (see section 2.5.3.4 above for a thorough discussion of the strategy). This, in itself, is an acknowledgement that her previous strategy has failed to secure the desired result.

Helen's plea in turn (1) forces Elsa, out of frustration with her friend's ambivalence, to go blunt: that is, “to focus on the propositional content of the message, and pay little attention to the interpersonal aspect of what is said” (Thomas 1995:170), as is appropriate for an emergency like the one in which Helen finds herself.

Elsa uses a series of imperatives (“*go ahead, do, sign, hurry up, get it over and done with, dispose of*”), as well as sarcasm to show her anger and frustration by expressing the exact opposite of what she wants Helen to do. She also uses a taboo word (“*sign that **fucking form***” as per turn 1 above), which as discussed in section 2.5.3.3 is an exercise of power in order to appear superior and influence the addressee to act in a certain way (see Beebe 1995 as cited in Culpeper 2011:227).

Elsa's use of sarcasm and a taboo word is calculated to shock Helen out of the danger of giving in to Marius. It is a strategy that Charlie, in example (14), used successfully in stopping the colonel from killing himself. Helen is in a similar situation: she is about to give up her home and everything she cares about. Hence, for Elsa to be able to stop her, “the maximally functional or expedient strategy is required” (Herman 1995:191).

If Helen's plea vaguely sounds like a warning (turn 1) to Elsa, it is one that falls flat on its face because as Elsa demonstrates, it is Helen herself, and not Elsa, who is in a foundering ship and who faces the danger of losing her freedom and her life. Given that a warning “refers to the different strategies used for getting the attention of the addressee and making him/her alert to a specific danger or bad consequences” (Bataineh and Aljamal 2014:88), it is Elsa who is alerting Helen to the specific danger of disposing of her life.

Elsa's use of the second person pronoun "you" and its possessive form "your" in turn (2) is intended to emphasise Helen's right to exercise her freedom of choice as is evident in the following disclaimer by Elsa: "*But if you haven't got the guts to do that, then too bad. I'm not going to do it for you.*" (See turn 7).

In turn (7) in accordance with Herman's (1995:193) argument that "a speaker who assesses her own contribution to have been too blunt may redress in next turn" Elsa changes tactics. Having abused Helen verbally, she now apologises to her as per turn (8), which is a negative politeness strategy in Brown and Levinson (1987) (strategy 6). The apology is calculated to restore face to Helen, followed by the excuse that "*I've had more woman-battering today than I can cope with*" (Fugard 1985:61). The imperatives are replaced by a suggestion, which decreases the degree of directness/imposition by increasing Helen's optionality. Since "the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be," (Leech 1983:108), the more polite Elsa tends to be. While the modal verb "can" expresses Elsa's belief in Helen's ability to do what is in her best interest, the last two sentences of the turn show Elsa's respect for Helen's space (her negative *face*).

It is interesting to note that going from being brutal to showing sympathy (in compliance with the sympathy maxim: see section 2.5.5.6 above), as she has just done in the above extract, is not a discursive strategy Elsa is prepared to reproduce for Marius. With Marius her strategy has consistently been to inflict maximal damage to his *face* so as to counter what leverage he might be able to exercise on Helen. Although Marius reciprocates with a similar strategy in his exchanges with Elsa, it is ultimately Elsa's strategy that wins the day because in the end Helen refuses to sign the form for her transfer.

If Helen is able to ignore the amount of imposition her act (summoning Elsa all the way from Cape Town) represents, which in normal circumstances would have made her act too great to perform, Elsa is equally determined to make the most of her short stay in Nieu-Bethesda. She does not seem to care how much damage her blunt remark inflicts to Helen's face, for as long as she gets what she wants out of her. After all, Helen's refusal to sign the form is in her own best interests because Helen cares about her world, her Mecca. In section 2.5.5.1 I argued that a speech act that conveys greater benefit to the hearer tends to be more polite than one that expresses greater cost to the hearer. In terms of the payoff for going on record in this manner, Elsa can be credited with being honest and outspoken and, in the light of Helen's refusal to sign the form, is able to restore in terms of *face* any risk posed by the FTA (see Brown and Levinson 1987:71).

The success of Elsa's strategy is indicated by the fact that Helen not only regains her faith in herself (she now makes a long speech, wresting control back from Marius), lecturing Marius about her Mecca, but most importantly she also refuses to sign the form.

Helen: (...) I won't be using this (the application form).

(Fugard 1985:73)

Although the real-life Helen Martins who inspired Fugard's play "committed suicide by ingesting caustic soda" (Brenner 2014), the Helen in *The Road to Mecca* stood her ground before the Dominee, Marius, regardless of the latter's institutional power (his being a church minister and member of the church council). Helen is known to have already undermined the religious institutional power by abandoning the church. Indeed, Marius' determination to commit Helen to an old-age home, which is run by his church, is an attempt to restore that power over Helen. This suggests that for someone as determined as Helen to preserve her space, there can be no power/authority too great to withstand. The stage directions indicate that "when [Marius] speaks again we sense a defeated man" (Fugard 1985:73). By conquering the very individual who represents church authority in the play, Helen has dealt a final blow to what has remained of the idea of the church in her life.

3.5.3. The theme of trust

For two people sharing a strong bond of friendship, such as Helen and Elsa, mutual trust is a defining element of that relationship. Helen trusts her friend's judgment enough to summon her all the way from Cape Town to be at her side at a critical moment of her life. In turn, Elsa demonstrates that she is worthy of Helen's trust by interrupting her school work. Once at Helen's place, Elsa prepares her friend to face up to Marius and trusts that when the latter comes to fetch the transfer form Helen will act effectively and turn him down. However, Elsa's argument that Helen should be left alone to live her life, against Marius' counterargument that she will be safer in an old-age home, is shaken when Marius reveals that Helen had almost burnt herself in an apparent accident. To make matters worse, she has said nothing to Elsa about the accident. By withholding the information from Elsa, Helen breaks her trust. Elsa feels she has been let down, like the boy in her tale whose father had promised to catch him if he jumped. Helen attempts to justify her decision not to tell Elsa the whole truth. She says, "I didn't tell you because I was frightened you would agree with them" (*Ibid.*).

Instead of appeasing Elsa, Helen only succeeds in angering her. The stage directions indicate that Elsa “*studies Miss Helen with cruel detachment*”. Elsa’s response indicates that she does not like the fact that Helen has not told her the whole truth. By saying that she did not tell Elsa because she was frightened she would agree with those who want her out of her house, Miss Helen has achieved the exact thing she has been fearing. For Elsa says, “*But you might have a point there. Now that I’ve heard about your ‘little accident’ I’m beginning to think they might be right*” (*Ibid.*:64). This line adds to Elsa’s “*cruel detachment*” referred to in the stage directions. Then, Elsa adds,

... corrugated iron and wooden walls? Give it half a chance and this would go up like a bonfire (...) And he says you were just standing and staring at it. What was that all about? Couldn’t you make a run for it? They say that about terror – it makes you either run like hell or stand quite still. Sort of paralysis. Because it was just an accident, wasn’t it, Helen? I mean, you weren’t trying anything else, were you? Spite everybody by taking the house with you in a final blaze of glory! Dramatic! But it’s a hell of a way to go. There are easier methods.

(*Ibid.*:64-5)

The stage directions indicate that “*Miss Helen goes up to Elsa and stares at her.*” Definitely this is not her friend Elsa speaking, not the Elsa she has trusted enough to summon all the way from Cape Town to come and help her in her most trying moment. Helen’s sense of being let down by her most trusted friend is conveyed through her question to Elsa, “*Who are you?*”

The fact that Elsa is devastated at the question, as indicated in the stage directions, shows how greatly *face*-threatening her act has been to Miss Helen. Brenner (2014) tries to capture the essence of Helen’s question by arguing that

In three words Helen not only reasserts her agency and strength, standing up to arguably the strongest character of the play, but offers perspective on the issue at hand. Helen brings Elsa down to the reality that her socially timid friend has asked for help and tried to commit suicide. Helen’s fear, and she says as much, is that Elsa will agree with “them,” the others, that she will no longer be on Helen’s ever-shrinking team. The question, who are you, asks are you still my friend, is it us or are you one of them.

Elsa is devastated at Helen’s question: at “the realisation that she has berated someone who is in genuine need of help, like the young black woman she gave a ride and provisions to” (*Ibid.*).

In terms of face orientations, the two women have so far been part of each other's group *face*, as demonstrated by their mutual support, their being there for each other. But this group *face* is threatened by the apparent breach of mutual trust: Helen saying nothing about her accident and Elsa's criticism of her friend, sounding as if she was siding with Helen's enemies. According to Herman (1995:190),

It is in everyone's best interests to respect others' 'face' which provides the reciprocity needed for face maintenance in the interests of all, everyone's face being dependent on everybody else's being respected, since face threat could result in counter-threat.

What has just happened between Miss Helen and Elsa is their failure to maintain face mutually, resulting in Elsa's cruel detachment, following Helen's admission that she had withheld information from her friend, and in Miss Helen's strange question in reaction to Elsa's criticism. For Marius, there could perhaps be no better opportunity to try to enlist the help of Elsa to try to persuade Miss Helen to sign the form. But who is Marius and why is he in the play?

3.6. Marius

Marius Byleveld, as the representative of the Dutch Reformed Church, stands in opposition to Helen's artistic vision. He is the anti-hero, one with an ulterior motive: his secret love for Helen. When Elsa declares that "*Marius Byleveld, the man, loves you Helen, the woman*" (*Ibid.*:75), she is basically attempting to distinguish Marius, the villain, the mouthpiece of the church council, who wants to immure Helen in an old-age home, from Marius, the secret lover. Marius' role is portrayed by Wertheim as follows:

As a representative of his repressive community, he is for Helen a figure of death, of the repressive forces of darkness that stand in Manichean opposition to her world of light and artistic enlightenment: forces that would snuff out the candles of her house and the metaphorical candles of her art and life.

(Wertheim 2000:161)

In *The Road to Mecca* Marius is portrayed as embodying death, which together with darkness, stands in opposition to Helen's ideal of light. This is what Helen tells Elsa about Marius:

He's been waiting a long time for me to reach the end of my Mecca. I thought I cheated him out of it, that that moment would never come. All those years when I was working away, when it was taking shape, he was there as well... standing in the distance, watching and waiting...

(Fugard 1985:46).

In his portrayal of Marius in diametrical opposition to what Helen stands for, Fugard uses a number of images. The most striking of these is perhaps Marius' love of the earth and its produce, which in the play is in opposition to light. The earth is a fixed element and as such conjures up lack of movement, whereas light is able to travel. Analogously, while the earth-bound Marius is content with routine and the status quo, Helen is able to "travel" all the way to Mecca. It is a fact that Marius, reeling from Helen's refusal to sign the transfer form to the old-age home, does acknowledge:

Mecca! So that's where you went. I'll look for it on my atlas of the world when I get home tonight. That's a long way away, Helen! I didn't realize you had travelled that far from me. So to find you I must light a candle and follow it to the east! (He makes a helpless gesture.)

No. I think I'm too old now for that journey... and I have a feeling that you will never come back.

(Fugard 1985:73)

Not only does Marius accidentally reveal his secret love for Helen, he also admits his inability to reach out to her. Then, Helen says: "I'm also too old for another journey, Marius. It's taken me my whole life to get there." The two have just acknowledged their inability to make the journey to reach out to each other, annulling the possibility of any love affair between the two.

However, Marius has one major hurdle to clear towards his goal of having Helen sign the form: the presence of Elsa. Included in his strategies to persuade Helen to do so is, first of all, trying to ostracise Elsa while affirming common ground with Helen. Secondly, through the so-called rituals of avoidance he tries to postpone the discussion until after Elsa has left. Both strategies are now discussed.

3.6.1. Ostracising Elsa and affirming common ground with Helen

Right from the beginning of Act 2, we gain a glimpse into Marius' discursive strategy: claiming common ground with Helen through the constant use of in-group identity markers, while at the same time ostracising Elsa. This is strategy (4) in Brown and Levinson's (1987)

list of positive politeness strategies. The following is an example of how Marius treats Elsa:

MARIUS: (Holding up a potato) Feast your eyes on this, Miss Barlow! A genuine Sneeberg potato! A pinch of salt and you've got a meal, and if you want to be extravagant, add a little butter and you have indeed got a feast. We had a farmer from the Gamtoos Valley up here last week, trying to sell potatoes to us! Can you believe it? Did you see him, Helen? He had his lorry parked in front of the Post Office. What's the English expression, Miss Barlow? Coals to – where?

ELSA: Coals to Newcastle.

MARIUS: That's it! Well in this case it was very near to being an insult as well. We pride ourselves in these parts on knowing what a potato really is. And here you have it. The 'apple of the earth', as the French would say. But I don't imagine that poor man will come again. Shame! I ended up feeling very sorry for him. 'Don't you people like potatoes?' he asked me. What could I say? I didn't have the heart to tell him he'd wasted his time driving all this distance, that nobody comes to the Sneeberg to sell potatoes! And then, to make me feel really bad, he insisted on giving me a small sack of them before he drove off. I don't think he sold enough to cover the cost of his petrol back home. I also brought you a few beets and tomatoes. The beets have passed their best now, but if you pickle and bottle them, they'll be more than all right. Have you ever treated our young friend to a state of that, Miss Helen? (To Elsa) It's one of our local specialities. One thing I can assure you ladies is that these vegetables are as fresh as you are ever likely to get. I dug them up myself this afternoon.

(Fugard 1985:49-50)

Marius' story of the farmer from the Gamtoos Valley is definitely allegorical of Elsa. Before I discuss the story proper, it is worth commenting on Marius' line: [*(Holding up a potato) Feast your eyes on this, Miss Barlow! A genuine Sneeberg potato! A pinch of salt and you've got a meal, and if you want to be extravagant, add a little butter and you have indeed got a feast*]. Through this line we are given a glimpse into the fact that Marius wants to treat Elsa as a stranger unaccustomed to Sneeberg potatoes. It is this characterisation that the story of the farmer from the Gamtoos Valley reinforces.

Like the farmer, Elsa travels a long distance to "sell" her liberal views to the conservative Nieu-Bethesda. This is the first attempt that Marius makes to portray Elsa as an "ignorant and intrusive outsider who does not understand the Karoo and the traditions of its Afrikaner people" (Heller 1993:474).

About the anecdote Wertheim notes the following:

The anecdote becomes a pointed parable as he [Marius] implies that Elsa, like the farmer, is unwanted and wasting her time in New Bethesda, and that his aim is to send the intruder back to Cape Town. He and the town, after all, know what is best for a member of their flock who has gone astray as Miss Helen so obviously has.

(Wertheim 2000:163)

Marius' ploy to get Elsa out of his way is reinforced by his constant use of the in-group markers "us", "we", that is Helen and him, wilfully excluding Elsa. He also clearly points to Elsa being an English speaker as opposed to an Afrikaner when he enquires, "*What's the English expression, Miss Barlow? Coals to – where?*" Marius's ostracism of Elsa becomes blunter when he says, "*It is my world – and Helen's – and we can't expect an outsider to love or understand it as we do.*" (Fugard 1985:51).

Marius' strategy is clearly to try to neutralise any influence Elsa might have over Helen and secure Helen's signature of the form. But Marius' act is infelicitous on two counts. Firstly, Marius himself will later admit that he has been living in the Karoo for twenty years only, undermining his claim that the Karoo is his world and Helen's. Secondly, as has already been demonstrated (see section 3.5), Helen does not share as much with him as she does with Elsa, Helen's true world being her Mecca, a world too eccentric for Marius to fathom, but one which Elsa understands and appreciates.

Marius uses another strategy to display his closeness with Helen, while distancing himself from Elsa. He calls Helen by her first name only, which is an in-group identity marker (positive politeness strategy 4 in Brown and Levinson's model), but he refers to Elsa by her title and surname (Miss Barlow) in order to distance himself from her, which is a negative politeness strategy 5 (giving deference) in the same model. Marius also wants to emphasize the fact that she is not married, enforcing patriarchal structures of powers and that she does not conform to the Calvinistic rules. Failure to make Elsa feel unwanted forces Marius to switch strategies. He knows he is wasting his time trying to destroy what seems like too strong a bond between the two ladies. He attempts another strategy, hoping to be more effective at prevailing upon Helen to sign the form. He uses what Brown and Levinson (1987:129) call "rituals of avoidance," which they consider as corresponding to negative politeness.

3.6.2. Rituals of avoidance

Marius knows that Elsa is only in the village for one night. Accordingly, he calculates that if he can postpone the discussion to a time when he and Helen would be alone, he would be more successful at persuading her to sign the transfer form. He invokes the so-called rituals of avoidance, in a number of ways. For example, when “Elsa returns with a tray of tea and sandwiches,” as indicated in the stage directions, Marius says: “Ah, here comes your supper. I must be running along” (Fugard 1985:55). To make him stay, Elsa counters that neither of them is hungry. When Marius says, “I’ll drop by tomorrow night if that is all right with you, Helen,” (*Ibid.*) Elsa again makes him stay by offering him a cup of tea. To have her out of his way will make it easier for him to achieve his goal of persuading Helen to sign the form and ultimately move to the old-age home. When he protests, “I don’t want to intrude” (*Ibid.*), Elsa begs him not to go because of her, promising to take his tea to the other room. It is clear Marius wants to be left alone with Helen. But the latter, who has summoned Elsa all the way from Cape Town to help her decide, begs her not to go. When Elsa changes her mind about going to the other room, Marius makes another move to leave, saying “I’ve obviously come at an inconvenient time” (*Ibid.*). Unfortunately for Marius, this “inconvenience” is not shared by Elsa and Helen, who have been waiting for him. As a result, when Elsa tells him that Helen has been expecting him and, as indicated in the stage directions, “fetches the application form for the old-age home and puts it down on the table,” (*Ibid.*) he finally settles down. But Marius, perhaps not completely confident that he will induce Helen to sign the form with Elsa nearby, makes another attempt to have the act postponed at least until after Elsa has left. He tells Helen, “You’re quite certain you want to discuss this now, Helen?” (*Ibid.*). Although Helen agrees, Marius still says, “It can wait until tomorrow” (*Ibid.*).

After his unsuccessful attempts to put off the signing of the form, Marius eventually decides to go through it with Helen. He may have failed to neutralise Elsa and could not convince Helen to agree to put off the discussion to a more appropriate moment, but he is calculating that he can still persuade her to sign the form. As will now be demonstrated through the analysis of his act of request, he is a distinctly persuasive speaker.

3.6.3. Marius’ request

Marius’ request to Helen to sign the form for her transfer to the old-age home meets the criteria of a canonical request. As Herman notes,

A speech act, like a request, requires that the propositional content of an utterance refer to a future act A of H; the preparatory conditions state that S (speaker) must believe that H (hearer) is able to do what is requested and that the action requested would not have been undertaken voluntarily by H in the normal course of events.

(Herman 1995:169)

It is clear that Marius' request involves Helen performing a future act (moving to the old-age home). Marius also believes that she is able to perform the act, but that she would not have done so voluntarily. However, since the move is against her free will, Marius' request constitutes an imposition because it interferes with Helen's negative *face* or her "basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination" (Brown and Levinson 1987:70). As such it needs redressive action on the part of the requestor.

The stage directions at the beginning of Act 2 tell one that Marius has given Helen "*a basket of vegetables*" (Fugard 1985:49). This gift-giving ranks as politeness strategy 15 in Brown and Levinson's model. Through this act of generosity Marius wants to show that he cares for Helen. In response to Marius' gift, Helen says, "*It's very kind of you, Marius, but you really shouldn't have bothered*" (*Ibid.*:50). Although she shows appreciation for Marius' gift, a positive politeness strategy, she also signals she would be better off not incurring a debt from Marius in this manner. Hence, if "positive politeness involves affirmation of common ground, and the promotion of the view that the participants are co-operators," (Herman 1995:192), which Marius' gift seeks to promote, Helen's strategy (showing appreciation for the gift but at the same adding a negative politeness hedge) is an attempt to tell Marius that her response should not be coerced (see Brown and Levinson 1987:172 section 5.4.3: don't coerce H). In other words Helen, who knows why Marius has come, is attempting to tell him not to assume her willingness to do what she is being requested. She is doing her utmost to say she must not be taken for granted.

Marius's discursive strategies will now be discussed.

MARIUS: Right. Just before we start talking, Helen, the good news is that I've spoken to Dominee Gericke in Graaf-Reinet again, and the room is definitely yours – that is, if you want it, of course. But they obviously can't have it standing empty indefinitely. As it is, he's already broken the rules by putting you at the top of the waiting list, but as a personal favour. He understands the circumstances. So sooner we decide, one way or the other, the better. But I want you to know that I do realize how big a move it is for you. I want you to be quite certain and happy in your mind that you're doing the right thing. So don't think we've got to rush into it, start packing up immediately or

anything like that. A decision must be made, one way or the other, but once you've done that, you can relax and take all the time you need (...)

(Fugard 1985: 56)

Although Marius begins with what he calls “*the good news*,” he quickly softens up the underlying imposition in his presumptuousness by adding, “*that is, if you want it, of course*” (*Ibid.*), the use of the conditional being more polite because it increases Helen’s optionality. As Brown and Levinson (1987:231) note, “upon making a positively polite request S may decide that he has been too presumptuous and take a long hedge onto it.”

However, the very next thing Marius does is to undermine that optionality by pointing out, “*but they obviously can't have it standing empty indefinitely.*” By saying so, Marius is again making an effort to coerce Helen, which threatens her *face* because it decreases the very optionality inherent in the foregoing conditional. In the next line, he portrays Dominee Gericke as a generous man, a strategy that coalesces with gift-giving. It is also noteworthy that Marius uses “we” instead of “you”. As Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984:203) note, “given the fact that in requests it is the hearer who is ‘under threat’, any avoidance in naming the addressee as the principal performer of the act serves to soften the impact of the imposition”. Marius is also doing his best to show that he has Helen’s interest at heart, an effort that appears futile because of his lack of understanding of the “real” Helen (see section 3.4, **Mecca as Helen’s** world, above), and the fact that he does not appreciate Helen’s Mecca.

The “*one way or the other*” is another attempt by Marius to inform Helen that she has an option to refuse to sign the form but in reality he is determined to achieve the opposite. Marius’s “deep and abiding need (...) to bring her (Helen) back to the faith and the volk” (Durbach 1987:7) is in fact a ploy to reach out to her. This makes any effort by him to show that he cares about her self-determination a “hypocritical face-redress [strategy]” (Ermida 2006:849), referring to “a conflictual dimension which is rendered, on the surface structure level, as seemingly benign face-saving work”.

3.7. Marius’ Defeat and the Consolidation of the Women’s Bond

Although Marius does not appear until the end of Act One, he dominates the second Act until he is “silenced” upon his defeat as a result of Helen’s refusal to sign the form for her transfer to the old-age home. Marking Marius’ dominance is the detail that he takes a total of 92 turns out of the 206 turns in the stretch in which he appears, with Elsa and Helen sharing the other 114 turns. However, looking at the play as a whole, Marius’ late entry and early exit mark his overall subordination in a play that has at its core “women’s struggle for self-expression and

self-fulfilment in a society that sanctions conformity as well as control by the powerful of the powerless” (Komisar 2012).

Marius’s defeat consists in the failure “to persuade Helen to retire to his church’s home for the elderly” (Heller 1993:474). This defeat, however, does not come in a single blow. Drawing from her “power over”, derived from being a school teacher (see section 2.5.3.3 **Power, distance and size of imposition** above), Elsa has successfully advanced most of all the arguments in Helen’s favour. By the end of the play, the two women will have systematically destroyed every weapon in Marius’ arsenal.

As noted, upon entering the scene Marius’ strategy has been to ostracise Elsa in order to neutralise her influence on Helen. His argument that “*it is my world – and Helen’s – and we can’t expect an outsider to love and understand it as we do*” (Fugard 1985:51) is undermined. Not only does he admit, as indicated above, that he himself has spent only twenty years in the Karoo but, as I demonstrated earlier, his argument is actually a mischaracterisation because Helen’s true world is not the Karoo, but her Mecca. The fact that Marius does not appreciate Helen’s Mecca makes him the real outsider to Helen’s world, not Elsa, who values this world.

In their conflict-riven exchange, while Marius continues to disempower Helen through his tendency to speak for her, Elsa upholds Helen’s self-determination. When he comments, “*So you know what is best for her*” (*Ibid.*:62), Elsa answers, “*No, no, no! Wrong again, Dominee. I think she does*” (*Ibid.*).

A patriarchal society such as the one depicted in Fugard’s play is characterised, like many male-dominated societies, by the silence of women. In this play Marius gives little or no voice to Helen, an attitude that is met with Elsa’s rebuttal. He claims, “*When Helen and I discussed the matter a few days ago...*” (Fugard 1985:62), oblivious of the fact that Helen is present, but Elsa counters, “*Don’t talk about her as if she were not here. She’s right next to you, Dominee. Ask her, for God’s sake... but this time give her a chance to answer*” (*Ibid.*).

We also know that Helen has undermined the authority of the Dutch Reformed Church that Marius happens to represent by turning her back on religion, and instead using her time more creatively by working at her Mecca. In the end the tables have been turned over Marius’ drive to disempower the two women because the latter successfully empower themselves while at the same time leaving him disempowered. Notable in Marius’ last turn are three moments of silence that drive home the point I am trying to make. He has nothing to say to both Helen

and Elsa; the stage directions indicate that “*A silence follows his departure*” (*Ibid.*:74). As for the consolidation of the bond between Elsa and Helen that follows Marius’ defeat, Heller (1993:476) notes, “Marius’ harassment has, if anything, deepened the female bond.”

3.8 Conclusion

Although there are only two Acts in the play, there are actually three moments of great relevance for the understanding of the working of *face* in the play. To begin with, the first Act shows the two friends bonding through such marks of solidarity as self-disclosures about their respective lives and gossiping. The strongest mark of solidarity is definitely Elsa’s decision to abandon her schoolwork and trek for 800 miles, all the way to the Karoo, to help stop the move by the Nieu-Bethesda community, led by Pastor Marius, to “be quit of the eccentric old woman who offends their sensibilities, who has left her church, and who outrages their sight with unconventional and subversive art with which she has populated her garden” (Wertheim 2000:155). The women’s being there for each other, more than anything else, is what bolsters their positive face or mutual acceptance. Not that the friendship was totally free of any friction, such as when Helen asked Elsa: “*Who are you?*” in a breach of mutual trust that was quickly restored. This restoration of mutual trust means a lot for two women whose private lives abound with *face*-damaging experiences, especially for Helen who has become undesirable to her own community for daring to be the person she wanted to be. The bond between the two women is so strong that their respective spaces seem to merge into one, to the extent that no favour seems too big to ask of the other. Because of the common ground shared by them, one’s right to be left alone (one’s negative *face*) is overridden by the other’s urgent need for support. This is what happens when, as for Helen and Elsa, one is part of the other’s group *face*.

A relationship as strong, a bond as solid as theirs, has just stood the test of someone like Pastor Marius whose presence in the play is designed precisely “to test the relationship between the two women” (Heller 1993:474). It is this test that marks the second moment in the continuum of positive-negative *face* in the play. Now the solidarity is strained by Helen’s ambivalence in standing her ground before Marius, at least in the eyes of the young and impatient Elsa. Infuriated, Elsa alters her strategy to gain what she wanted from Helen. Instead of continuing to batter her, Elsa shocks her out of her hesitation, a strategy that deceptively makes her appear like an enemy to Helen. Elsa’s attempt to temporarily distance herself from her friend achieved its desired effect by getting Helen to turn the Pastor down and uphold her right to self-determination (her negative *face*).

The third moment is the consolidation of the bond between the two women, a moment characterised by the victory over Marius and everything that he represents but also by mutual approval and trust (positive *face*). Elsa tells Helen: “*God, I love you! I love you so much that it hurts*” (Fugard 1985:79). And to Helen’s question: “*What about trust?*” Elsa answers, “*Open your arms and catch me! I’m going to jump!*” Unlike the little boy whose father was unable to catch his son, breaking the latter’s trust, Elsa now seems ready to jump without any fear that Helen might not catch her. This marks a renewal of trust between the two women.

CHAPTER FOUR: *MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!*

4.1. Introduction

In *The Road to Mecca* the bond and trust between Helen and Elsa were tested before being consolidated again. This had serious implications for the characters' choice of strategies not only in dealing with each other but also in handling external pressure, as embodied by Marius. By examining the staging of the relationship between a white girl and a black boy with his black mentor, *My Children! My Africa!* I hope to broaden the analysis of new insights into *face*, born from such factors as race and gender.

Although the topic deals with how characters orient to *face* during interactions, for this particular play the analysis will include the characters' direct addresses to the audience. Without these direct addresses, no thorough analysis of the play will be possible. The politeness strategies for performing the different face-threatening acts in the play will be analysed as part of the play's main actions. However, an analysis too focused on individual extracts may result in a stereotypical portrayal of the characters. To prevent this, a section has been devoted to characterisation through conversational behaviour based on the characters' approaches to Grice's CP on the one hand and Leech's PP on the other (see section 4.13 below).

In section 2.5.1 above, *group-orientation of face* has been highlighted as providing an interesting angle for analysing the selected Fugard plays since they are set in Africa, where people are known to adhere to *group face*. *My Children! My Africa!* seems to make the strongest case for this perspective on *face*. The reasons for this and their implications will be discussed as the issue becomes relevant.

The systematics of turn-taking, including turn size, turn-length, topic control and turn sequencing and their relevance to the dramaturgy of this play will be the focus of section 4.14. The insights drawn from the current inquiry will be summarised in the concluding remarks.

Immediately below is a summary of the play, followed by an overview of various analyses and reviews of it.

4.2. My Children! My Africa!

This two-act play premiered at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa on 27 June 1989 under the directorship of Athol Fugard himself. The play is set in the Karoo region of South Africa in the dystopian world of apartheid, a world the play dramatises through the characters of Thami, a black student from the township, his white friend Isabel and his black teacher Mr M.

The play begins in the thick of a lively inter-school debate between Thami and Isabel on whether or not women should receive the same education as men. In the end Isabel's championing of equal rights for women and men wins over Thami's more conservative position. Through his ingenuity Mr M then marshals the former opponents to work together in preparation for the upcoming literary competition they are entering as a team, effectively setting the stage for a bond of friendship between Isabel and her friend Thami.

Matters come to a head when Thami pulls out of the competition in order to join the school boycott to protest the inferior Bantu educational system imposed by the white government. The decision dismays Isabel, who has been investing time and effort in making the competition successful, and puts him on a collision course with Mr M, a champion of education and non-violence. Mr M probably sympathises with the struggle, but feels the youth are wrong to place "liberation" before "education". He believes they will simply disadvantage themselves further if they boycott schools and use violent means to show their frustrations with the political dispensation.

In his review of the play, Richard Hornby primarily turns his attention to "the relation between aesthetics and politics, or more precisely, between words and political action" (Hornby 1990:123). He characterises the debate between Thami Mbikwana and Isabel Dyson as "a rare instance where black and whites compete together, or, for that matter, have any personal interaction at all" (*Ibid.*:124). According to him, "Mr M is a classically tragic hero, bringing about his own downfall by acting according to a set of genuine but ultimately limited ideals" (*Ibid.*:126). His opposition to "violence under all circumstances" (*Ibid.*) and his belief "that words are the only way to change men's hearts" (*Ibid.*) are the factors which put Mr M at loggerheads with his pupil and protégé Thami Mbikwana for his leadership role in the uprising.

In his analysis of the play Wertheim observes that

With *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) (...) there is a recognition that apartheid's days are numbered and that a new generation of young people, black and white, stand on the threshold of the future. They will soon throw off the shackles of racism either to turn South Africa into a bloodbath or to forge a new society never envisioned by their parents.

(Wertheim 2000:177)

He basically places at the centre of the play “the issue of how a new generation will achieve freedom and at what cost” (*Ibid.*:179). Nicholas Visser (1993:486-502), in his analysis of the play takes a view which contrasts with those discussions of the play that essentially point to a choice between words (Mr M's position) and political action (Thami's). He “is critical of liberation and of *My Children! My Africa!* to the extent that it expresses and is informed by liberal values” (Barbera 1993:xiii). He attributes Mr M's preference for words over stones to “Fugard's own faith in the efficacy of words” (*Ibid.*:xiv), a bias that Visser believes silences “alternative oppositional voices”(*Ibid.*) as embodied by Thami Mbikwana.

In her paper Joan O'Mara looks at the three areas of South Africa's life dealt with in *My Children! My Africa!* The first one is South Africa's education system, specifically the 1953 Bantu Education Act promulgated with the intention “to centralise and control native education, training and teaching people in accordance with their opportunities in life” (O'Mara 1994:7). Although three years after the 1976 Soweto uprising the controversial act was replaced by the Education and Training Act of 1979, major school boycotts broke out between 1980 and 1986. It is during this period, in 1984 to be precise, that *My Children! My Africa!* was set, with the school boycotts at its core. The second area O'Mara discusses is “the restricted social interaction permitted between whites and nonwhites” (1994:7). According to her, following Tatum (1987), “the Population Registration Act of 1950 stipulates that every person be assigned a racial category and that people of different races must live, learn, work, and travel separately” (1994:7). For this reason, Isabel's contact with blacks was limited to her auntie and her father's delivery boy, a relationship of subordination. By putting Isabel and Thami on the same stage, the author seeks to break that restriction, for Isabel and Thami are meeting as equals. In this sense the play is looking ahead to a free interaction between whites and non-whites. The third aspect of South Africa's life which O'Mara discusses as part of the play's focus is the so-called black-on-black violence. O'Mara quotes Tatum (1987) as referring specifically to the killings of people accused of collaborating with the police. The mob killing of Mr M in *My Children! My Africa!* must be understood within this framework.

These three areas provide a useful background for understanding the characters of *My Children! My Africa!*

For Anne Sarzin (2012), “*My Children! My Africa!* (...) foreshadows the new and free South Africa and the interaction between its three characters provides a microcosm of the political forces that threaten to tear the country and its people apart” (Sarzin 2012:28). The clear choice the play presents between dialogue (the prevalence of words over violence as embodied by Mr M) and the struggle (Thami’s ultimate choice) risked tearing the country apart, if violence prevailed over peaceful negotiation.

4.3. Direct Addresses to the Audience

Dramatic characters usually interact with the purpose of pursuing certain personal goals. According to Herman (1995:191), “speakers as actional, goal-directed agents will, *ceteris paribus*, seek to minimize or eliminate face threat as the most efficient rational way of fulfilling their goals”. Knowing these goals will determine what motivates each character’s choice of strategies, that is, why certain actions are adopted at the expense of others. Insights into these interactional goals can be found in the direct addresses, which the author Athol Fugard himself referred to as “confidences” (Barbera 1993:xvii).

Although *face* is interactive and direct addresses to the audience “seem outside the interpersonal exchange of dramatic characters, (they) are still under pragmatic ordinance, given that the addressees, the audience, have to impute both belief and relevance to their utterances and take the propositions they express on trust as ‘relevant’ to the dramatic world” (Herman 1995:226). Such addresses also add to the dramaturgy of the play in that they create dramatic irony; i.e. when the spectators know more than the characters.

4.4. Isabel’s Discovery of a New World

In her direct address to the audience in scene 2 of Act One, Isabel remarks:

I didn’t really know it (the new world) before the debate, but I do now. You see, I finally worked out what happened to me in the classroom. I discovered a new world! I’ve always thought about the location as just a sort of embarrassing backyard to our neat and proper little white world, where our maids and our gardeners and our delivery boys went at the end of the day. But it’s not. It’s a whole world of its own with its own life that has nothing to do with us. If you put together all the Brakwaters in the country, then it’s a pretty big one... and if you’ll excuse my language... there’s a hell of a lot of people living in it! That’s quite a discovery you know. But it’s also a little... what’s the word?... disconcerting! You see, it means that what I thought was out there for me... No it’s worse than that! It’s what I was made to believe was out

there for me... the ideas, the chances, the people... specially the people!... all of that is only a small fraction of what it could be. (Shaking her head) No. Or as Auntie says in the kitchen when she's not happy about something... Aikona! Not good enough. I'm greedy. I want more. I want as much as I can get.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:148-9)

There is no doubt that the debate has shifted Isabel's perception of the location as an "embarrassing backyard to our neat and proper little white world, where our maids and our gardeners and our delivery boys went at the end of the day" to "a whole world of its own with its own life," a world in which "there's a hell of a lot of people living in it!" (Ibid.).

As she will later admit to Mr M: "The visit to Zolile was one of the best things that has happened to me. I don't want it to just end there. One visit and that's it (...). It feels like it could be the beginning of something. I've met you and Thami and all the others and would like to get to know you all better" (Ibid.:152). Isabel's so-called "discovery of a new world" sets out her goal of being educated about the location and its people, a goal that will motivate her every action in the play. As Weales puts it, "in part, the play is about the education of Isabel" (Weales 1993:513).

In light of this, any action seen to promote that goal, for example the literary competition, will bolster her positive *face*, as evidenced by her warm reception of Mr M's invitation to a partnership with Thami in the literary quiz. On the other hand, any action she considers as going against that goal will be face-threatening.

4.5. Mr M's Passion for Education

Mr M, the principal of Zolile High School, is described in the list of the cast as "*passionate about his vocation as a teacher.*" The fact that the play takes place within the premises of a school (Zolile High) is therefore not a mere coincidence. It highlights the centrality of education in the play. In his direct address to the audience in scene 4 of Act one, Mr M has this to say:

(...) Friends, I am going to let you into a terrible secret. That is why I am a teacher. It is all part of a secret plan to keep alive this savage Hope of mine. The truth is that I am worse than Nero feeding Christians to the lions. I feed young people to my Hope. Every young body behind a school desk keeps it alive. So you've been warned! If you see a hungry gleam in my eyes when I look at your children... you know what it means. That is the monster that stands here before you.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:157)

Mr M uses a vivid metaphor to depict the way he feeds young people to his hope, with a monster-like savagery, which he characterises as “*worse than Nero feeding Christians to the lions*” (*Ibid.*). The strength of the metaphor lies in the exploitation of cruelty for something positive. Instead of letting his savagery destroy lives, as Nero once did with some Christians, by feeding young lives to his “savage” hope, Mr M wants to build their lives through education. The irony is that these young people are ultimately destroyed, fed as they were, not to hope as Mr M has wanted, but to hopelessness. This image of Christians being fed to lions seems to hint at Mr M’s own fate in the hands of the militants. Like Christians who were killed for their beliefs, Mr M will ultimately be killed for his life-long ideal to provide an education to the young (a cause he lived his life for: “*what I call my life rattles around in these two matchboxes... the classroom and the backroom*” (*Ibid.*:157).

Mr M’s passion for education runs throughout the play and is epitomised by various actions, symbols or metaphors. The first such action is the interschool debate that brings Thami and Isabel together with Mr M as the referee. The second one is the dictionary, from which Mr M reads to remind the debaters “*what a debate is supposed to be*” (*Ibid.*:135). This book also symbolises Mr M’s “faith in the power of words, of education to bring about change without violence” (Weales 1993:514). A similar point is made by Barbera, who notes that in *My Children! My Africa!* the dictionary and the debate “suggest words rather than violence as the model tools for socio-political change; they suggest an exchange of views rather than an exchange of gunfire as the way conflicts should be played out” (Barbera 1993:xiv).

Mr M’s preference for words over stones (the symbol of the struggle) is strongly exemplified when he tells Thami: “*if the struggle needs weapons give it words, Thami. Stones and petrol bombs can’t get inside those armoured cars. Words can. They can do something even more devastating than that... they can get inside the heads of those inside the armoured cars*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:182).

Another symbol of Mr M’s passion for education is the school bell, which he effectively uses to rein in the debaters at the beginning of the play but which becomes irrelevant at the end of the play under the changed social context of the school boycott. Although Mr M rings it “*furiously*”, he fails to summon the striking pupils back to school.

4.6. Thami's Choice

In Thami's direct address to the audience in scene 6 of Act One, two Thamis emerge: the young Thami (the scholar) and the older Thami (the freedom fighter), the interests of the latter conflicting with those of the former. About the young Thami, he says the following:

Starting with that little farm school. I remember my school bells like beautiful voices calling to me all through my childhood... and I came running when they did. You should have seen me, man. In junior school I was the first one at the gates every morning. I was waiting there when the caretaker came to unlock them. Oh yes! Young Thami was a very eager scholar. And what made it even better, he was also one of the clever ones. A "most particularly promising pupil" is how one of my school reports described me.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:172)

Bringing the story of his life up to date, Thami then reveals how he has gone from being that "most particularly promising" pupil with top marks and a dream to become a medical doctor, to the freedom fighter who thinks, "*I don't need to go to university to learn what my people really want is a strong double-dose of that traditional old Xhosa remedy called 'Inkululeko'. Freedom*" (Ibid.:173).

Just as Isabel has made a life-changing discovery (of the location and its people), the grown-up Thami has changed too. If the younger Thami was eager to learn, the older Thami considers the Zolile classrooms as "*traps which have been carefully set to catch our minds, our souls*" (Ibid.:175), essentially laying out the reasons why the young people from the location are switching Zolile for another school, in a process Thami likens to an awakening:

We have woken up at last. We have found another school... the streets, the little rooms, the funeral parlours of the location... anywhere the people meet and whisper names we have been told to forget, the dates of events they try to tell us never happened, and the speeches they try to say were never made. Those are the lessons we are eager and proud to learn, because they are lessons about our history, about our heroes. But the time for whispering them is past. Tomorrow we start shouting. AMANDLA!

(Ibid.)

The above clearly sets out the conflicting goals of Thami, the scholar, versus Thami, the freedom fighter that will constitute most of the drama in this play. Thami's loyalty to the struggle at the expense of education would put him at loggerheads with Mr M whose passion is education. Isabel's desire for a stronger bond with Thami will be frustrated by the latter's

loyalty to the “cause”, given that for the sake of the struggle “*the Comrades don’t want any mixing with whites*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:180).

The direct addresses have shed a light on each character’s individual wants and desires: for Isabel it is the desire to learn more about the location and its people; for Thami the struggle for black people’s freedom; and for Mr M, the education of the youth. Nonetheless Isabel’s goal (to be educated about the location and its people) is in congruence with Mr M’s passion for education, a fact which translates into many shared interests between the two of them. As for Thami and Mr M, it is very likely that their opposing views will collide in the future.

With a clear understanding of the characters’ goals, the strategies they use for carrying out their actions in the play will now be analysed. The actions of the play revolve around the interschool debate, the literary competition, Mr M’s perceived paternalism towards Thami, Isabel’s education, Thami’s loyalty to the cause, the school boycotts, Mr M’s nightmare and death and Thami’s flight into exile. These actions will now be examined one by one.

4.7. The Interschool Debate

Placed strategically at the beginning of the play, this debate is key to unlocking some of the issues dealt with in the work. For example, the importance of the choice Thami has to make (between his education and the struggle) is already parodied during the debate, when his classmates have to choose between Thami’s “outrageous” position and Isabel’s more rational approach. However, the fact that “Mr M is pleased that his students overcome their loyalty to Thami and vote for the position represented by the visiting white student, Isabel” (Barbera 1993:v-vi) begs the question whether Mr M is assuming that Thami will, as his classmates have, eventually choose reason (his studies) over his blind loyalty to the struggle. Mr M would be assuming this incorrectly because Thami will choose the struggle in the end, in spite of Mr M’s various attempts to persuade him to the contrary.

The *MacMillan English Dictionary* (2007) defines a debate as “a discussion in which people or groups state different opinions about a subject,” a concept rendered in Mr M’s dictionary as “*the orderly and regulated discussion of an issue with opposing viewpoints receiving equal time and consideration*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:135). Mr M rules out “*shouting down the opposition so that they cannot be heard,*” (*Ibid.*) saying that such behaviour “*does not comply with that definition*” (*Ibid.*). This clearly shows Mr M’s preference for highlighting his opposition to Thami’s struggle (violence). This debate is equally important for Isabel for it opens up the path for her education about the location and its people. Without it she would

not have discovered her so-called new world and would not have met Thami and Mr M. Meanwhile, Thami's rejection of the education of women on a basis equal to that of men is a microcosm of his rejection of an education based on Western civilisation without considering African history and culture. Since the play "is at once about the keeping of order in contemporary South Africa and about the rise of a new black order in that country" (Wertheim 2000:179), the debate between Thami and Isabel "is the paradigm and prolegomenon for real-life political negotiation" (*Ibid.*) for which South Africa is desperate as a way of avoiding a bloodbath.

I will now analyse the debate itself for the politeness strategies used by the different characters. Here is the extract for ease of reference:

MR M: Order please!

ISABEL: I never said anything of the kind.

THAMI: Yes you did. You said that women were more...

ISABEL: What I said was that women...

THAMI: Were more emotional than men...

ISABEL: Correction! That women were more intuitive than men...

MR M: Miss Dyson and Mr Mbikwana! Will you both please...

ISABEL: You are twisting my words and misquoting me.

THAMI: I am not. I am simply asking you...

MR M: Come to order! [Grabs the school bell and rings it violently. It works. Silence] I think it is necessary for me to remind all of you exactly what a debate is supposed to be. [Opens and reads from a little black dictionary that is at on the table] My dictionary defines it as follows: 'The orderly and discussion of an issue with opposing viewpoints receiving equal time and consideration.' Shouting down the opposition so that they cannot be heard does not comply with that definition. Enthusiasm for your cause is most commendable but without personal discipline it is as useless as having a good donkey and a good cart but no harness.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:135-6)

In section 2.5.3 above it was established that if an FTA must be performed, the speaker will have to choose between doing the FTA without redress (bald-on-record), with redress to either positive face or negative face, and using off-record politeness. The debate affords a clear instance of the bald-on-record approach, "where it is unambiguously clear what the act and intention is" (Herman 1995:191). Herein the act is to defend one's position as clearly and unambiguously as possible while the intention is to win votes. This is why, as Mr M will

describe it later, Isabel and Thami “went for each other hammer and tongs, no holds barred and no quarter given or asked.” (Fugard in Gray 1990:150).

The debate also hints at the power-difference between the contestants, with Isabel coming through as “the stronger and more assertive contestant” (Gabashane 1996:172) of the two. She grabs four turns against three for Thami. This could be due to the fact that Isabel “feels very strongly about what (they) were debating” (Fugard in Gray 1990:140), while Thami’s unassertiveness could be an early indication of his shifting interest in favour of the struggle, away from education. In any case such a “discursively constructed power” (see section 2.5.3.3 above) as noted in the debate may shift from time to time and is not stable. As the referee, Mr M is above the fray but his long turn and his use of the imperatives to restore order make him the overall dominant character. As schoolmaster and host of the debate, he enjoys what I referred to in section 2.5.3.3 above as “power over”, which is derived from “complex institutionalised latent networks such as school, family” (Ng and Bradac *cited in* Watts 2003:213). The question is: can he keep this “power over” throughout the play?

The strategies in the closing remarks of the debate say something about the characters’ personalities. Thami shows no sympathy for the other side, uttering statements such as “*Western Civilisation has meant only misery to Africa and its people*” (*Ibid.*:136), in clear violation of the maxim of quality of the CP, which states: “do not say what you believe to be false” (Herman 1995:174). Unlike Thami, Isabel strikes a more conciliatory tone. By focusing on areas of agreement and common ground with the other side (observing the agreement maxim), she demonstrates that it is she, rather than Thami, who is more interested in and more open to the friendship with the other, which is her goal and desire anyway. In her closing remarks she says, “(...) *I want to start off by telling you that I have much respect and admiration for your history and tradition as anybody else. I believe most strongly that there are values and principles in traditional African society which could be studied with great profit by the Western Civilisation...*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:137). To my mind Isabel owes her victory to both her conciliatory approach and her reasonableness.

4.8. The Literary Competition

The notion of a literary competition is born out of Mr M’s argument that Isabel and Thami “*shouldn’t be fighting each other*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:150). Instead, “*they should be fighting together! If the sight of them as opponents is so exciting, imagine what it would be*

like if they were allies. If those two stood side by side, if they joined forces, they could take on anybody... and win!" (Ibid.).

If the debate established the first contact, the competition has the potential to unite the former contestants. By promoting cooperation and involvement with each other, it is capable of fostering positive politeness. For Isabel especially, there could be no better chance of knowing and understanding Mr M and Thami than by engaging with them. Her warm reception of Mr M's announcement of the literary festival indicates how much the event means to Isabel in terms of the advancement of her goal:

ISABEL: I'm in the team?

MR M: Yes.

ISABEL: And... [Her eyes bright with anticipation]

MR M: That's right.

ISABEL: Thami!

MR M: Correct.

ISABEL: Mr M, you're a genius!

(Fugard in Gray 1990:151)

The fact that Mr M made all the arrangements personally to ensure the event takes place attests to his own passion for education:

MR M: (...) I have suggested to Miss Brockway that Zolile High and Camdeboo High join forces and enter a combined team. As I have already told you, she has agreed and so has the Festival director who I spoke to on the telephone this morning. There you have it, Isabel Dyson. I anxiously await your response.

(Ibid.)

If the competition advances both Mr M's passion for education and Isabel's desire to be educated about the location and its people, Thami's subsequent withdrawal from the competition is a negation of that passion and desire, a face-threatening act to both Isabel and Mr M as evidenced by Isabel's reaction to the announcement by Thami that he is withdrawing from the literary competition:

ISABEL: (...) The only thing I do know at this moment is that I don't very much like the way anything feels right now, starting with myself. So have you told Mr M yet?

THAMI: No.

ISABEL: Good luck. I don't envy you that little conversation. If I'm finding the news a bit hard to digest, I don't know what he is going to do with it. I've just got to accept it. I doubt very much if he will.

(Ibid.:177-8)

In the light of what Isabel has said in her direct address, her eagerness to learn more about the location and its people, the above clearly runs contrary to that desire. Although Isabel does not know what Mr M told the audience in his direct address to its members, she knows how much Mr M values education and co-related activity. For this reason she argues: *“it’s a hell of a lot more than just an old-fashioned idea as far as he’s concerned. This competition, you and me, but especially you, Thami Mbikwana, have become a sort of crowning achievement to his life as a teacher. It’s become a sort of symbol for him, and if it were to all suddenly collapse...!”* (Ibid.:170).

I have just argued that the literary competition, for which Thami and Isabel are to team up, could advance their friendship, bringing down the barriers (racial and gender). In the following extract, when Mr M announces the holding of the literary quiz, he and Isabel begin to dismantle those barriers. Not only do they dispense with some politeness excesses in addressing each other, but the exchange is also a clear example of cross-racial interaction, especially where people share a common goal, in this case education.

(The turns numbered for ease of reference)

Mr M enters, hat in hand, mopping his brow with a handkerchief.

- (1) *MR M: Miss Dyson! There you are.*
- (2) *ISABEL: [Surprised] Hello!*
- (3) *MR M: My apologies for descending on you out of the blue like this, but I’ve been looking for you high and low. One of your schoolmates said I would find you here.*
- (4) *ISABEL: Don’t apologise. It’s a pleasure to see you again, Mr M.*
- (5) *MR M: [Delighted] Mr M! How wonderful to hear you call me that.*
- (6) *ISABEL: You must blame Thami for my familiarity.*
- (7) *MR M: Blame him? On the contrary, I will thank him most gratefully. Hearing you call me Mr M like all the others at my school gives me the happy feeling that you are also a member of my very extended family.*
- (8) *ISABEL: I’d like to be.*
- (9) *MR M: Then welcome to the family, Miss...*
- (10) *ISABEL: [Before he can say it] Isabel, if you please Mr M, just plain Isabel.*
- (11) *MR M: [Bowling] Then doubly welcome, young Isabel.*
- (12) *ISABEL: [Curtsy] I thank you, kind sir.*
- (13) *MR M: You have great charm, young lady. I can understand now how you managed to leave so many friends behind you after only one visit to the school. Hardly a day passes without someone stopping me and asking: When is Isabel Dyson and her team coming back?*

(...)

- (14) *MR M: You like a good fight.*

- (15) ISABEL: *Ja. Specially the ones I win!*
- (16) MR M: *Splendid! Splendid! Splendid! Because that is precisely what I have come to offer you.*
MR M: (...) *Can you spare a few minutes?*

(Fugard in Gray 1990:149-50)

Mr M's request (for Isabel to participate with Thami in the upcoming literary quiz) is a directive, which is an "attempt to get the interlocutor to do things for the speaker" (Herman 1995:168). As such it requires negative politeness because it interferes with the addressee's "basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action or freedom from imposition" (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). Hence Mr M begins by attending to Isabel's negative *face* (her desire to be unimpeded). Thanks to Isabel's heart-warming response to Mr M's request/invitation, Mr M realises that he and Isabel share the same interest, a fact that will make future interactions between the two much easier. This shared goal has been revealed in the direct addresses to the audience but the characters themselves did not know anything about the other's goal. Consequently, this revelation does help bring Mr M and Isabel closer.

By addressing Isabel by her title and last name (see turn 1 above), Mr M uses negative politeness which "involves expressing oneself appropriately in terms of social distance and respecting status differences" (Holmes 2008:281). In terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, this is strategy (5): *giving deference*. Considering their age/status gap, Mr M seems to be going on a charm offensive to impress his much younger addressee. This says something about Mr M's personality as a loving person who wants his guest to feel at home, as can be observed from his welcoming and doubly welcoming Isabel as per turns (9) and (11).

His apology in turn (3) is also a negative politeness strategy (strategy 6) in the same model, through which he "acknowledges the addressee's face-want not to be offended" (Wagner 2004:23). He uses "an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984:206) in the form of the performative verb "*apologise*". However, apologising is a self-deprecating act for the speaker's own face. Aware of this, Isabel tries to boost Mr M's face in turn (4).

Isabel is the first to break the ice of formality between the two, calling Mr M by his nickname in turn 4, a gesture Mr M welcomes (she can be seen to be working to further her goal of coming to know the people of the location better). When in turn (9) Mr M slips back into

formality, Isabel says “*just plain Isabel*” in the next turn. These in-group markers (Isabel calling Mr M by his nickname and Mr M welcoming Isabel as a member of his extended family in turn 7) are positive politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson’s model, which as I pointed out in section 2.5.3.5 emphasise closeness between the speaker and addressee. In turn (11) Mr M expresses interest in and approval of Isabel, another positive strategy (positive strategy 3) in the same model. His “*can you spare a few minutes?*” (Turn 17) is actually a pre-sequence to the main request (see below), which Mr M further prefaces with a long turn (roughly 279 words) consisting of *face*-giving praise of both Thami and Isabel for their performance during the debate. This elaborate facework, while it reveals something about Mr M’s personality, should also make it easier for Isabel to accept Mr M’s offer. Unaware of her desire to be educated about the location and its people, Mr M peddles his request to Isabel to join Thami as a directive, prefacing it with a rich mix of negative politeness to attend to her desire to be left alone (her negative *face*). But her warm reception of the news has turned this into a case of *face*-giving to Isabel whose desire is to be educated about the township and its people.

What has started off as a request/impositive, requiring negative *face* redress, has become an offer/commissive. While a request tends to benefit the requester needing negative face redress, an offer benefits the hearer and is therefore more polite (see Mohsen Shahrokhi *et al.* 2013:21). It is clear that the social distance which existed between Mr M and Isabel at the beginning of the play has been reduced significantly. As a result, it would seem that from now on these two characters could ask anything of each other without much of a politeness burden. Whether the requests will be granted remains to be seen.

Mr M says, “*The future is ours, Isabel. We’ll show this stupid country how it is done*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:155). This statement shows how close Mr M and Isabel have grown, not only because of the in-group devices “ours” and “we” but also because of the banter or mock impoliteness. According to Culpeper (2011:215) such “mock impoliteness” reinforces solidarity; the fact that Mr M feels free to use such banter is an indication of the increased familiarity between them.

The same cannot be said about the relationship between Thami and Isabel. Because of his shifting priorities (from education to the struggle) Thami is not as enthusiastic as Isabel about the literary competition. While Mr M’s and Isabel’s goals are converging, that of Thami is actually conflicting with both Isabel’s and Mr M’s. As a result, Thami’s subsequent withdrawal from the literary competition is *face* damaging to both Isabel and Mr M. Aware

of how *face* damaging his decision will be to Isabel, Thami does not make the announcement bald-on-record. Not only does it take him a number of turns to make the announcement, he also does not bring himself to name the act of withdrawing. He merely utters hints. It is clear that he is concerned with Isabel's *face*. Here is the extract in which Thami makes the announcement:

ISABEL: What I've done is write out a sort of condensed biography of all of them... you know, the usual stuff... date of birth, where they were born, where they died, who they married... et cetera, et cetera. My Dad made copies for you and Mr M. Sit [Hands over a set of papers to THAMI] You okay?

THAMI: Ja, ja.

ISABEL: (...) [Abandoning the notes] Why am I doing this? You're not listening to me.

THAMI: Sorry.

ISABEL: [She waits for more, but that is all she gets] So? Should I carry on wasting my breath or do you want to say something?

THAMI: No, I must talk.

ISABEL: Good. I'm ready to listen.

THAMI: I don't know where to begin.

ISABEL: The deep end. Take my advice, go to the deep end and just jump right in. That's how I learnt to swim.

THAMI: No. I want to speak carefully because I don't want you to get the wrong ideas about what's happening and what I'm going to say. It's not like it's your fault, that it's because of anything you said or did... you know what I mean?

ISABEL: You don't want me to take personally whatever it is you are finding so hard to tell me.

THAMI: That's right. It's not about you and me personally. I've had a good time with you, Isabel.

ISABEL: I've had an important one with you.

THAMI: If it was just you and me, there wouldn't be a problem.

ISABEL: We've got a problem, have we?

THAMI: I have.

ISABEL: [Losing patience] Oh for God's sake, Thami. Stop trying to spare my feelings and just say it! If you are trying to tell me that I've been wasting my breath for a lot longer than just this afternoon... just go ahead and say it! I'm not a child. I can take it. Because that is what you are trying to tell me, isn't it? That it's all off.

THAMI: Yes.

ISABEL: The great literary quiz team is no more. You are pulling out of the competition.

THAMI: Yes.

ISABEL: You shouldn't have made it so hard for yourself, Thami. It doesn't come as all that big a surprise. I've had a feeling that something was going to go wrong somewhere.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:176-7)

Thami's indirectness is clearly aimed at sparing Isabel's face and feelings: an indication that he cares about his friendship with her. He states, "*It's not like it's your fault, that it's because of anything you said or did...*" and when she asks, "*we've got a problem, have we?*" he corrects her saying, "*I have.*" In the end, Isabel urges her friend to "*stop trying to spare my feelings and just say it!*" The fact that she is annoyed demonstrates that such indirectness, when the two of them are friends, is not desirable, especially to Isabel, who would prefer her friend to be open and honest to her. Thami's indirectness comes through as impolite and counterproductive. Instead of sparing Isabel's feelings, his strategy ends up annoying her. It can be said that indirectness is not inherently polite. There is a clash of goals, between Isabel's desire for straightforwardness and Thami's desire to protect his struggle. Thami's withdrawal from the competition also represents an FTA for Isabel whose goal it is to be educated about the township and its people; the literary competition has been a worthwhile opportunity for advancing this goal. Now that the competition is no more, one cannot help wondering what would happen to the friendship.

But why has Thami withdrawn from the competition? It must be said that the character of the literary competition itself must have contributed to his decision. By focusing on English literature in isolation, with names such as William Wordsworth, Samuel T. Coleridge, Lord Byron, etcetera, the literary quiz seems to advance Western civilisation, which to Thami, as already noted, "has meant only misery to Africa and its people" (Fugard in Gray 1990:136). This sort of bias reflects the Bantu education system that Thami and the comrades are opposing, which according to Ngugi (1972:14 as cited by Shihada 2007:29) "encouraged a slave mentality, with a reverent awe for the achievements of Europe."

How can Thami participate in an activity promoting the very ideas that he and the comrades are up against without being seen as betraying the so-called cause? In taking the decision to withdraw from the competition, Thami has not bothered to discuss the matter with Mr M beforehand. After all, the latter is the one who initiated the project. It would have been considerate of Thami to consult with him. It is evident that his decision to withdraw from the competition will be a major blow to Mr M for whom, as Isabel puts it, the project means

everything. She points out, “(...) *If I’m finding the news a bit hard to digest, I don’t know what he is going to do with it. I’ve just got to accept it. I doubt very much if he will.*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:177-8). In a way, Thami’s decision not to discuss the matter with Mr M in advance is a rejection of his paternalism as evidenced by Thami’s reaction to the above suggestion by Isabel. Thami asserts, “*He’s got no choice, Isabel. I’ve decided and that’s the end of it.*” (*Ibid.*) To put Thami’s attitude into perspective, it is germane to discuss Mr M’s paternalism.

4.9. Mr M’s Paternalism

In the absence of Thami’s biological parents (Mr and Mrs Mbikwana who live in Cape Town), Mr M, bachelor and childless as he is, has found in Thami a true son, whom he loves and treats well. For example, asked once by Isabel if Thami is his favourite pupil, Mr M is unable to conceal his true feelings for the boy:

ISABEL: He’s your favourite, isn’t he?

MR M: Good heavens! A good teacher doesn’t have favourites! Are you suggesting that I might be a bad one? Because if you are... (Looking around) you would be right, young lady. Measured by that yardstick I am a very bad teacher indeed. He is my favourite. Thami Mbikwana! Yes, I have waited for a long time for him. To tell you the truth I had given up all hope of him ever coming along. Any teacher who takes his calling seriously dreams about that one special pupil, that one eager and gifted young head into which he can pour all that he knows and loves and who will justify all the years of frustration in the classroom. There have been pupils that I’m proud of, but I’ve always had to bully them into doing their school work. Not with Thami. He wants to learn the way other boys want to run out of the classroom and make mischief. If he looks after himself he’ll go far and do big things. He’s a born leader, Isabel, and that is what your generation needs. Powerful forces are fighting for the souls of you young people. You need real leaders. Not rabble-rousers. I know Thami is meant to be one. I know it with such certainty it makes me frightened. Because it is a responsibility. Mine and mine alone.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:154)

These words could have been spoken by a father who has his son’s best interests at heart and wants to invest in his education as a way of ensuring his future. In other words, Thami and his future (through education) has become Mr M’s group *face*, which, as I argued in section 2.5.1 above, concerns not just the individual whose *face* is being analysed but also both the people and the things that the individual holds dear. To love and care for someone is to fight

for them, defend them and care for them. Through the following acts, Mr M is seen to care for Thami and his education, as part of his group *face*:

1. When he hosts the interschool debate in which Thami and Isabel participate.
2. When he arranges for Isabel and Thami to take part as a team in a literary quiz, which he hopes will result in the team winning first prizes and a university scholarship for Thami. He remarks, “(...) *When you and Thami shine at the Festival, as I know you will, and win first prize and we’ve pocketed a nice little cheque for five thousand rand, I am going to point to Thami and say: ‘And now ladies and gentlemen, a full university scholarship if you please.’*” (*Ibid.*)
3. When he asks Isabel about what Thami and the comrades “*were whispering about*” (*Ibid.*:160) in order to protect Thami and his friends from trouble.
4. When he rejects Thami’s accusation that he teaches the inferior Bantu Education, an accusation which implies that he supports it, even though Mr M is not, as Thami knows well, a bad teacher.
5. When, “*ringing his school bell wildly*” (*Ibid.*:185), he tries to summon the striking pupils to come to class.

Thami, too, has shown his love for “*his father*” by the way he would avoid direct confrontation with him for most of the play. He not only attempts to save him from the mob but he also admits, after Mr M has been killed, that he also loved him.

Many acts attest to this father-to-son love binding Mr M to Thami or what Weales (1995:514) terms “causal paternalism”; that is, Mr M’s tendency to act like a surrogate father towards Thami by *telling* him rather than *asking* him as in the following example. After announcing the upcoming literary quiz, Mr M is asked by Isabel:

ISABEL: Yes, what about my team-mate? What does he say? Have you asked him yet?

MR M: No, I haven’t asked him Isabel, and I won’t. I will tell him, and when I do I trust he will express as much enthusiasm for the idea as you have. I am an old-fashioned traditionalist in most things, young lady, and my classroom is certainly no exception. I teach, Thami learns. He understands and accepts that that is the way it should be. You don’t like the sound of that, do you?

ISABEL: Does sound a bit dictatorial, you know?

(Fugard in Gray 1990:153)

Mr M may mean well, given his strong love for Thami, but he seems to be referring to the wrong Thami, the scholar. If he had heard Thami's direct address to the audience, he would have understood better how he has changed. According to Weales (1993:514) Mr M's attitude reflects "the way in which Bantu Schools serve the white government and the concomitant disintegration of Mr M's faith in the power of words, of education to bring about change without violence." Bantu Schools serve the white government with blind obedience, without ever challenging it. What Mr M is trying to say is that Thami must not question his role and methods as a teacher. This is exactly what the latter wants to challenge. This is an ironic situation; Mr M is convinced that he "knows best" and that Thami should listen to him, but Thami and his friends are against the idea of simply accepting a higher authority – in fact, they are rebelling against precisely such an idea. Although the ideological premise on which Bantu education was established was, of course, wrong, it did not mean that all teachers within that system were bad. Mr M is an example of a good teacher: one who tries to circumvent the system to his pupils' advantage. For him the only way out of their dismal situation is for the pupils (especially Thami) to be educated as best they can under the circumstances and not to resort to violence, which will simply be a destructive way of addressing the problem.

A concerned Isabel wishes to advise Mr M to try to change the way he treats Thami. The act of advising, as a directive (see section 2.2.2.2 above) interferes with the addressee's freedom of action, so Isabel uses a number of strategies to redress the risk to Mr M's negative *face* that her advice poses:

- (1) *ISABEL: (...) These past few weeks have been quite an education. I owe you a lot, you know. I think Thami would say the same... If you would only give him the chance to do so.*
- (2) *MR M: What do you mean by that remark, young lady?*
- (3) *ISABEL: You know what I mean by that remark, Mr Teacher! It's called Freedom of Speech.*
- (4) *MR M: I've given him plenty of Freedom, within reasonable limits, but he never uses it.*
- (5) *ISABEL: Because you're always the teacher and he's always the pupil. Stop teaching him all the time, Mr M. Try just talking to him for a change... You know, like a friend. Bet you in some ways I already know more about Thami than you.*

(Fugard in Gray 1990:159)

To begin with, Isabel expresses gratitude to Mr M over how “*these past few weeks have been quite an education*” as in turn (1). By saying that she owes it to Mr M, she bolsters his positive *face*, or need to be approved, before she goes on to exaggerate that approval (positive politeness strategy 2) by claiming that she thinks Thami shares her opinion. She does not wait too long to deliver the *face*-threatening act of advising Mr M (that he should give Thami a chance to speak). To do so, she uses a subjunctive to express her pessimism about Mr M’s ability or willingness to comply (negative politeness strategy 3). Her sarcastic remark “*Mr Teacher!*” parodies Mr M’s description of himself: “*I teach, Thami learns*” (*Ibid.*:153).

As for Mr M’s concern that Thami never uses the “*plenty of Freedom*” that he gives him “*within reasonable limits*” (see turn 4 above), Isabel names the reasons (positive politeness strategy 13) why she thinks this is so, before she reiterates the request with the “*try just*”, leaving it up to Mr M to decide, thus reducing the imposition. The committer (*you know*) helps “lower the degree to which the speaker commits her/himself to the propositional content of the utterance” (Watts 2003:183). By the time she begins to state the reasons why she believes Mr M ought to change his attitude, the necessary facework has already been laid out, and her use of an imperative (“*stop teaching him all the time*”), as well as her more direct form of expression, no longer make the impact they would have done if she had not laid her foundation with the right mix of both positive and negative politeness strategies. That Mr M subsequently agrees with her [*Mr M: “I dare say that is true*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:159)] shows that her strategy has worked, although this is in no way a guarantee that Mr M will actually do as he has been asked. As Herman (1995:190) notes, following Brown and Levinson (1987:62), “attention to face may only be perfunctory or superficial, as a diplomatic declaration of good intentions.”

What accounts for Isabel’s relative directness in advising Mr M is perhaps the reduced social distance and growing familiarity between the two (see section 2.5.3.3 above for more on socio-cultural variables that influence a speaker’s choice of strategies) that I have already referred to. Isabel’s directness is also what distinguishes her from Thami. Although the latter is closer to Mr M, whom he had known for a lot longer than Isabel has, he could not bring himself to be straight with him. This is because advising one’s teacher ranks as a bigger imposition in Thami’s culture than it is in Isabel’s. In fact, when pressed by Isabel to be straight with Mr M, Thami only replied: “*It doesn’t work that way with us, Isabel. You can’t just stand up and tell your teacher he’s got the wrong ideas*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:170). The

reader will recall that in section 2.5.3.3 it has been established that how a speech act ranks will vary from society/culture to another, and that what counts as an imposition for one culture may not be so for another culture/society.

However, both Thami and Isabel will alter their strategies while they are developing as characters (see section 4.13 below).

The next act I will analyse is Mr M's request to Isabel to inform on her friend Thami, an act that I believe should be placed under the umbrella of Mr M's perceived paternalism. Not only does this illocutionary act test Isabel's relationship with Thami, it also highlights an aspect of group *face*, which as I argued earlier is an important perspective for reading this particular play. Besides, it offers an opportunity for assessing whether Mr M's conversational behaviour has changed in any way from the request I have just analysed. This request is formulated in the following excerpt:

MR M: There's a dangerous, reckless mood in the location. Specially among the young people. Very silly things are being said, Isabel and I've got a suspicion that even sillier things are being whispered among themselves. I know Thami trusts you. I was wondering if he had told you what they were whispering about.

ISABEL: [Shocked by what MR M was asking of her] Wow! That's a hard one you're asking for, Mr M. Just suppose he had, do you think it would be right for me to tell you? We call that splitting, you know, and you're not very popular if you're caught doing it.

MR M: It would be for his own good, Isabel.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:160)

Mr M begins with a summary of the general situation in the location without mentioning Thami directly. This strategy amounts to what House and Kasper (1981) cited by Watts (2003:184) term "agent avoiders, which refer to propositional utterances in which the agent is suppressed or impersonalised. Thereby deflecting the criticism from the addressee to some generalised agent." Although Mr M does not refer to Thami directly until later in the turn, it is clear that it is Thami that he is referring to by speaking about "*a reckless mood in the location, specially among the young people*" because Thami is a young man from the location. When he finally mentions Thami by name, it is not to accuse him directly of any wrongdoing but rather to highlight how the young man trusted Isabel, in these words virtually backing her into a corner. He seems to be suggesting that she is able to help him with whatever he has in mind. It is interesting to note how this seems to fly in the face of Brown

and Levinson's (1987) strategies (2) "do not assume willingness to comply" and (3) "be pessimistic about ability or willingness to comply", respectively. It may seem discourteous of Mr M to attempt to exploit that trust. But for someone as passionate about something as Mr M, the end justifies the means, as long as he protects his goal of educating the youth (his positive face), which the activity in the location threatens.

When Mr M finally makes the request, he uses the progressive aspect (*I was wondering if...*) and the past tense in an attempt to distance himself from Isabel and the act, thereby reducing its impact. However, as indicated in the stage directions above, Isabel is shocked, which means Mr M's strategy has misfired. He tries a new tactic by hinting that the act is beneficial to Thami. If the act is in Thami's best interest, Isabel being Thami's friend, then why would Isabel, who supposedly cares for her friend, not want to further his best interests? This is the calculation Mr M seems to have made. But Isabel simply does not accept the premise, because what she is being asked is just too great a price for her to pay. Mr M must have underestimated the depth of her friendship with Thami (her group *face*) and the amount of risk to Isabel's *face* that his request represents. As Isabel herself puts it, "*we call that splitting, you know, and you're not very popular if you're caught doing it*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:160). As I discussed earlier (Section 2.5.3.8), if what is to be said constitutes too great a risk to the addressee's face, saying nothing may be the safest strategy. But making the request is the only way Mr M could have taken the chance of reaching his goal, undermining Thami's militancy in order to protect the scholar's education.

Realising Isabel would not budge, and since "a speaker who assesses her own contribution to have been too blunt may redress in next turn, or add on mitigating elements at the end of her turn" (Herman 1995:193), Mr M backpedals on his request, switching to a damage-control mode in his next turn:

MR M: [Realising his mistake] Forgive me Isabel. I'm just over-anxious on his behalf. One silly mistake now could ruin everything. Forget that I asked you and ... please... don't mention anything about our little chat to Thami. I'll find time to have a word with him myself.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:160)

Mr M's redressive action comes in the form of an apology and a confession about the reasons why he has asked Isabel ("*I'm just over-anxious on his behalf*"). According to Wagner (2004:23), "apologies count as remedial work and have been traditionally regarded as hearer-

supportive, as they provide some benefit to the addressee at cost to the speaker.” However, as I stated earlier on, the act of apologising is a threat to the speaker’s own *face* because it involves some form of self-humiliation. But the act may be justified by someone like Mr M who is seeking to persuade Isabel to renew her trust in him after his gaffe. Mr M’s latest strategies seem to point in two directions: to repair the damage caused by his misfired request and to cushion his second request for Isabel to say nothing to Thami.

By rejecting Mr M’s request Isabel has endeavoured to protect her friendship with Thami. This is an instance of group *face* (Isabel’s), which as I established in section 2.5.1 above refers not only to the individual whose face is being analysed but also to the people and the things that the individual holds dear. But Mr M cares for Thami too. As I have already argued, there are basically two Thamis, the scholar and the freedom fighter. By requesting Isabel to inform on her friend, Mr M is trying to protect Thami the scholar whom he mostly cares about against the destructive influence of the struggle. It is Thami, the scholar, who is part of Mr M’s group face – not Thami the freedom fighter.

Mr M’s perceived paternalism does not end here. In scene 5 of Act One, when Isabel invites both Mr M and Thami to visit her house for tea, Mr M responds in a manner that gives Thami no chance to speak for himself. The preparation for the upcoming literary festival is in full swing, the three were becoming closer and closer, and Isabel has no better way of showing her appreciation for everything than sharing some quality time with her best friends, a gesture which is *prima-facie face-giving* to the invitees.

ISABEL: Just before you go, Mr M, I’ve got an invitation for you and Thami from my Mom and Dad. Would the two of you like to come to tea one afternoon?

MR M: What a lovely idea!

ISABEL: They’ve had enough of me going on and on about the all-knowing Mr M and his brilliant protégé, Thami. They want to meet you for themselves. Thami? All right with you?

MR M: Of course we accept, Isabel. It will be a pleasure and a privilege for us to meet Mr and Mrs Dyson. Tell them we accept most gratefully.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:167)

By inviting Mr M and Thami, Isabel shows that she appreciates their company, since an invitation is an implicit expression of approval for the hearer in that the latter’s company is sought and appreciated (Gil 2012:402). Mr M’s unreserved acceptance of the invitation is an act of reciprocating Isabel’s show of appreciation for their company. However, by telling

Isabel to tell her parents that “*we accept most gratefully*” (“*we*” that is, he and Thami), without consulting with Thami first, Mr M has committed the same old sin of not giving Thami a chance to speak for himself. This indicates Mr M has not heeded Isabel’s advice that he should “*try just talking to him for a change*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:159), which I have just discussed. But Thami, as deferring as ever to Mr M, waits until he has left to voice his indignation to Isabel:

THAMI: [Edge to his voice] Didn't you hear Mr M? "A delight and privilege! We accept most gratefully." (...)

ISABEL: Was he speaking for you as well?

THAMI: He speaks for me on nothing!

(Fugard in Gray 1990:168)

Despite Isabel’s facework, Thami will turn down her invitation for tea with her family. I will discuss his act of refusal in the next section (his loyalty to the cause), where this act belongs. The fact that Thami turns down that which Mr M “most gratefully” accepts demonstrates the conflicting goals of Thami and Mr M. While Thami has a cause to protect as part of his group *face* (“*The Comrades don't want any mixing with whites*”, he will tell Isabel), Mr M pursues a goal that runs contrary to Thami’s. The loyalty of the latter to the cause and the actions motivated by this loyalty will be analysed next.

4.10. Thami’s Loyalty to the Cause

There are a number of acts motivated by Thami’s loyalty to the cause, the first one being his refusal to visit Isabel’s house for tea which I have just mentioned. This refusal is not due to anything Isabel did or did not do, but rather because of Thami’s concern for his group-*face*, his loyalty to the “Cause”, which entails a subordination of his personal desires to the needs of the group (see Ting-Toomey 1988).

Aware that a “refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/requestor/inviter, because it contradicts his or her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies,” (Chen as quoted in Tanck 2004:2). Thami does not go bald-on-record in his refusal. According to Ting-Toomey (1988) the communication style of collectivistic people is less “controlling, confrontational, solution-oriented” than “obliging, avoiding, and affective-oriented”, the opposite being true for more individualistic people. In other words, collectivistic people are more indirect than are individualistic people.

ISABEL: Relax. I know that. That's why I tried to ask you separately and why I'll ask you again. Would you like to come to tea next Sunday to meet my family? It's not a polite invitation. They really want to meet you.

THAMI: Me? Why? Are they starting to get nervous?

(Fugard in Gray 1990:168)

The strategies Thami employs in turning down Isabel's invitation include hinting ("Me? Why? Are they starting to get nervous?"). Not until much later in the play, in scene 1 of Act Two precisely, does he give his reasons why he has reservations about being seen in the company of a white family:

(1) *THAMI: [Trying] Visiting you like this is dangerous. People talk. Your maid has seen me. She could mention, just innocently but to the wrong person, that Thami Mbikwana is visiting and having tea with the white people she works for.*

(2) *ISABEL: And you go along with that?*

(3) *THAMI: Yes.*

(4) *ISABEL: Happily!*

(5) *THAMI: [Goaded by her lack of understanding] Yes! I go along happily with that! (Turn 5)*

(6) *ISABEL: Hell Thami, this great Beginning of yours sounds like ... [Shakes her head] ... I don't know. Other people deciding who can and who can't be your friends, what you must do and what you can't do. Is this the Freedom you've been talking to me about? That you were going to fight for?*

(Fugard in Gray 1990:180)

The fact that Thami is "trying" as per the stage directions (turn 1) is an indication that he is well aware that his refusal will hurt Isabel's feelings. The mistake that Isabel has made by extending the invitation to both Mr M and Thami, and the blunder that Mr M commits by including Thami in his enthusiastic acceptance of the invitation without seeking Thami's opinion, is the failure to take into account Thami's allegiance to the "Cause". It is here that Isabel's more individualistic nature seems to clash with Thami's sense of collectivism, culminating in two diametrically-opposed understandings of the concept of freedom of choice and action. For Thami, for the sake of the "Cause", the wants and desires of the group to which he swore allegiance to must prevail over his freedom as an individual. This, however, does not mean that Thami has completely ceased to exist as an individual, and that he no longer has wants or desires to warrant any claim to either positive or negative face. For

example, when asked by Isabel if it is such a big crime that he should be seen in the company of whites, he is wise enough to note the difference between him as an individual and his group (the location): *“In the eyes of the location... yes!”*. This may sound a little paradoxical because Thami is a resident of the location, but it does highlight the juxtaposition of the two Thamis that I spoke about earlier, the scholar/individual and the militant. All along, he has made it clear that his wants as an individual are sometimes different from the group’s, and if he sometimes comes through as slightly insincere, this is because, as Nwoye (1996) established (see Section 2.5.1 above), cooperation with one’s group is preferable to being sincere and truthful as an individual, group-face needs being superordinate to individual ones. Of course, Isabel cannot understand this. She is not able to grasp that Thami could be imposed upon by other people who decide *“who can and who can’t be your friends, what you must do and what you can’t do.”* (Fugard in Gray 1990:180). The issue is that for Thami, what Isabel regards as an imposition is far from being one. For him it is discipline, without which the struggle cannot succeed.

Allegiance to group face is not exclusively Thami’s in this play. As already discussed in terms of the direct addresses, the other two major characters in the play, Isabel and Mr M, do have ideals and passions that they are fighting to promote and preserve. For Isabel, it is the desire to be educated about the location and its people, and also for black and white to become united for a better South Africa. For Mr M, it is the passion about the youth’s education. Thami shows as much zeal for the struggle as Mr M is passionate about promoting the education of the youth. For example, there are as many metaphors for Thami’s struggle (the cause, the stone, violence, comrades, the People, the location) as there are symbols for education (the school, the debate, the dictionary, non-violence, the school, word, and so forth).

The second FTA that I wish to investigate for the politeness strategies used is Isabel’s failed advice to Thami to work to improve things with Mr M, saying that he and Mr M need each other.

THAMI: I don't need him.

ISABEL: I think you do, just as much as he...

THAMI: Don't tell me what I need, Isabel! And stop telling me what to do! You don't know what my life is about, so keep your advice to yourself.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:171)

Isabel's act meets the felicity conditions of a piece of advice and is referred to as such by Thami through the use of the performative "advice". The analysis of a second act of advising will determine whether Thami and Isabel have changed the way they approach each other. So far he has been indirect in addressing her but she direct in dealing with him. It will be recalled that the addressee's status is a factor in determining the speaker's strategy (see section 2.5.3.3 above). The extract shows Thami on the offensive in what appears to be his bluntest remark so far in the play. He uses the imperative three times in such a short turn, demonstrating how annoyed he is with Isabel for advising him on the inadvisable. His strong rejection of Isabel's advice exposes the deep rift between Mr M and Thami on the latter's identification with the "Struggle", which Mr M dismisses as "vandalism".

From the above extract it is clear that when it comes to the struggle Thami can be as assertive as possible in defence of his group's interests and objectives. It is here that Thami's privileging of his group *face* over his wants and desires as an individual seems to clash with Isabel's more individualistic approach to the concept of friendship. Isabel believes that "*if we can't be open and honest with each other and say what is in our hearts, we've got no right to use it* (the word friendship)" (Fugard in Gray 1990:171). On the contrary, for Thami, according to Egner (2006) as cited by Grainger *et al.* (2010:2160) "the premise of sincerity and truthfulness – so important for Westerners – is secondary to a demonstration of cooperation (arguably part of group face)." Because of his allegiance to the "cause" Thami does look at friendship differently and so whatever he does as an individual seems to come under constant scrutiny by Thami the activist. It is these two Thamis with whom Isabel has to juggle throughout the play.

4.11. Mr M's Nightmare

In his direct address Mr M speaks about a "savage Hope" to which he feeds young people. He asserts: "*(...) I feed young people to my Hope. Every young body behind a school desk keeps it alive.*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:157). According to *Collins English Dictionary* (2011) hope is "a feeling of desire for something and confidence in the possibility of its fulfilment." Mr M's

strong desire justifies all the actions he has taken to see to it that his hope is realised (hosting the interschool debate, arranging for the literary quiz, attempting to undermine Thami's militancy, etc.).

What is happening on the day of the so-called operation "*Qhumisa*" (the school boycotts and strikes) is the reversal of Mr M's hope. For someone whose passion is to educate the youth, these school boycotts and strikes represent a real nightmare. In other words, the operation Qhumisa that Thami and the comrades are organising is an FTA to Mr M: a notable example of "acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or the speaker" (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). Mr M's *face* wants are nothing else than the promotion of education for the youth, for which he has already initiated a number of actions (the debate, the literary competition). The boycott of classes is antithetical to this passion.

Mr M's sense of hopelessness is portrayed in different ways:

In his first direct address to the audience Mr M had said: "*What I call my life rattles around in these two matchboxes... the classroom and the backroom. If you see me hurrying along the streets you can be reasonably certain that one of those two is my urgent destination... If we're not careful we might be remembered as the country where everybody arrived too late*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:157).

In scene 2 of the second Act, in his last direct address to the audience before he is killed by the mob, Mr M expresses his worries that he may get "*late to school*". What was once only hypothetical, a premonition, has become reality. There is also the slogan Sipho Fondini writes on the wall for which he sarcastically asks Mr M if the spelling is right: "*Liberation first, then education.*" This clearly turns Mr M's ideal on its head because he is first and foremost for education, and he has called the struggle "*vandalism*". Adding to his doomsday is the sight of "*a police van (...) crowded with children*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:184). The irony is that these children are now asking Mr M to assist them (to tell their parents), after they had turned down his help (to give them an education and keep them off the streets). But now it is too late: too late for the children to be helped either way. In the next scene Mr M tries to ring the bell "*furiously*" to attempt to summon the children to come to school but again, it is too late. In his first direct address he had warned the audience about his hope. Now it is his turn to be warned by Thami to stop ringing the school bell: "*You are provoking the comrades with it.*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:185). Mr M says: "*Come to school! Come to school. Before they*

kill you all, come to school” (Ibid.). Incongruously, it is Mr M who is killed by the very people he wanted to save.

A more poignant metaphor for this reversal of Mr M’s hope is perhaps the tale of the Ethiopian tribesman, which is worth analysing not solely for the beauty of its imagery but also for the poignancy with which it conveys its message. The following excerpt includes what precedes the tale in order to contextualize it:

(...) Whenever my spirit was low and I sat alone in my room, I said to myself: Walk, Anela! Walk!... and I imagined myself at the foot of Wapadsberg setting off for that horizon that called me that day forty years ago. It always worked! When I left that little room, I walked back into the world a proud man, because I was an African and all the splendour was my birthright. (Pause). I don’t want to make that journey again. Thami. There is someone waiting for me now at the end of it who has made a mockery of all my visions of splendour. He has in his arms my real birthright. I saw him on the television in the Reverend Mbopa’s lounge. An Ethiopian tribesman, and he was carrying the body of a little child that had died of hunger in the famine... a small bundle carelessly wrapped in a few rags. I couldn’t tell how old the man was. The lines of despair and starvation on his face made him look as old as Africa itself. He held that little bundle very lightly as he shuffled along to a mass grave, and when he reached it, he didn’t have the strength to kneel and lay it down gently... He just opened his arms and let it fall. I was very upset when the programme ended. Nobody had thought to tell us his name and whether he was the child’s father, or grandfather, or uncle. And the same for the baby! Didn’t it have a name? How dare you show me one of my children being thrown away and not tell me its name! I demand to know who is in that bundle! (Pause) Now knowing their names doesn’t matter any more. They are more than just themselves. That tribesman and dead child do duty for all of us, Thami. Every African soul is either carrying that bundle or in it. What is wrong with this world that it wants to waste you all like that... my children... my Africa!’

(Fugard in Gray 1990:190-1)

The gloomy imagery in the tale seems to tell of the looming demise of Mr M’s own hope to educate young people. To recapitulate, Mr M had also said in his direct address to the audience that “I feed young people to my Hope. Every young body behind a school desk keeps it alive” (Ibid.:157). The reverse is now taking place. There is not a single body behind a school desk to keep Mr M’s hope alive. The idea of a tribesman brings to mind tribalism, defined as “a very strong loyalty that someone feels for the group they belong to, usually combined with the feeling of disliking all other groups or being different from them”

(MacMillan English Dictionary 2007). Does this not suggest Thami's strong loyalty to the struggle for whose sake he is willing to sacrifice his education?

The detail that it is "*a little child*" that "*had died of hunger in the famine*" signifies that the hope has been killed *prematurely* before it could take root, grow and ultimately bear fruit. The carelessness with which the bundle has been wrapped and the way it is dropped into a mass grave could indicate the growing lack of love for education in the youth in favour of "*stone-throwing*". It is interesting to note that it is in the same place inside the Reverend Mbopa's lounge in which Mr M corrects "*homework and prepare[s] lessons*" to nurture the hope that he ironically also witnesses an Ethiopian tribesman make "*a mockery of all my visions of splendour*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:180). Analogously, it is in the school that Mr M's hope is kept alive; it is also here that it dies, killed by the striking pupils.

Could the author's choice of "Ethiopia", a country once beset by starvation/hunger, be suggesting that, having "buried" their hope of an education, the children could suffer hunger and deprivation as a result?

4.12. Love as the Best Sabotage

Thami's confrontation with Mr M in scene 3 of Act Two marks a turning point in the play because failure to heed the warning is what causes Mr M to be killed, bringing about the play's denouement. It is also the first direct confrontation between the two characters, an opportunity to appreciate how Thami has developed as a character, especially in his dealing with Mr M. In the light of this confrontation Thami can be perceived as having developed from one who used to believe that "*you can't just stand up and tell your teacher he's got the wrong ideas*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:170).

Here is the excerpt in which Thami performs this act, with the turns numbered for ease of reference:

- (1) THAMI: [*Quietly*] Stop ringing that bell, Mr M.
- (2) MR M: Why? It's only the school bell, Thami. I thought you liked the sound of it. You once told me that it was almost as good as music... don't you remember?
- (3) THAMI: You are provoking the Comrades with it.
- (4) MR M: No Thami. I am summoning the Comrades with it.
- (5) THAMI: They say you are ringing the bell to taunt them. You are openly defying the boycott by being here in the school.
- (6) MR M: I ring this bell because according to my watch it is school time and I am a teacher and those desks are empty! I will go on ringing it as I have

been doing these past two weeks, at the end of every lesson. And you can tell the Comrades that I will be back here ringing it tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and for as many days after that as it takes for this world to come to its senses. Is that the only reason you've come? To tell me to stop ringing the school bell?

(...)

- (7) THAMI: (...) I've come here to warn you.*
- (8) MR M: You've already done that and I've already told you that you are wasting your breath. Now take your stones and go. There are a lot of unbroken windows left.*
- (9) THAMI: I'm not talking about the bell now. It's more serious than that.*
- (10) MR M: In my life nothing is more serious than ringing the school bell.*
- (11) THAMI: There was a meeting last night. Somebody stood up and denounced you as an informer. [Pause. Thami waits. MR M says nothing] Everybody is talking about it this morning. You are in big danger.*
- (12) MR M: Why are you telling me all this?*
- (13) THAMI: So that you can save yourself. There's a plan to march to the school and burn it down. If they find you here....*
[Pause]
- (14) MR M: Go on. [Violently] If they find me here, what?*
- (15) THAMI: They will kill you.*
- (16) MR M: "They will kill me." That's better. Remember what I taught you... if you've got a problem put it into words so that you can look at it, handle it and ultimately solve it. They will kill me! You are right. That is very serious. So then... what must I do? Must I run away and hide somewhere?*

(Fugard in Gray 1990:185-7)

To put the analysis of the speech act of warning into perspective it is worth defining the act of warning:

A warning refers to the different strategies used for getting the attention of the addressee and making him/her alert to a specific danger or bad consequences. It also refers to the way in which speakers use these strategies either directly or indirectly, politely or impolitely, as influenced by their cultures and ideological perceptions.

(Bataineh and Aljamal 2014:88)

Thami's act meets the felicity conditions of a warning. In terms of preparatory conditions, "it isn't clear that the hearer knows the event will occur" (Yule 1996:51), but "the speaker does think the event will occur, and the event will not have a beneficial effect" (*Ibid.*) on the addressee.

Thami's act complies with the definition by Bataineh and Aljamal in that it consists of a directive ("*Stop ringing that bell*" as per turn 1) and draws the addressee to a specific danger should he not comply ("*They will kill you*" as per turn 15). The use of an imperative by Thami in addressing Mr M clearly marks the shifting power relations between the two. Through the imperative Thami basically overturns Mr M's paternalistic tendency to dictate to him. Instead of telling Thami what to do, the tables have been turned.

The fact that he addresses Mr M quietly (as indicated in the stage directions in turn 1 above) does not reduce the impact of the illocutionary act. According to Linsin (2011) such soft-spokenness may actually encourage good listening. However, in view of Thami's incapacity to save Mr M, a different approach might have been more effective than the administration of the warning in small doses (turns 1 and 3) and his procrastination (he waits many turns before revealing that Mr M might be killed for refusing to heed the warning). Even Mr M himself seems to welcome Thami's improved discursive strategy ("*They will kill me*". ***That's better.*** "*Remember what I taught you... if you've got a problem put it into words so that you can look at it, handle it and ultimately solve it.*" (Turn 16). He means Thami should have been blunter, perhaps as blunt as Charlie who successfully stopped the colonel from shooting himself in example (14) above.

Unfortunately, as demonstrated in the extract below, Thami misses the opportunity to do just that.

(More breaking glass and stones and the sound of a crowd outside the school. MR M starts to move. THAMI stops him)

THAMI: No! Don't go out there. Let me speak to them first. Listen to me! I will tell them I have confronted you with the charge and that you have denied them and that I believe you. I will tell them you are innocent.

MR M: You will lie for me, Thami?

THAMI: Yes.

MR M: (Desperate to hear the truth) Why? (THAMI can't speak.)

MR M: Why will you lie for me, Thami?

THAMI: I've told you before.

MR M: The 'Cause'?

THAMI: Yes.

MR M: Then I do not need to hide behind your lies.

THAMI: They will kill you.

*MR M: Do you think I'm frightened of them? Do you think I'm frightened of dying?
(MR M breaks away from THAMI. Ringing his bell furiously he goes outside
and confronts the mob. They kill him).*

(Fugard in Gray 1990:191)

Mr M is “*desperate to hear the truth,*” as described in the stage directions. But all that he gets from Thami is a lie. Thami’s argument that “*our cause will suffer if we falsely accuse and hurt innocent people*” (*Ibid.*:188) has already been rejected by Mr M: “*Your cause won’t be embarrassed because you see they won’t be ‘hurting’ an innocent man*” (*Ibid.*).

This vaguely reminds one of Elsa’s defence of Helen in *The Road to Mecca*, against Marius’ insinuation that the community of Nieu-Bethesda did not persecute harmless people like Helen. This was met with Elsa’s response that Helen was anything but harmless to the people of the village for whom her art was offensive. Likewise, contrary to what Thami is suggesting, Mr M is not innocent. He himself says so by confessing “*simply and truthfully*” that he had gone to the police and given names of those that he thought were behind the unrest. He would have been a true “*government stooge, a sell-out, an arse-licker,*” (*Ibid.*:183) as he had been called by the angry comrades, had he accepted any payment for his act.

The truth Mr M is “*desperate to hear*” could be a similar confession from Thami, that despite his loyalty to the cause, he still loved Mr M. Thami makes that confession but too late. Mr M had told Thami his version of the truth: “*The truth is that I was so lonely! You had deserted me. I was jealous of those who had taken you away. Now, I’ve already lost you, haven’t I? I can see it in your eyes. You’ll never forgive me for doing that, will you?*” (*Ibid.*:188).

There could have been no stronger proof of the love Mr M felt for Thami than this, a feeling that he would have liked Thami to reciprocate. His goal in going to the police was more to protect his “*turf*” than to harm his pupils. Now that he has lost Thami, his protégé, and his classroom, his sense of despair could not be more poignant. He says, “*You know, Thami, I’d sell my soul to have you all back behind your desks for one last lesson. Yes. If the devil thought it was worth having and offered me that in exchange... one lesson! ... he would have*

my soul. So then it's all over! Because this... (the classroom) is all that there was for me. This was my home, my life, my one and only ambition... to be a good teacher!" (Ibid.:189)

With nothing to live for, no pupils to teach, no chance to teach that one lesson, and no chance to accomplish his goal of providing an education to the youth, Mr M has died a noble death.

By merely "*ringing his bell furiously,*" Mr M has expressed, in his final act, "a sense of the moral superiority of words over violence as a means of social change" (Barbera 1993:xvi). He has answered the violence with love. As Fugard once put it himself, "Love is the answer. The best sabotage is love" (Collins 1983:371).

Although by choosing the struggle over education Thami has virtually rejected Mr M and his ideals, after the latter's death he has essentially taken over Mr M's role as the teacher. He is the one who teaches Isabel about the location. If Mr M's killing were the yardstick by which Isabel's education (about the location and its people) is to be measured, then it would seem that she has not learned all there is to learn about the location and its people. For example, she and Thami do not see eye to eye as regards Mr M's death. She calls it "murder", while Thami insists it is an act of self-defence, prompting Thami to continue educating Isabel about the location and its people:

THAMI: (Abandoning all attempts at patience. He speaks with the full authority of the anger inside him.) Stop, Isabel! You just keep quiet now and listen to me. You're always saying you want to understand us and what it means to be black... well if you do, listen to me carefully now. I don't call it murder, and I don't call the people who did it a mad mob and yes, I do expect you to see it as an act of self-defence... listen to me!... blind and stupid but still self-defence. He betrayed us and our fight for freedom. Five men are in detention because of Mr M's visit to the police station. There have been other arrests and there will be more. Why do you think I'm running away? How were those people to know he wasn't a paid informer who had been doing it for a long time and would do it again? They were defending themselves against what they thought was a terrible danger to themselves (...)

(Fugard in Gray 1990:194-5)

Thami then draws a sharp contrast between his world and Isabel's as if to demonstrate to her that the two worlds (the white world and the black) would remain divided for as long as the one continues to fight for the freedom denied them by the other:

What Anela Myalatya did to them and their cause is what your laws define as treason when it is done to you and threatens the safety and security of your comfortable white world. Anybody accused of it is put on trial in your courts and if found guilty they get hanged. Many of my people have been found guilty and have been hanged. Those hangings we call murder! Try to understand, Isabel. Try to imagine what it is like to be a black person, choking inside with rage and frustration, bitterness, and then to discover that one of your own kind is a traitor, has betrayed you to those responsible for the suffering and misery of your family, of your people. What would you do? Remember there is no magistrate or court you can drag him to and demand that he be tried for that crime. There is no justice for black people in this country other than what we make for ourselves. When you judge us for what happened in front of the school four days ago just remember that you carry a share of the responsibility for it. It is your laws that have made simple, decent black people so desperate that they turn into 'mad mobs'. (Isabel has been listening and watching intently. It looks as if she is going to say something, but she stops herself) Say it, Isabel.'

(Ibid.:195)

Isabel wanted to embrace the world of the location, and throughout the play she has been driven by her desire to learn more about it and its people. The least she is expecting is to be told by her friend that she shares responsibility for what is happening to black people. Hearing this revelation, she probably understands better why, in the lead-up to the so-called “*Operation Qhumisa*”, the Comrades had imposed discipline, ordering that any contact with whites “*be kept at a minimum*” (*Ibid.*:180). If she did not understand then why Thami would “*go along happily with that*” (*Ibid.*), now she certainly does.

Isabel is shown to have evolved from the individualistic, straightforward individual we met at the beginning of the play to someone who does not just speak the truth. Perhaps she has realised that everything is not always clear cut (black or white), but grey – and difficult to understand fully. This could be the reason why she is hesitant to ask the question which is really troubling her. On this count, it can be said that Isabel’s education has been successful. She has definitely learned something about the ways of the location. Thami has learned too. Mr M’s death is the catalyst. In the build-up to the boycott, Isabel had advised Thami to make things work between him and Mr M. Thami had been categorical in his rejection of the idea:

ISABEL: (...) Oh Thami, don't let it go wrong between the two of you. That's just about the worst thing I could imagine. We all need each other.

THAMI: I don't need him.

ISABEL: I think you do, just as much as he...

THAMI: Don't tell me what I need, Isabel! And stop telling me what to do! You don't know what my life is about, so keep your advice to yourself.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:171)

Isabel goes on to criticise her friend for his lack of openness and honesty. Under section 4.10 above (Thami's loyalty to the cause), I argued that a demonstration of cooperation with one's group/cause is more important than honesty and truthfulness. Thami had a cause to protect. But now the context has changed. Mr M has been killed and the struggle has been unsuccessful. In his last interaction with Isabel, a different Thami emerges, one who is honest and truthful about his feelings.

The following two excerpts demonstrate that Thami has developed as a character, in which process Mr M's death seems to be the catalyst.

Below Thami strongly rejects Isabel's advice.

ISABEL: (...) Oh Thami, don't let it go wrong between the two of you. That's just about the worst thing I could imagine. We all need each other.'

THAMI: I don't need him.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:171)

Now, after Mr M's killing, Thami responds differently to the same question:

ISABEL: Oh Thami, it is all wrong! So stupid! That's what I can't take... The terrible stupidity of it. We needed him. All of us.

THAMI: I know.

(*Ibid.*:196)

Going from "*I don't need him*" to "*I know*" is an about-face that means that Thami has been hiding his true feelings for Mr M, that he had truly loved him. Isabel, too, has changed. She had once been very straight with Thami. Deeply hurt by Thami's lack of openness, when friends are supposed to be open and frank with each other, she had said:

(...) You used the word 'friendship' a few minutes ago. It's a beautiful word and I'll do anything to make it happen for us. But don't let's cheat, Thami. If we can't be open and honest with each other and say what is in our hearts, we've got no right to use it.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:171)

But now she seems unable to be as open as she had once wanted Thami to be. After Thami has drawn a contrast between the two worlds, the white and the black (see *Ibid.*:195 above), she wants to say something but cannot bring herself to say it, in a move that makes it hard to recognise in Isabel the character who has always been straightforward.

THAMI: (...) Say it, Isabel.

ISABEL: No.

THAMI: This is your last chance. You once challenged me to be honest with you. I'm challenging you now.

ISABEL: (She faces him) Were you there when it happened, Thami? (Pause). And if you were, did you try to stop them?

THAMI: Isn't there a third question, Isabel? Was I one of the mob that killed him?

ISABEL: Yes, Forgive me, Thami... please forgive me! ... but there is that question as well. Only one! Believe me, only once... late at night when I couldn't sleep. I couldn't believe it was there in my head, but I heard the words... 'Was Thami one of the ones who did it?'

(Fugard in Gray 1990:196)

At first Isabel does not have the courage to ask Thami if he was of those who killed Mr M but in the end she poises it very indirectly.

4.13. The CP, the PP and Character Development

The maxims of the CP and those of the PP were amply dealt with in sections 2.3 and 2.5.5 respectively. According to Herman (1995:195-6), "while the CP ensures that communication and interaction are conducted on a rational basis of means and ends, the PP works to ensure that that very rationality is directed at social ends" (Herman 1995:195-6). Although it is clear that the two principles interact to ensure social comity as a goal is also achieved during an interaction, norms of good conversational behaviour might be violated, resulting in offence. This section focuses on how differently characters approach the CP and the PP during an interaction, how as a result they may offend others or be interpreted as polite, and how they may develop as characters due to changed conversational behaviour.

Thami's concluding statement during the interschool debate clearly flouts the maxim of quality which states "do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence" (Levinson 1983:101-2 cited by Herman 1995:174). In fact, the stage directions have already indicated that Thami's "*concluding statement is outrageous and he (Thami) knows it and enjoys it*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:136). It is simply baseless to claim that Western Civilisation is to blame for all the ills dogging Africa. Thami is aware of this, which makes him seem arrogant for saying it. As a result Thami's conversational behaviour during the debate not only offends Isabel ("*You made me so angry,*" she will tell Thami after the debate) but also earns Mr M's criticism:

MR M: (...) (Wagging a finger at THAMI) You were quite shameless in the way you tried to exploit that loyalty (from an audience consisting of his classmates).

(Fugard in Gray 1990:139)

This lack of tact on Thami's part (in violation of the tact maxim in Leech's PP) runs contrary to the norm of politeness characterising a meeting between total strangers. Maximising information may be the rule for a heated debate like this but this can still be achieved without sacrificing the interpersonal aspect of the interaction. Isabel's closing remarks contrast with Thami's in that she tries to minimise disagreement with the opposition (see section 4.7 above).

Unlike Thami, Isabel does tell the truth without necessarily offending her opponent. According to the stage directions her closing statement is greeted with "*polite applause*". This is proof that one can comply with the maxim of quality without necessarily sacrificing the politeness principle.

The fact that Isabel seeks agreement with Thami, in spite of their opposing views on the question of equality for women and men, already portrays Isabel as more accommodating than Thami. This can be explained by the fact that it is she who is interested in learning about the location and its people.

A further contrast can be drawn between Thami and Isabel with respect to the maxim of quality. After his joke about the word "*riot*", Thami goes on record as saying "*we joke about everything*". This, however, fails the truth-test when Isabel later attempts to joke after he had

alluded to the way the slaves who were building the pyramids easily outnumbered the soldiers guarding them.

ISABEL: What are you up to, Mbikwana? Trying to stir up a little social unrest in the time of the pharaohs, are you?

THAMI: Don't joke about it, Miss Dyson.

(Fugard in Gray 1990:166)

Through his response, Thami seems to suggest that there are things that cannot be joked about, especially those that have to do with his “struggle”. This simply confirms the presence of two Thamis in the play, the individual and the freedom fighter, the former being more open-minded than the latter, whose allegiance to a cause demands discipline. In the above example, Isabel’s joke did not go down well with Thami, simply because it has to do with something Thami takes very seriously, the struggle for freedom.

In the following extract Mr M destabilises a statement by Thami in a fashion that could make the former claim moral high ground. Thami is saying that like the statues built by Ozymandias in ancient Egypt, white statues must be toppled.

MR M: (...) Where do you get the idea that we, The People, want you to do that for us?

THAMI: (Trying) They are not our heroes, teacher.

MR M: They are not our statues, Thami! Wouldn't it be better for us to rather put our energies into erecting a few of our own? We've also got heroes, you know.

(*Ibid.*)

Mr M rejects Thami’s notion, cutting across it by means of a chiasmus. The destabilisation of this concept is proof that nothing, no plan, is so fool-proof that it cannot go wrong. Resorting to violence as a means for achieving change has no guarantee of success, just as non-violence has not always been successful in bringing about change. This paradox seems to be echoed in the question that Fugard asked himself about the play: “But who is right?” (See Barbera 1993:xvii). Fugard himself fails to bring closure to the question. While non-violence is symbolically silenced through the killing of Mr M, the struggle does not necessarily gain the upper-hand because many of the comrades are arrested and Thami flees into exile. The play ends on a positive note, though. By refusing to be associated with Mr M’s killers and by confessing that he too loved Mr M, Thami is in fact paying tribute to his former mentor.

Scene 4 of Act 2 sees Thami and Isabel develop as characters. Isabel's direct address to the audience, commented on earlier, has established her goal/desire (her positive *face*) as desiring to learn about the location and its people (see Fugard in Gray 1990:148-9). After Mr M's killing, Isabel is a changed person. She says to Thami, "*Let me tell you straight out that there is nothing in this world... nothing!... that I want to see less at this moment than anything or anybody from the location.*" (*Ibid.*:191-2). It is hard to recognise in Isabel the person who had once said about the location and its people, "*Aikona! Not good enough. I'm greedy. I want more. I want as much as I can get*" (*Ibid.*:149). In fact, Isabel sounds like someone who has been too eager to embrace a wild beast, only to reject it the sooner it bares its claws and teeth, ready to attack.

To judge from her last interaction with Thami following Mr M's death, it seems that Isabel has not in fact learned all that there is to learn about the location. For example, her refusal to accept that in the eyes of the location Mr M's killing is "*an act of self-defence*", prompts Thami to teach her.

4.14. The Systematics of Turn-Taking

To this point the analysis of this play has centred on the pragmatics of the language, on what the characters have said or left unsaid, how these instances have come to affect the pursuit of their individual goals/desires. Considering that "how turn rights are distributed in the who-speaks-to-whom, who-is-not-spoken-to dimension, can be consequential" (Herman 1995:114), I now turn the attention to the systematics of turn-taking for insights on the way in which these influence the understanding of the dramaturgy of this play.

Of the fourteen rules governing the systematics of turn-taking according to Sacks *et al* (1978) discussed earlier in section 2.4.1 above, I will only discuss turn change options, turn constructional strategies (distribution, order and length), and turn sequencing. For this purpose I have selected a three-party exchange between Isabel, Thami and Mr M.

(Isabel is reacting to Thami's announcement that the Comrades do not want any mixing with whites. At this point, as indicated in the stage directions, "*MR M enters quietly. His stillness is a disturbing contrast to the bustle and energy we have come to associate with him*").

- (1) *MR M Don't let me interrupt you. Please carry on. [To Thami] I'm most interested in your reply to that question. [Pause] I think he's forgotten what it was, Isabel. Ask him again.*
- (2) *ISABEL: [Backing out of the confrontation] No. Forget it.*

- (3) *MR M: [Persisting] Isabel was asking you how you managed to reconcile your desire for Freedom with what the Comrades are doing.*
- (4) *ISABEL: I said forget it, Mr M. I'm not interested any more.*
- (5) *MR M: [Insistent] But I am.*
- (6) *THAMI: The Comrades are imposing a discipline which our struggle needs at this point. There is no comparison between that and the total denial of our Freedom by the white government. They have been forcing on us an inferior education in order to keep us permanently suppressed. When our struggle is successful there will be no more need for the discipline the Comrades are demanding.*
- (7) *MR M: [Grudging admiration] Oh Thami... you learn your lessons so well! The 'revolution' has only just begun and you are already word perfect. So then tell me, do you think I agree with this inferior Bantu Education that is being forced on you?*
- (8) *THAMI: You teach it.*
- (9) *MR M: But unhappily so! Most unhappily, unhappily so! Don't you know that? Did you have your fingers in your ears the thousand times I've said so in the classroom? Where were you when I stood there and said that I regarded it as my duty, my deepest obligation to you young men and women to sabotage it, and that my conscience would not let me rest until I had succeeded. And I have! Yes, I have succeeded! I have got irrefutable proof of my success. You! Yes. You can stand here and accuse me, unjustly, because I have also had a struggle and I have won mine. I have liberated your mind in spite of what the Bantu Education was trying to do to it. Your mouthful of big words and long sentences which the not-so-clever comrades are asking you to speak and write for them, your wonderful eloquence at last night's meeting which got them all so excited – yes, I have heard about it! – you must thank me for all of that, Thami.*
- (10) *THAMI: No I don't. You never taught me those lessons.*
- (11) *MR M: Oh I see. You have got other teachers, have you?*
- (12) *THAMI: Yes. Yours were lessons in whispering. There are men now who are teaching us to shout. Those little tricks and jokes of yours in the classroom liberated nothing. The struggle doesn't need the big English words you taught me how to spell.*
- (13) *MR M: Be careful, Thami. Be careful! Be careful! Don't scorn words. They are sacred! Magical! Yes, they are. (...)
Talk to others. Bring them back into the classroom. They will listen to you. They look up to you as a leader.*
- (14) *THAMI: No, I won't. You talk about them as if they were a lot of sheep waiting to be led. They know what they are doing. They'd call me a traitor if I tried to persuade them otherwise.*
- (15) *MR M: Then listen carefully, Thami. I have received instructions from the department to make a list of all those who take part in the boycott. Do you know what they will do with that list when all this is over.... Because don't fool yourself, Thami, it will be. When your boycott comes to an inglorious end like all the*

others.... They will make all of you apply for re-admission and if your name is on that list... [He leaves the rest unspoken]

- (16) *THAMI: Will you do it? Will you make that list for them?*
- (17) *MR M: That is none of your business.*
- (18) *THAMI: Then don't ask me questions about mine.*
- (19) *MR M: [His control finally snaps. He explodes with anger and bitterness] Yes, I will! I will ask you all the questions I like. And you know why? Because I am a man and you are a boy. And if you are not in that classroom tomorrow you will be a very, very silly boy.*
- (20) *THAMI: Then don't call me names, Mr M.*
- (21) *MR M: No? Then what must I call you? Comrade Thami? Never! You are a silly boy now, and without an education you will grow up to be a stupid man! [For a moment it looks as if THAMI is going to leave without saying anything more, but he changes his mind and confronts MR M for the last time.]*
- (22) *THAMI: The others called you names at the meeting last night. Did your spies tell you that? Government stooge, sell-out collaborator. They said you licked the white man's arse and would even eat his shit if it meant keeping your job. Did your spies tell you that I tried to stop them saying those things? Don't wait until tomorrow to make your list. Mr M. You can start now. Write down the first name: Thami Mbikwana.
[He leaves]
[A few seconds of silence after THAMI's departure. ISABEL makes a move towards MR M but he raises his hand sharply, stopping her, keeping her at a distance.]*
- (23) *ISABEL: This fucking country!
[She leaves.]*

(Fugard in Gray 1990:180-3)

4.14.1. Turn change options

According to Herman,

Turn change can occur by the current speaker selecting next, next speaker self-selecting, or the turn may lapse, in which case the speaker may incorporate the lapse as a pause and either of the earlier options can be used to relinquish the turn at the next TRP.

(Herman 1995:92)

[TRP stands for Transition Relevance Place, a term defined as “an area in a conversation in which a co-participant may legitimately take over the floor from an ongoing speaker and begin a new turn-at-talk” (Watts 2003:277)]. In the above extract, Mr M self-selects, wresting

speech from the legitimate speakers (Isabel and Thami) without permission. In the same turn, Mr M then projects two TRPs, first by selecting Thami as the next speaker. Thami's failure to respond is significant. This silence is attributable to Thami, which Mr M incorporates as pauses into his turns. Mr M then projects a second TRP by selecting Isabel, with the clear intent of drawing either person to what seems like a very confrontational topic, the issue of freedom, the very issue that has ranged Mr M and Thami on opposing sides, as to how it ought to be achieved: through the struggle (Thami's position) or through non-violence (Mr M's position). Isabel, aware of the confrontation in the offing, backs away as indicated in the stage directions. Finally Mr M self-selects, this time to pose the question that Isabel could not bring herself to ask Thami in Mr M's presence. Instead of letting Thami respond to the question Mr M has directed at him, Isabel turn-grabs in a frantic bid to prevent the confrontation between Mr M and his pupil that has been brewing all along. Isabel's failure in this respect is indicated by her silence. Mr M takes the floor again to force Thami's hand. This time, Thami takes up Mr M's challenge. However, he does not directly respond to Mr M's question. Instead, he invokes the discipline necessary for the struggle to be successful, which he argues cannot be compared with "*the total denial of our Freedom by the white government,*" (Fugard in Gray 1990:181). He also invokes the inferior education imposed by the white government "*in order to keep us permanently suppressed*" (*Ibid.*). Instead of challenging Thami's argument, Mr M not only shows a "*grudging admiration*" (see stage directions in turn 7), but also asks Thami if he thinks that he, Mr M, agreed with the inferior Bantu education. The fact that Mr M has allowed Thami to redirect the discussion shows how the power is slipping away from the former. Not so long ago, he had been flexing his muscles by self-selecting without permission, now he has basically been reduced to a follower.

4.14.2. Turn constructional strategies: distribution, order and length

The way the turns are constructed, distributed and ordered, as well as variations in their lengths, is also significant. Before Mr M's arrival at the scene, the turn-taking has alternated between Isabel and Thami quite smoothly with the current speaker self-selecting or selecting the next speaker, especially when a question has been directed to the next speaker who will take the turn to respond.

With Mr M's arrival, the turn distribution pattern changes, the change itself indicating the imminent confrontation. It goes from Mr M-Isabel-Mr M-Isabel to Mr M-Thami-Mr M-Thami-Mr M-Thami, with the exclusion of Isabel from the turn-taking in the second part being very significant. This exclusion casts her as an outsider, a spectator of the raging debate

about the best way to bring about change in the country. As argued earlier, Isabel is in the play, partly, to be educated about the location and its people. Hence the spat between Mr M and Thami, which concerns the location and how it handles the question of liberating black people, does not concern her directly. Not only is she white, she does not live in the location. Her role is reduced to that of a passive audience, separated from the drama unfolding before her as if by a fourth wall.

The turn-pattern used is as follows: A-B-A-B-A-C-A-C-A-C-A-C-A-C-A-C-A-C-A-C-A-C-B, wherein A represents Mr M, B Isabel and C Thami. After turn 4, Isabel (B) drops out of the exchange, only to reappear at the end in order to vent her frustration.

According to Itakura (2001:1862) conversational dominance has to do with “a multi-dimensional construct consisting of sequential, participatory and quantitative dimensions.” The extract shows Mr M and Thami sharing conversational dominance in the extract (they are the most concerned with the given debate). Out of the 23 turns that make up the extract, Isabel takes only three, which makes her come through as the most powerless (reflecting her role as an outsider). This is in sharp contrast to the strong and powerful debater that we met at the beginning of the play. What the extract also illustrates is that power can shift between characters: this shift has a lot to do with, among other things, the topic being discussed and how strongly the characters feel about it. During the earlier debate, Isabel manifested herself as conversationally dominant “*because I happen to feel very, strongly about what we were debating,*” (Fugard in Gray 1990:140).

4.14.3. Turn sequencing

In turn (1), in line with a convention governing conversation according to which, “those who enter occupied spaces usually speak or initiate interaction first, usually by stating their reasons or business” (Herman 1995:160), Mr M self-selects upon entering the stage. However, his reasons for being there constitute an implicit challenge to Thami, to answer the apparently rhetorical question which Isabel has posed before Mr M’s arrival. Thami’s failure to take up Mr M’s challenge leaves the Question-Answer sequence unsatisfied, forcing Mr M to initiate a repair sequence by inviting Isabel to repeat the question. In turn (2), as indicated in the stage directions Isabel backs out, prompting Mr M to rephrase Isabel’s question in turn (3), against Isabel’s advice in turn (4). At this point, faced with the futility of trying to ward off a likely confrontation between Mr M and Thami, Isabel opts out in an apparent show of restraint, which according to Sifianou (1997 cited in Nakane 2006:1811-35) is a negative

politeness strategy. In turn (6), Thami finally breaks his silence but his contribution does not directly address Mr M's question as to how he had managed to reconcile his desire for freedom with what the Comrades are doing. Instead, he shifts the discussion to the fact that there is no comparison between the denial of their freedom by the white government and the so-called "discipline" being imposed by the Comrades. Thami demonstrates that Mr M's question is actually inappropriate, that it is not him versus the Comrades as Mr M is implying but rather the white government (as the denier of black freedom) versus the Comrades (as freedom fighters). In so doing, Thami initiates an instance of "other repair, other-initiated", a class of repairs which according to Piazza (1999:1006) "convey[s] more explicitly than others the hostility existing between interlocutors and reflect the conflict".

In turn (7), Mr M orients the topic to the issue at the core of the boycott of classes – the inferior Bantu Education being imposed by the white government. Thami's accusation in turn (8) undergirds the deep-seated opposition between him and Mr M as to the means for achieving change in the country. Mr M's repetition of "*unhappily*" makes his rejection of the accusation even more forceful.

The sequencing strategies adopted in the extract, questions going unanswered or answered only partially, accusations being rejected or requests being turned down, are ones which generate "conflict situations". These, according to Herman (1995:137), "have high dramatic value since they are productive of tensions and generate suspense and involvement of the audience in outcomes."

4.15. Conclusion

The study of *My Children! My Africa!* through the exploration of the notion of *face*, although far from being exhaustive, has contributed some useful insights towards my goal of understanding the use of dramatic language; that is, how it is employed in the characters' dialogue. The inquiry has established that a character's goals are intrinsically linked to the character's *face* wants/needs. Consequently, to understand what motivates a character's choice of strategies, whether to go bald-on-record, off-record or simply opt out of a conversation, presupposes an understanding of the character's goal and how strongly the character believes in that goal. For this particular play, the direct addresses to the audience have been instrumental in revealing each character's interests/wants or desires.

For Isabel, the desire to learn about the location and its people, as established in her direct address to the public, has translated into directness of expression. For Thami, the loss of

interest in education in favour of the struggle explains his lack of assertiveness in actions involving education (the interschool debate, the competition and the like), whereas for issues concerning the “cause,” he is all the more direct. However, to tie a character to a particular strategy on a one-on-one basis is to underestimate Fugard’s rare gift in creating rounded characters. Both Isabel and Thami develop as characters, as reflected in the various strategies used by them. He goes from being indirect to being direct towards the end of the play, while her strategies follow a directness-indirectness trajectory.

From the analysis of the notion of *face* itself, it can be said that positive and negative *face* are not mutually exclusive phenomena but rather complementary. For the characters’ “need to be involved with other participants” (Scollon and Scollon 1995:36) seems to co-occur with the “need to maintain some degree of independence from other participants and (...) respect their independence” (*Ibid.*).

CHAPTER FIVE: VALLEY SONG

5.1. Introduction

In *My Children! My Africa!* *face* has been analysed in the contexts of cross-racial, cross-cultural and cross-gender issues characterising the relationships between a black student and his mentor Mr M on the one hand, and a white student on the other. Portraying a country about to turn the page from apartheid towards a democratic and multiracial society, the play endeavours to answer the main question as to how to go about bringing about change in the country: violently or peacefully. *Valley Song* (1995) is Athol Fugard's first post-apartheid play. Although the play "retains many attributes of his earlier plays" (Blumberg 1996:460), it explores "some new initiatives in structure and thematic concerns" (*Ibid.*). An example of these is the featuring of the character of "Author," which must be played by the character of Buks, as recommended by the author in the cast. The fact that the role of Author, who is a white person, and that of Buks (a coloured/black character) must be played by the same actor irrevocably places this play in the realm of post-apartheid politics in which such blurring of colour lines is possible. It must be stated that a white person playing a coloured/black character has always been a sensitive issue, even after apartheid.

A summary of the play, together with a number of reviews and previous analyses of it, is provided directly below. This will be followed by a discussion of the reasons for Veronica's choice of strategies in performing her FTA (see point 5.3). The influence of the late Caroline on the actions of both her daughter Veronica and her father Abraam Yonkers will be the focus of point 5.4 (The Ghost of Caroline). Veronica's assertiveness will be discussed in point 5.5, and Buks and the old boundaries in point 5.6. The goals and strategies of Author, who is part of the cast, will be examined in point 5.7 while the emphasis of point 5.8 is on the final confrontation between Veronica and her grandfather. The insights from the analysis of how characters orient themselves to *face* in this play will be summarised in the conclusion.

5.2. Valley Song

Valley Song premiered in Johannesburg during August 1995. The play dramatises the story of a coloured teenager by the name of Veronica who lives with her maternal grandfather in the remote Karoo town of Nieu-Bethesda, South Africa. Bored with the restricted village life, Veronica wants to go to Johannesburg, where she dreams of becoming a famous singer. She

is up against her grandfather and guardian Abraam Yonkers ('Buks', 'Oupa') whose permission to leave she must first seek. Haunted by the sad memories of his only daughter Caroline, who died in Johannesburg, where she had eloped with her boyfriend, Buks refuses to allow Veronica go to the very place where her mother had died. He fears that she might face the same fate as her mother. The striking resemblance between mother and daughter compounds his fears. Determined to pursue her dream/goal, Veronica insists on being allowed to go and threatens to run away if she is not. Also featuring in the play is a surrogate of the play's real-life author Fugard, known simply as "Author", whose role is to test Veronica's resolve. In the end, Veronica, whose sense of self-determination increases as the play progresses, is allowed to leave, having been blessed by both Buks and Author.

In his analysis of the play, Wertheim begins by approaching the text biographically. He compares Veronica's choices to those Fugard himself must make in a bid to survive in the new South Africa, following the demise of apartheid, which was the driving force behind his plays. Like Veronica, the young Fugard once "broke free from his parents and his limited Port Elizabeth background to become a world-class artist" (Wertheim 2000:220). There is also "Buks's contentment with the status quo and with his fear of change" (*Ibid.*), which resonates with Athol Fugard's own fear of becoming obsolete as a writer. As Reynolds observes, "with the passing of the apartheid system, Fugard might seem displaced or dated. Nevertheless, this play grapples precisely with the 'obsolescence' of the old politics and of an aging political playwright in a reborn South Africa" (Reynolds 1998:103). However, despite the presence of the author-figure as part of the cast of *Valley Song*, it is actually *Exits and Entrances* (2006), which "focuses mainly on the relationship between the playwright (a young Fugard) and a well-known Afrikaans actor (André Huguenet)" (Keuris 2008:71-2) which is considered as "largely an autobiographical play" (*Ibid.*:71).

As an answer to his fear of becoming irrelevant in the new South Africa, Fugard through his surrogate uses the metaphor of pumpkin seeds. In Author's direct address to the audience that begins the play, he sounds a note of optimism, "(...) *One of these, together with a little prayer for rain, in a hole in the ground. And in a good year, when you get that rain, this little handful could give you up to a hundred of those beauties!*" (Fugard 1996:37). That optimism is embodied in the concept of seeds, which symbolises hope (Cirlot 1971:282). This note of optimism is akin to "the boundless aspirations of young Veronica, an embodiment of the new South Africa," (Wertheim 2000:222).

Wertheim (2000:213) notes that in the first productions of the play, during which Fugard himself acted the roles of Buks and the Author, “the audience found itself confronted, as it rarely does in drama, with the playwright himself as a character within the plot of the drama and as its narrator.” Interestingly, Fugard notes in the cast that “the role of THE AUTHOR and ‘BUKS’ must be played by the same actor” (Fugard 1996:35). When he himself played both roles (as a white Author and a coloured man, Buks), he embodied the blurring of colour lines, as mentioned earlier, which is only possible in the new South Africa. As Wertheim notes, “in addition to blurring of the line between stage and audience, the author/actor consciously conveys through the actor’s body a post-apartheid fluidity that not only permits but endorses the abrogation of color lines” (Wertheim 2000:213).

In her analysis (1996), Blumberg situates the play “on the threshold within the space of the in-between: between the interregnum and the so-called post-apartheid era, between the decaying structures of oppression and the uncertainty of a fledgling democracy, between the stifling entrapment of old ways and the energy and enthusiasm of youth” (Blumberg 1996:459). While the old ways are embodied by Buks, the energy and enthusiasm of youth evidenced by Veronica, and the fact that in the end she is allowed to leave, indicates that the old ways have given way to the new order.

Gerard (1995) regards the play as an answer to Fugard’s role in the new South Africa. He writes, “if there was any question about what would happen to Athol Fugard’s writing once the driving force behind his art was gone, that question is put firmly to rest with his poignantly beautiful new play *Valley Song*, his first work since the end of apartheid” (Gerard 1995).

Vincent Canby (1996) sounds a similar note in his review of the play. He notes that, “as Abraam (Buks) tries to come to terms with Veronica’s wish to leave the farm and go to Johannesburg, Author befriends them both and faces his own apprehension as an aging man and artist” (*Ibid.*). To Veronica Author makes the following confession: “You see the truth is that I am not as brave about change as I would like to be. It involves letting go of things and I’ve discovered that it is a lot harder than I thought it was” (Fugard 1996:84-5). Just as Veronica leaves the farm and Buks behind and is headed to Johannesburg, Fugard realises that he, too, must adjust to South Africa’s changed political landscape, if he is to survive as a playwright, because apartheid as a focus of protest and resistance, which has been his perennial theme, is no more.

In my approach (*face-orientation*), I will not only determine the characters' goals and how these tie in with each one's positive *face* (see Brown and Levinson 1987:101-3) but also discuss the politeness strategies used by the characters, the rationale behind their choice of strategies, and when and why characters alter their strategies. For example, the factors which account for Veronica's choice of strategies (see point 5.3); how she shifts from being indirect/unassertive at the beginning of the play to becoming direct/assertive (see point 5.5) towards the end; how the ghost of Caroline influences Veronica's plan to leave and, finally, Buks' objection to her plan (see point 5.4). The conflict between Buks and Veronica does not develop only as a result of what they say to each other but also in the manner in which the turns are structured to reflect that conflict. Also to be examined are the sequencing strategies employed in the structuring of the dialogue between the two.

5.3. Veronica's Choice of Strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:213) "if a speaker wants to do an FTA, and chooses to do it indirectly, he must give H some hints and hope that H picks up on them and thereby interprets what S really means (intends) to say."

In this section I am going to discuss the FTA Veronica wants to perform, the reason why she carries out the FTA indirectly instead of going direct (*bald-on-record*), the hints she gives to her grandfather and whether the latter understands what she intends. Here is the extract in which Veronica provides hints to her grandfather regarding what she wants from him. The lines are numbered for ease of reference. Throughout the analysis of the excerpt, Buks will be referred to simply as Oupa.

1. *BUKS: (...) So what mischief were you up to this morning my girl?*
2. *VERONICA: Nothing Oupa. Nothing... nothing... nothing... nothing! There's no good mischief left in this place. I've used it all up. Anyway, I'm not looking for mischief any more.*
3. *BUKS: I see. So what are you looking for then?*
4. *VERONICA: Adventure and Romance!*
5. *BUKS: That's now something new. Since when is this?*
6. *VERONICA: Since a long time, Oupa.*
7. *BUKS: Well I don't know how much adventure and... what was it?*
8. *VERONICA: Romance.*
9. *BUKS: I don't know how much of that you are going to find around here.*
10. *VERONICA: So then what Oupa?*
11. *BUKS: What do you mean?*
12. *VERONICA: What is there for me? I'm bored.*
13. *BUKS: Open your eyes and look around you.*

14. VERONICA: *They're open Oupa... wide open... and what do I see? Always just the same old story. Nothing happens here Oupa.*
15. BUKS: *Nothing happens? Haai, you young people! [Out of a pocket comes a handful of pumpkin seeds.] Veronica. Come here. What are these?*
16. VERONICA: *Pumpkin seeds.*
17. BUKS: *No. That's what people call them but that is not what they really are. They are miracles. A handful of miracles. Veronica! Every year, in these akkers... thousands of miracles. And you say nothing happens here?*
18. VERONICA: *Ja, I know all that Oupa but a girl can't make adventure and romance out of pumpkin seeds.*
19. BUKS: *Veronica! Veronica! What's got into you lately? You're as restless as a little dwarrelwindjie [Afrikaans for 'whirlwind'] out there in the veld. What's the matter with you?*
20. VERONICA: *I don't know Oupa. Yes, I do. I'm Veronica Yonkers and I want to sing!*
21. BUKS: *So?*
22. VERONICA: *So Oupa asked me and I'm telling you. I want to sing.*
23. BUKS: *So sing. Nobody is stopping you.*
24. VERONICA: *No. Oupa doesn't understand.*
25. BUKS: *Then you must explain to me.*
26. VERONICA: *I want to sing to lots of people.*
27. BUKS: *But you already do that. In Church. At the School Concert. You know how much everybody likes your singing and all the nice songs you make.*
28. VERONICA: *That's not enough.*
29. BUKS: *Not enough? I hear you. The whole village hears you. God hears you. And that is not enough?*
30. VERONICA: *I don't mean it that way Oupa. But I don't just want to sing hymns and the same old school songs to the same old people... over and over again.*
31. BUKS: *But you don't. Every time I listen there's a new song coming out of you.*
32. VERONICA: *You mean the ones I make up myself?*
33. BUKS: *Ja. And let me tell you my girl those are the best songs I ever heard.*
34. VERONICA: *Oupa is just saying that to make me happy.*
35. BUKS: *If it makes you happy that's good – but I'm saying it because it's the truth.*
36. VERONICA: *I made a new one this morning when I was cleaning the house.*
37. BUKS: *There you see! That's what I mean.*
38. VERONICA: *So, do you want to hear it?*
39. BUKS: *But of course.*
40. VERONICA: *Are you ready?*
41. BUKS: *[Getting 'ready' ... putting down his mug and folding his arms]: Yes.*
42. VERONICA: *It's called 'Railway Bus, O Railway Bus'.*
43. BUKS: *Railway Bus?*
44. VERONICA: *Yes. But you must say it two times with a 'O' in between. 'Railway Bus, O Railway Bus.'*
45. BUKS: *The Railway Bus that used to come from Graaff-Reinet?*

46. VERONICA: *Yes yes yes! Wait for the song Oupa. Then you'll understand. [Singing]*
Railway Bus, O Railway Bus
Why don't you come no more.
I want to travel fast
On the smooth tar road
Far away, far away
I want to see big cities
And strange places
Far away, far away

(Fugard 1996:42-3)

In line 2, in her response to Oupa's question as to what mischief she is up to, Veronica hints that she is bored, having used up all "good mischief". She is implying that she is tired of the routine of village life. In other words, she desires change (her group *face*). In line 4, the words "Adventure and Romance" add to this desire because, as Oupa acknowledges in line 9, there is not much adventure and romance to be had in Nieu-Bethesda. However, Veronica misinterprets this as an indication that Oupa wants what she does and presses for change, insisting that she is bored. But Oupa, whose idea of change is different from his granddaughter's, brings out some pumpkin seeds, which he calls miracles, in a failed bid to dispel Veronica's boredom. In line 19, Oupa calls his grand-daughter "a little *dwarrelwindjie out there in the veld*", because of her restlessness, an image that brings to mind the idea of flight. In fact Caroline, Veronica's mother, did go to Johannesburg in search of adventure and romance. Veronica herself will threaten to run away from her grandfather, should the latter refuse to give her permission to leave. In line 20, having failed to persuade her grandfather to embrace her idea of change and let her go, Veronica modifies her strategies. She tells Oupa that she wants to sing. So far, so good. As demonstrated in the beginning of the play she and Oupa like to do so; hence Veronica does not run the risk of being objected to by her grandfather. But there is a difficulty with her request. It fails to meet the felicity conditions of a canonical request. For an act to qualify as such, the addressee must recognise that something is being asked of her/him (see section 2.2.3.4 above), besides the fact that "S (speaker) must believe that H (hearer) is able to do what is requested and that the action requested would not have been undertaken voluntarily by H in the normal course of events" (Herman 1995:169). Oupa's dismissive response "So?" in line 21 means that Oupa does not recognise Veronica's request as genuine. In line 23 he actually urges her to sing, saying that nobody is stopping her. In line 24, Veronica signals that she and Oupa are not really

communicating, prompting him to ask her to explain. In line 26, she announces that she wants to sing to lots of people but falls short of being clear because there is nothing new in what she is saying: she has already been singing to many, at least in Oupa's eyes. In line 30, she repeats the theme of change by insisting that she does not "*just want to sing hymns and the same old school songs to the same old people.... Over and over again*" (Fugard 1995:42). When she finally sings a song she has herself composed, encouraged by the *face-giving* praise by her grandfather that the songs she creates herself are the best ones, it becomes clear to Oupa what it is that Veronica wants. His rejection of the song is telling of his opposition to her notion of leaving the place, which the song so vividly suggests.

It is obvious in the extract above that Veronica is being deliberately vague, which is in breach of the rules for effective communication. She is violating three of Grice's maxims, namely those of quantity, of manner and of relevance (see section 2.3.1 above). She is not being as "informative as is required for the current purpose" (Levinson 1983:101-2 in Herman 1995:174), which is a violation of the maxim of quantity. She is also not being relevant (in breach of the maxim of relevance). Oupa understand well what his granddaughter is trying to say, but seems to be making it difficult for her. Although Veronica is not saying clearly that she wants to leave, the title of her song "The Railway Bus", which conveys the idea of travelling, lays bare her intention to leave. Oupa's rejection of the song in fact demonstrates that he understands this. He says, "*If that Railway Bus hadn't been there and made it so easy for her, who knows? Maybe she would still be alive and sitting here with us today. That is how she ran away. And that is how you came back – in your Ouma's arms, wrapped in a blanket. Haai!*" (Ibid.:45).

The Railway Bus represents two opposing views for Oupa and Veronica. For him it is as repellent as the sad memory of Caroline's death it brings to his mind. He avers, "*The Railway Bus is not a nice thing for a song*" (Ibid.). For Veronica, who remembers nothing about her mother except the little she has been told by other people and whose dream is to travel to Johannesburg in pursuit of her dream to become a famous singer, the Railway Bus is exactly what she needs to travel to her destination. For Oupa the Railway Bus is all about the past, a painful past he would rather forget. However, Veronica, thanks to the Railway Bus, can look to the future. She is a dreamer in a way that her grandfather cannot fathom. This is why his request that she should sing about the school or the house, the same old songs she has always sung, falls on deaf ears. In other words, the Railway Bus, for reasons I have just discussed, has for Oupa the illocutionary force of a threat.

In consequence, for Oupa the Railway Bus represents an FTA. Likewise, Oupa's refusal to listen to Veronica's song constitutes an FTA to her. In other words, neither seems to want what the other does. Threatening each other's face in this way runs contrary to strategy 13 in Brown and Levinson's strategies for promoting positive politeness (see Brown and Levinson's 1987:128). According to this strategy, "by including [sic] in his practical reasoning, and assuming reflexivity (H wants S's wants), H is thereby led to see the reasonableness of S's FTA (or so he hopes)" (*Ibid.*). By wanting to leave, Veronica fails to take into account her grandfather's needs to be looked after. On the other hand, by stopping her from leaving, he is overlooking Veronica's need to become independent.

It is only by promoting mutual face that cooperation can be achieved, considering that "it is in everyone's best interests to respect others' 'face' which provides the reciprocity needed for face maintenance in the interests of all, everyone's face being dependent on everybody else's being respected, since face threat could result in counter-threat" (Herman 1995:190). Taking this into account and since, as indicated, "a speaker who assesses her own contribution to have been too blunt may redress in next turn," (*Ibid.*:193), Oupa retracts his remark, explaining why he reacted the way he did to the song.

It is not just positive face that has been threatened. Veronica's negative face is on the line too. By urging her to stop singing her chosen song and admonishing her to *sing "about the school or our house, or that nice one about when it rains,"* (Fugard 1996:45), Oupa is interfering with Veronica's freedom of action or her negative face. In fact, very recently, Oupa has praised Veronica's own songs as being the best ones. His triple use of the imperatives ("**Don't** sing it to me again"; "**Sing** me one of your other songs": and "**Sing** me that one") shows how unprepared Oupa is to give space and a voice to his granddaughter. Veronica rejects Oupa's orders, responding "*I don't feel like singing that song Oupa,*" (Fugard 1996:45), leading to *face* being mutually damaged. The stage directions indicate, "*A hurt, estranged silence settles between them*" (*Ibid.*). In other words, the incident threatens the close rapport that has been prevailing between them.

Veronica refuses to sing any of the old songs because she wants to break with the past. She looks to the future in a way that her grandfather cannot. Beyond setting out Veronica's goal "*I want to travel*", the song is also suggestive of the fast pace of life in Johannesburg, in contrast with the slow pace of village life, where as she puts it, "*(...) Nothing happens here Oupa*" (*Ibid.*)

On the other hand, the size of the city of Johannesburg as her chosen destination and the distance needed to reach it (*“far away”*, says the song) bespeak Veronica’s ability to dream on a large scale (a quality that differentiates her from both her grandfather and her friend Alfred Witbooi with his dream of a second-hand bicycle). The *“smooth tar road”* is suggestive of the modern life Veronica is dreaming of, a modern life absent in Nieu-Bethesda, a town that lacks “the simplest amenities of the modern world” (Durbach 1987:3).

By weaving her desire into a song, rather than telling it as it is (bald-on-record), Veronica shows she cares about her grandfather’s feelings. The stage directions indicate *that “she breaks off abruptly when she sees her song is disturbing her Oupa”* (Fugard 1996:45). But Veronica is as concerned about Oupa’s *face* as she is about her own. In consequence, when he instructs her to stop singing the song because he does not like it, Veronica is hurt too because it is clear that he does not want what she does.

The turn-sequencing options of the extract are important for the configuration of the evolving conflictual situation between Oupa and Veronica. The dialogue begins with a series of QA, which Oupa initiates by asking the first question, orienting off-stage to an event in the past. Already at this point, we gain a glimpse into Oupa’s character – his ties with the past – in his opposition to Veronica, who prefers to look to the future. In turn (2) she is shown to break with the past when she declares that she is not looking for mischief any longer. She also introduces two new concepts (adventure and romance) to the interaction, to demonstrate her interest in experimenting with new experiences rather than settling for the same old “mischiefs”. These first few turns do not project mutuality between the two interactants. Instead, they portray Oupa and Veronica at odds on issues in the conversation. When Veronica says *“there’s no good mischief left in this place,”* it is clear she is bored and already thinking of moving on to a different setting. Oupa’s comment in turn (9) that he doubts she can find adventure and romance in the valley deceives Veronica into believing that her grandfather agrees with her. The impression she has, that the interaction is moving in the direction she desires, is shattered when in turn (15) Oupa brings out of his pocket a handful of pumpkin seeds, praising them as miracles, hoping Veronica would agree with him. Disharmony ensues when she rejects this move. She counters that a girl cannot make adventure and romance out of mere pumpkin seeds. Oupa’s ploy fails to quash Veronica’s view that nothing happens in the valley. He calls her restless in turn (19). In turn (20), Veronica gives a dispreferred answer to Oupa’s question (*“What’s the matter with you?”*). But, realising that her answer would not satisfy her grandfather, she quickly backtracks with a

repair sequence before orienting to the more conciliatory topic of singing. Turns 21, 22, 23 show the two in apparent harmony (Oupa desiring what Veronica wants) because he urges her to sing. But this harmony is short-lived as soon as Veronica, in turn (24), triggers the need for repair, which corrects the previous information and negates the very harmony arising from the information. By saying that Oupa does not understand (turn 24), Veronica is endeavouring to tell him that they are not in agreement. Veronica's response in turn (26) fails to pass muster, at least as far as Oupa is concerned, for as he puts it in turn (27), she already sings before various audiences. The adjacency pairings in turns 27-28 and 29-30 help to further the conflictual situation between Oupa's conformism with the status quo, that is life as it is in the village (Veronica singing in church and at the school concert), and her desire to break with the routine of singing "*hymns and the same old school songs to the same old people.*" It is clear that the exchange will lead to an open conflict at the end, as demonstrated when Veronica later sings her song "The Railway Bus" in which she makes clear her intention to leave the valley. In turn (31) Oupa initiates a repair sequence, praising her ability to sing, saying there is always a new song coming out of her every time she sings. The repair appears to be aimed at appeasing Veronica. In turn (32), Veronica seems to take the bait, only to question her grandfather's sincerity. In turn (36), after a temporary truce, capitalising on Oupa's praise, Veronica informs her grandfather about a new song she had composed that morning. His enthusiastic response in turn (37), and his apparent readiness to hear her new song, indicate how naïve he must have been. When, finally, she sings her song, it becomes clear to Oupa that it is not the kind of song he wants to hear. She uses the song to advance her case for leaving, which is at odds with his position.

Oupa knows that matters are not going to be the same after Veronica's departure. He will have no one to look after him and, after his death, no one to take over cultivation of the land. As for the author, the end of apartheid, as much as it is desired, will rob his dramaturgy of the theme of apartheid. This could explain the Author's reluctance to embrace change in *Valley Song*.

Knowing that her desire to leave for Johannesburg to pursue a singing career constitutes an imposition on her grandfather, Veronica uses an indirect speech act in an effort to mitigate the force of her act. A number of factors must be accounted for in her choice of strategies. These include Oupa's power over her, the social distance between the two, the degree of imposition inherent in her act and the rights and obligations of one to the other. I will discuss these sociocultural variables in order to contextualise her use of indirectness.

According to Thomas, “we tend to use a greater degree of indirectness with people who have some power or authority over us than to those who do not” (Thomas 1995:124). In this light, by virtue of being Veronica’s grandfather and legal guardian (legally she is still a minor), Oupa wields legitimate power over his granddaughter. This power translates, on the one hand, into an obligation for Veronica to seek permission from her grandfather to leave and, on the other, into a prerogative for Oupa to grant or deny her that permission. In the following exchange with Veronica, he makes explicit reference to this power, following Veronica’s protestation that her grandfather had no right to open her letter from her friend Priscilla.

VERONICA: (...) Anyway, Oupa had no right to open it.

BUKS: Don’t tell me about my rights Veronica! This is my house. I got all the rights I need in here. For as long as you sleep under this roof and eat my food...

(Fugard 1996:71).

By wishing to leave Veronica is in fact attempting to subvert Oupa’s authority. She is actually signalling that she is old enough to look after herself, that she has the right to self-determination.

Besides the unequal power relationship between Veronica and her grandfather and their social distance (which is low in this case), there is the rate of imposition of her act. These socio-cultural variables add up in the computation of the weight of imposition of the act she is carrying out and determine the speaker’s choice of strategies (see section 2.5.3.3 above for more detail).

If Veronica were asking a small favour, given the close relationship between her and her grandfather (low social distance), she would not have needed to be indirect. She could have been direct with him (bald-on-record strategy) without the risk of hurting her his feelings. Hence the question emerges: how serious is Veronica’s act?

I have just argued that the purpose of going indirect is, among other things, to avoid hurting the feelings of the addressee, especially for a person so close and endearing to the speaker as Oupa is to Veronica. From the beginning of the play, it is clear that it is no longer a question of whether she should or should not leave. Her decision to leave seems as irreversible as the very period in South Africa that the play is attempting to portray – the end of apartheid and the advent of a democratic South Africa. It is not a matter of what to tell Oupa, for Veronica knows well what to say. It is rather a question of how to say it to him, in such a fashion that

he is not hurt. This is the challenge that she faces, for she knows that Oupa needs her, perhaps more than she needs him. She is conscious that the separation will hurt him more than it will hurt her. He needs her more than ever, particularly now that he has lost both his wife (Veronica's Ouma) and his daughter Caroline (Veronica's mother). In other words, she is aware that she is Oupa's only living relative. To leave him now will make it very hard for someone so old who has, in the words of Author, "a very few years left to live." This is the argument that Author uses in trying to persuade Veronica to reconsider her decision to leave. He says, "*come on Veronica. Think of your poor Oupa. He's only got a few years left. Make them happy ones. Go back and tell him that you've changed your mind...*" (Fugard 1996:83).

Caroline's death in Johannesburg has greatly influenced Oupa's decision to stop Veronica from going to that city. He is protecting her as his group *face*, someone he cares about, just as she has tried to spare his feelings by going indirect with her request. Paradoxically, the ghost of Caroline influences her father's decision to turn Veronica down, as it does the desire of the latter to leave.

5.4. The Ghost of Caroline

From her grave Caroline has been influencing the actions of both her daughter Veronica and her father Buks. For Buks, who staunchly opposes Veronica's departure, Caroline's death is a useful excuse for objecting to Veronica's intention to leave. In Buks' thinking, Veronica risks the same fate as her mother. In this sense Buks is protecting Veronica as his group *face*, in that he cares for his granddaughter. Caroline may be dead but her influence on Veronica has made itself felt long before the name of Caroline has even been mentioned in the text. For example, when at the beginning of the play Veronica tells her grandfather that she is looking for "*adventure and romance*" (Fugard 1996:41), it is hard not to perceive the connection with her mother's actions. For we are told the latter once "*ran away with her boyfriend*" (*Ibid.*:46) by the name of Harry Ruiters. By running away (adventure) with her boyfriend (romance) Caroline once sought what her daughter Veronica is now seeking: "Adventure and romance". As will now be demonstrated, the fact that both mother and daughter seek the same thing, their ability to sing and their physical resemblance, seems to increase Buks' fear that history may repeat itself and that Veronica might run away like her mother. This fear is compounded by the striking resemblance between mother and daughter:

VERONICA: And my mother? Tell me about her.

BUKS: It hurts me to talk about her.

VERONICA: I'm sorry Oupa but it feels like I know nothing about her.

BUKS: What did you want to know?

VERONICA: Anything. You say she looked like me?

BUKS: Oh yes. So much it almost frightens me.

VERONICA: Why 'frighten' Oupa?

BUKS: No, that's the wrong word. Surprise. I meant to say Surprise.

(Fugard 1996:47)

The repair in the last turn in the above extract is merely a ploy by Oupa to suppress his fear and save his own *face*. For to admit to Veronica that he is indeed frightened by the striking resemblance between her and her mother is to appear to be endorsing the notion that, like her mother, Veronica will one day leave him. By revising his words from “frighten” to “surprise”, with their different connotations, Oupa is doing his best to repress the motive of his fear in order “to appear to agree or to hide disagreement” (Brown and Levinson 1987:114). It seems he does not want to be drawn into a discussion about his dead daughter, a topic he cannot address without having to deal with his fear that Veronica might leave him. In the following extract Oupa lies in an effort to persuade himself that Veronica will not do what her mother did. A white lie like this one is clearly preferable to truth-telling.

VERONICA: Did she like singing?

BUKS: Yes, but not like you. (A small smile and a shake of the head)... definitely not like you.

(Fugard 1996:47).

It is clear Oupa is trying to disassociate Veronica from what Caroline did in order to repudiate the thought that daughters tend to do what their mothers once did, a spectre the striking resemblance between Caroline and Veronica seems to raise.

In the following extract Oupa expresses his fears to his wife's spirit, a confession he could not bring himself to make to Veronica:

He says, “(...) *There's nobody I want to talk to any more – only Veronica and I can't put my worries on those young shoulders, specially when she is one of them (...). You can see for yourself she is happy. She is singing more than ever – even making her own songs now. And obedient. She listens to me. When I tell her to do something she does it. But I can also see she is starting to get restless. She's nearly as old now as Caroline was when she ran away. And she looks so much like her Betty it really does frighten me.*

Just yesterday she was standing in the street laughing and teasing a young man, her hands on her hips just the way her mother used to do it. I thought I was seeing a ghost. Because it was Caroline standing there! So waar! I nearly called her name. Sometimes it happens in the house as well, when she's sweeping, or doing the washing... I see Caroline! But then she starts singing and I remember... No! it's Veronica. It's my grandchild.

(Fugard 1996:50)

On the day Veronica receives a letter from her friend Priscilla, inviting her to go and live with her, she lies about its contents to Oupa, angering him. Since he was illiterate, Oupa had someone else read the letter for him. Infuriated, he quickly likens Veronica's behaviour to her mother's:

BUKS: You've been making plans to go to Johannesburg?

VERONICA: Please try to understand Oupa.

BUKS: You also want to run away from me like your mother?

VERONICA: Please Oupa... please listen! I was going to tell Oupa, but first I wanted to know where I was going and that there was somewhere I could stay so that Oupa wouldn't worry about me. I wasn't going to just run away and disappear.

BUKS: I knew it! I knew there was something going on behind my back.

VERONICA: You are not listening to me Oupa.

BUKS: That's right. I'm not listening to you because you tell lies Veronica. That's how it started with your mother. Lies and secrets. And then stealing.

(Fugard 1996:73)

Accordingly, the similarity between Veronica and her mother is not just in looks but also, frighteningly so for Oupa, in behaviour. He seems to be implying that because Veronica steals and lies like her mother, she will probably also run away as the latter did. But Veronica has made it clear that she “*wasn't going to just run away and disappear*” (Ibid.). In fact, Veronica has been making an effort to be seen as her own person, different from her mother and, implicitly, from her actions also, such as when she is mistaken for her mother by her grandfather in the following extract:

BUKS: Please... don't go! ... I must talk to you – please – I must know – why? – What did I do wrong? – Help me Caroline – That's all I want just to know what I did wrong?

VERONICA: No Oupa! It's me... Veronica... [Buks stops]... your grandchild. Caroline is dead, Oupa.

(Ibid.:80)

Veronica's strategy is designed to allay her grandfather's fear that because she looks like her mother, she will behave like the latter. What Oupa seems to forget is the fact that different circumstances are at work for Caroline and her daughter. According to Wertheim (2000:214), "for Veronica, a figure of youthful optimism, the sky's now the limit, and young people of all races can feel empowered to reach for the stars". Whereas for Caroline, who lived during apartheid and whose actions were restricted by what Wertheim calls "the low ceilings erected by the racially claustrophobic apartheid rule" (*Ibid.*), no such empowerment could be imagined. In the light of what Wertheim has just said and against the backdrop of the new, post-apartheid South Africa, Veronica's affirmation, "It's me... Veronica... your grandchild. Caroline is dead", seems to be insisting that she, Veronica, unlike her mother, can now reach for her stars. This constitutes an attempt to quell her grandfather's fear that she will end up like her mother if she is allowed to leave for Johannesburg. Veronica is emphasising that she is not like the latter; hence what once happened to her mother will not necessarily transpire with her, now that the country has changed for the better.

5.5. Veronica's Assertiveness

At seventeen, Veronica is on the threshold of adulthood, a status for which she fights through her multiple attempts to assert herself in front of her grandfather. Her claim to selfhood is embodied in her decision to leave the valley, in itself an exercise of power intended to influence him to act in a way that she desires. She is aware that Oupa, as her grandfather and legal guardian, holds legitimate power over her because legally she is still a minor. The only way she can influence her grandfather is to invoke the so-called "power to" or "discursively constructed power" (see section 2.5.3.3 above), similar to that which Joss in example (15) above was trying to exercise over her mother Kate in a bid to force her to let her stay with her mother's ex-boyfriend, following Kate's decision to leave him.

At the heart of *Valley Song* lies the opposition between Veronica's decision to leave and Oupa's objection to it, between Veronica's assertive action and Oupa's attempts to prescribe and impose on her what she should or should not do, restrictions reminiscent of those imposed by apartheid on "non-whites". For example, his command to Veronica to "go home and cook" (Fugard 1996:48) spells out the less-than-emancipatory role he is trying to prescribe to his granddaughter, a role that Veronica will strongly reject in response to Author's offering her a job consisting in "*scrubbing and polishing floors*". She will go on

record as saying, “*You will never see me barefoot, carrying wood on my head with a baby on my back. You will never see me on my knees scrubbing a white man’s floor*” (Ibid.:67-8).

Veronica had already rejected the idea of working for a white man when the prospect was raised that the Author could buy the Landman house. Her grandfather had told her: “(…) *If he does buy the house and fixes it up and comes to live here in the village, who knows, maybe there’s a chance for you in there*” (Fugard 1996:59). The fact that, as indicated in the stage directions, Veronica is “*alarmed*” at her grandfather’s idea, shows to what extent she feels insulted (an instance of damage to her positive face). As Goffman (1967:6) notes,

A person tends to experience an immediate emotional response to the face which a contact with others allows him; he cathects his face; his “feelings” become attached to it (...) If events establish a face for him that is better than he might have expected, he is likely to “feel good”; if his ordinary expectations are not fulfilled, one expects that he will “feel bad” or “feel hurt”

As will now be demonstrated in the following extract, Veronica’s expectations are not met. She has expected her grandfather to listen to her and give her a voice but the latter continues to treat her as if she does not have ideas of her own. She is alarmed, as indicated, but finally finds her voice.

1. VERONICA [*alarmed*]: *What do you mean Oupa?*
2. BUKS: *Work my girl. For you. Ja! Stella is right. They’re going to need somebody to clean the house and do the work.*
3. VERONICA: *No Oupa!*
4. BUKS: *No? I think you are old enough for it now Veronica.*
5. VERONICA [*panic*]: *Yes, I know I am but... No no no! [A few seconds of surprised silence at her outburst. She is desperate and flustered.] I know Oupa means good for me... and I’m very grateful... but No! ... Oupa mustn’t just... decide like that... what I mean is you promised Oupa that when the time came we would talk about these things first... yes you did! ...*
6. BUKS: *Veronica?*
7. VERONICA: *What I’m trying to say Oupa is that I also got ideas... other ideas about what I want to do... about my future and everything... So Oupa mustn’t decide just like that...*

(Fugard 1996:59-60)

In turn (3) Veronica rejects Oupa’s view with a firm “*No*”. Although she violates strategy (6) in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model – avoid disagreement – and therefore threatens Oupa’s face, she is portrayed as being straight and honest with her grandfather. In turn (5),

her “token agreement” is immediately followed by three consecutive “No[s]”, emphasising her disagreement with him while at the same time helping to assert her individuality and freedom of choice (her negative *face*). The stage directions indicate that she is “*desperate and flustered*.” The fact that she attempts to seek agreement in turn (5) (“*I know Oupa means good for me*” and “*And I am very grateful*”) is mere facework designed to cushion her grandfather against what follows: her strongest condemnation of his tendency to make decisions for her. It is quite ironical for Oupa to suggest in line (4) that Veronica is “old enough for it (housework)” when, in fact, all that she wants is for her grandfather to acknowledge that she is old enough to make her own decisions. In turn (7), Veronica goes on record in asserting her independence and individuality.

She will later put her foot down in response to Oupa’s question, “(...) who’s been giving you these ideas?” (Fugard 1996:61). She will say, “Nobody. I don’t need other people to give me ideas. They are my own” (*Ibid.*).

The fact that Veronica has spoken a total of 90 words in the extract, compared to Oupa’s 35, does attest to her conversational dominance. As Herman, following Bentley (1965), notes:

Speakers who accrue to themselves the rights and privileges of speech may be the more dominant characters. By the same token, those who consistently have speech wrested away from them will be seen as in an unequal relation with the most masterful ones.

(Herman 1995:111)

Veronica’s bid for emancipation may also be evaluated by the way the above segment has been constructed (see section 2.4.1 for details on the systematics of turn-taking). Not only does she initiate the dialogue with a question, putting her grandfather on the defensive, she uses all her turns to reject Oupa’s ideas with a firm “No” and assert her own position. Another sign of her dominance in the extract is the fact that she reserves the last word to herself. In turn (5), for example, she simply keeps the floor rights by taking the longest turn of the segment, thus blocking his rights to speech.

It has to be borne in mind that Veronica has wrested discursive power away from her grandfather, in spite of the latter’s legitimate right over her. The extract has demonstrated that through turn construction units, by varying both the order and size of turns available, one speaker can be discursively projected as more powerful than the speaker who actually holds legitimate power.

Another occasion when Veronica endeavours to assert herself occurs when she discovers that her letter from her friend Priscilla in Johannesburg has already been opened and read. And when Oupa calls her a child while chiding her for lying about the contents of the letter [*“Veronica I think you are lying to me. That isn’t what the letter says is it? Answer me child”* (*Ibid.*)], she replies, *“I’m not a child any more Oupa”* (*Ibid.*).

It is not just the idea of working as a domestic that Veronica is rejecting. It is also the notion that she, a coloured and therefore non-white, should be working for a white man. By rejecting the idea, she is aiming to subvert the master-to-slave binary that has characterised the white-to-black relationship under apartheid. Veronica’s rebellion, as it might be called, definitely places *Valley Song* in the realm of the post-apartheid era, in which the equality between whites and non-whites is constitutionally sanctioned. Oupa’s failure to hold Veronica back in the valley, where she would have no choice but to do the kind of work she despises, points to the irreversibility of the country’s changing political and social landscape.

Veronica’s bid for emancipation can also be explained through the metaphor of the pumpkin seeds. The play begins with Author *“producing a handful of pumpkin seeds from his pocket”* (Fugard 1995:37) and saying, *“(…) One of these, together with a little prayer for rain, in a hole in the ground. And in a good year, when you get that rain, this little handful could give you up to a hundred of those beauties!”* (*Ibid.*).

Just as Oupa tries to show to his restless granddaughter that “miracles” do take place in the village, to which she responds by telling him *that “a girl can’t make adventure and romance out of pumpkin seeds”* (*Ibid.*), the Author uses the same image in order to test Veronica’s attachment to her dream. He says, *“(…) take your apple box and go home, and dream about something that has a chance of happening – a wonderful year for your Oupa on his akkers with hundreds of pumpkins”* (*Ibid.*:67). Veronica rejects the Author’s advice because the so-called miracles of pumpkin seeds represent to her nothing but the earth-bound routine out of which she cannot create *“adventure and romance”*. In the end she uses the natural growth of a pumpkin seed becoming a large pumpkin as a metaphor for explaining the irreversibility of her departure to make the accomplishment of her dream possible.

VERONICA: Can Oupa explain to me how a little seed becomes a big pumpkin?

BUKS: No.

VERONICA: You said to me once it was a miracle.

BUKS: That’s right.

VERONICA: You give it water and skoffel out the weeds and it just grows. Isn’t that so?

BUKS: Yes, that is so.

VERONICA: I think it is like that with me and my singing Oupa. I also can't tell you how it happens. All I know is that when I sing, I'm alive. My singing is my life. I must look after it the way Oupa looks after his vegetables. I know that if I stay here in the Valley it will die.

(Ibid.:81-2)

Veronica is tentatively drawing the analogy that if it is natural for a little pumpkin seed to grow big, it is equally natural for the little seed of singing in her to grow into a big singing career for her. Consequently the miracle of the pumpkin seeds is paralleled by the miracle of Veronica's singing.

Another means by which Veronica asserts herself and her dream is to mock her friend Alfred Witbooi's restricted dream of acquiring a used bicycle. The two are coloured, once categorised as non-whites side by side with black people during apartheid. As such, they were victims of the segregationist laws of Apartheid South Africa. Consequently, although they were able to dream as largely as Veronica does, they were restricted the possibility to achieve those dreams. Now that the situation has changed in the new South Africa, Veronica can achieve her dreams. By fantasising about a used bicycle, Alfred Witbooi is not taking advantage of the limitless opportunities that the new order in the country offers. Instead, Veronica would dream about a "*big, black, shiny new bicycle with a loud ringatingaling bell and all that*" (Fugard 1996:54). There are two different visions here, one unrestricted and looking to the future, the other harking back to the restrictions of the past as embodied partly by Alfred Witbooi but mainly by Buks (Oupa), who represents the old boundaries.

5.6. Buks and the Old Boundaries

Fugard wrote *Valley Song* during South Africa's transition from the old order of apartheid to the new order of a democratic and multiracial society. He himself described the play as one that "straddles the present, with one foot in the past and one foot in the future" (Wertheim 2000:212). It is the same line of thought that Marcia Blumberg wishes to convey when she characterises the play as being "situated in the liminal space of the in-between: between the interregnum and the post-election era, between the decaying apartheid structures and the uncertainty of a fledgling democracy, between the stifling entrapment of old ways and the energy and enthusiasm of youth" (Blumberg 1996:456).

It is clear that this energy and enthusiasm of youth is embodied by Veronica through her ability to dream and look to the future, whereas Buks exemplifies the so-called old ways. For this reason he is described by Wertheim (2000:220) “as an old man who has known only the life of an uncomplicated, church-going coloured tenant farmer tied to his akkers.” If Fugard’s description of the play as being “one foot in the future” fits Veronica with her youth and ability to dream, the “one foot in the past” definitely describes Buks with his ties to the previous boundaries. The author portrays Buks as rooted to the ground in the following terms:

AUTHOR: (...) That old house that was standing there empty and falling apart when I first saw it, Landman and Jaap built it with their own hands. Just the two of them! And then when Jaap died in the great 'flu epidemic the young Buks stepped into his father's shoes and husbanded that land. And that's how it has been ever since. His life is rooted now as deeply in that soil as the old Walnut tree next to the windmill. When it's like that between you and a piece of land you end up being a part of it. Your soul wilts and withers with the young plants during the droughts. You feel the late frosts as if it was your skin that had been burnt black. And when it rains you rejoice and your heart swells with sweetness like fruit on the trees.

(Fugard 1996:64)

The above helps to explain why it is difficult for Buks to embrace change. It is, therefore, understandable why, to him, Veronica’s dream of a move to a distant city, where his daughter Caroline had died, is akin to pure madness. Buks’ ties with the past and Veronica’s ability to look to the future do explain the opposing positions taken by the two characters that form the kernel of the conflict at the heart of the play.

We are given a glimpse of Buks’ bond with the past right from the beginning of the play. Not only does Buks prefer to sing old songs whose narratives are about a distant past, as opposed to Veronica’s ability to sing her own songs, but he also seems to lack initiative as regards practical matters concerning his life. For example, he has no concept of what he would do with himself if, as he is hoping, someone buys his land. He fears that he might be asked by the new owner “to take up my spade and my wheelbarrow and go, and that’s the end of the story” (Fugard 1996:41). Unlike her grandfather (and his lack of vision), Veronica has ideas of her own.

One more technique Fugard uses to set the two characters apart is that of portraying Buks as passionate about farming his akkers, while he shows Veronica as despising those same akkers. The fact that Veronica hates what Buks loves, which runs contrary to asserting

common ground (see Brown and Levinson 1987:129), means a confrontation is likely between the two. This is what she tells the audience in her direct address:

VERONICA: (to the audience. Her mood is dark and defiant): I hate those akkers. Yes. Hate them. I know that's a big sin – to hate the Earth that God created – but I can't help it. That's the way I feel and that's what I want to say. If I was my Oupa I would rather let us go hungry than plant another seed in that ground. I mean it. It gives us food, but it takes our lives. Oh yes it does! That's why my mother ran away. I just know it. She didn't want her life to be buried in that old house the way my Ouma's was. If ever anybody sees a spook in that house it will be my Ouma... scrubbing the floors. And my Oupa also – he'll spook those akkers one day. You'll see. He's like a slave now to that little piece of land. That's all he lives for, and it's not even his. He talks about nothing else, worries about nothing else, prays for nothing else...

(Fugard 1996:64-5)

Just as she ties Oupa to the earth, which symbolizes the status quo, Veronica embraces change. To emphasise her grandfather's ties with the soil, she calls him “*a slave now to that little piece of land*” (*ibid.*), which suggests how hard it is for him to break free from servitude to the land. She attributes her mother's flight to the city to a fear of being buried in this piece of land. Veronica makes clear that she cares about her mother, that she and her mother have a great deal in common. Like her daughter, Caroline must have been bored. Like her mother, Veronica also wants to leave the Karoo; she wants what her mother Caroline once wanted. Caroline is part of her daughter's group *face*, her hero. It does not matter that she does not know much about her mother except for what Oupa has told her. It is for accurate reasons that Oupa found the similarity between mother and daughter “frightening”. Even if Veronica does not run away as her mother once did, she still insists on leaving.

Oupa cares about his akkers and the pumpkin seeds as much as he cares about the fond memory of his late wife Betty Bruintjies. She may be dead but she is still part of his group *face*. Not only does he address her spirit to share his worries, he also defends her to Veronica. Rejecting Oupa's view that she should find work as a maid in a white man's house as her grandmother once did, Veronica reminds her grandfather that things ought to be different in the new South Africa. She says, “(*...*) *Here we are carrying on and talking just like the 'klomp arme ou kleurlinge' we've always been, frightened of the white man, ready to crawl and beg him and be happy and grateful if we can scrub his floors...*” (Fugard 1996:60-1). The stage directions indicate that “it takes him [Buks] a few seconds to control his anger

before he can speak coherently” (*Ibid.*:61). Then he lashes out at Veronica in what seems like his strongest defence of the memory of his wife.

He tells her,

Now you listen to me very carefully my child. I’ve never talked to you like this before and I don’t ever want to talk to you like this again. You wouldn’t be alive today, standing there insulting the memory of your Ouma...”

Veronica’s denial is ignored; he continues:

Insulting the memory of your Ouma, if that “arme ou kleurling” hadn’t gone to the city and rescued you. Ja. You would most probably be lying in the same grave as your mother if Betty Bruintjies hadn’t climbed into that vervloekte Railway Bus and found you and brought you back here. Broken hearted as she was she nursed you and gave you a start in life. Ja, it’s true she scrubbed floors in that Landman house, went down on her hands and knees and scrubbed and polished, but if you can walk through your life with even half of the pride that that woman had in herself and her life, then you will be a very lucky girl (...)

(*Ibid.*)

Oupa forgets that with the demise of apartheid, Veronica does not face the kind of restrictions that her grandmother once encountered, and that the best way to honour her memory is to exercise her own freedom of choice as her grandmother could not. If the latter had been proud to go down on her hands and knees and scrub and polish, Veronica should be prouder and luckier that she can dream of a singing career and actually go to Johannesburg in pursuit of it. But Oupa does not merely defend his late wife against Veronica’s implicit criticism of the kind of work her mother had once done. He also makes it clear to Veronica that she is the very reason for his going “*arme ou kleurling*” in an effort to show that he cares about her as much as he cares about the memory of his late wife. He says,

As for this ‘arme ou kleurling’ ... you’re right – I’ve done a lot of crawling and begging in my life and I am ready to do it again for those few akkers. You want to know why Veronica? So that I can grow food there for you to eat, just as I grew food there for your mother and your Ouma to eat, and as my father grew food there for me to eat.

(*Ibid.*)

However, in stating that he is ready to crawl and beg again, he seems to take no notice of the changed context, where such submissive activities during the apartheid years are not necessary, even though there may not be much of a choice for someone as old as him. This is

definitely not the case for Veronica who is young, with a whole life ahead of her. It is actually positive that the elections took place, to open the door for Veronica to pursue her dream. In fact what seems as male to male inheritance of tenant farming does not have to continue with Veronica, a young girl with innovative ideas and a mind of her own.

5.7 Final Confrontation

The scene that leads to the final confrontation between Veronica and her grandfather over her departure begins as follows:

VERONICA: Oupa hear about the business at the Post Office?

BUKS: No. Tell me.

VERONICA: There was a bad argument between Mrs Oliphant and Old Brigadier Pelser.

BUKS: What happened?

(Fugard 1996:68)

She proceeds to tell him what took place.

The story is a mere tactic to prepare herself to enquire about her letter from her friend Priscilla, which Mrs Oliphant had passed on to her grandfather to give her. It is interesting to note that she does not confront him head on. She waits until Oupa asks her if she had been at the Post Office before enquiring about her letter.

BUKS: (...) Were you at the Post Office?

VERONICA: Yes. [Pause] Oupa?

BUKS: Yes.

VERONICA: Mrs Oliphant also said that Oupa's got a letter for me. She says she gave it to you yesterday.

(Fugard 1996:69)

She could have been direct with her grandfather by saying, for example, "Oupa, where's my letter that Mrs Oliphant gave you?" It seems she still cares about his *face* at the expense of being honest with him. This is the same strategy that she had used at the beginning of the play, when she told him about her desire to leave the valley. She chose to sing, weaving her intention to leave into her song, leaving it to him to deduce what she wanted.

The confrontation is characterised by uncooperative behaviour by the two characters towards each other, such as when Oupa demands to know why Veronica did not tell him about the letter. She replies: *“I didn’t think Oupa would be interested. It wasn’t an important letter. Just silly talk you know and news about the village (...)”* (Fugard 1996:70). Of course, she is not being truthful, in violation of the maxim of quality. She is lying to protect her grandfather from the reality that she has been making plans to go to Johannesburg despite his objections, truth that she was certain was going to hurt his feelings. But Oupa already knows this, and the only reason he tells Veronica that he does not know what the letter says is to put her honesty to the test. Veronica fails it, lying about the contents of the letter, forcing him to call her to task. Although she later apologises for lying, she reasserts her right to selfhood by telling her grandfather that he had no right to open the letter anyway. Earlier he has called her a child, to which she has objected, telling him, *“I’m not a child any more Oupa”* (Fugard 1996:71). Veronica’s remark opens up a new front in their confrontation.

In the following extract, Oupa accuses her of stealing from him just like her mother once did, leading to a confrontation between the two:

BUKS: So how were you going to Johannesburg?

VERONICA: I got my own money.

BUKS: Your own money? [VERONICA is silent] What do you mean ‘your own money’?

VERONICA: Money I save Oupa.

BUKS: From where?

VERONICA: From what the white people give me.

BUKS: You ask them for money?

VERONICA: No. I earned it. I sing my songs for them and they pay me (...) [She takes a chance... fetching the tin with her savings, opening it, and placing it trustingly on the table in front of her Oupa.] Look Oupa – I nearly got half the price of a train ticket already. I’m doing it because I want Oupa to be proud of me. I want to give you something back for all you’ve given me. But I can’t do that if I stay here. There’s nothing for me in this Valley. Please try to understand what it is like for me. I’ll die if I got to live my whole life here. [Buks’s devastation turns to rage. He grabs the tin and hurls it out into the night.] No Oupa! No! It’s mine!

BUKS: Devil’s money.

VERONICA: It’s not. I earned it. I earned it properly.

BUKS: I’m telling you, it’s Devil’s money! That’s where it comes from. Devil’s money. He’s trying to get you the way he got your mother. But this time I’m ready for him. Now you listen to me very carefully Veronica. Don’t let me ever catch you begging money from the white people again. And you can also

forget all about Johannesburg. This family has already got one grave up there. There won't be another one. Whatever you might think, you are still a child and I am your Oupa. If you try to run away I'll have the police after you. I mean it. And I'll tell them to lock you up until you come to your senses.

(Fugard 1996:74-5)

His demonisation of Veronica's money and the warning that he would set the police on her, should she try to run away, is definitely a last-ditch attempt by Oupa to put a term to Veronica's plan to leave. He knows that with the money, she is one step closer to having her plan materialise. Although Oupa accepts the fact that Veronica could make her own money, he does not approve of the method she chooses for making money – by singing. He wants her to work in a white house, which is seen as a more suitable job. He does not just want to protect her, he also wants to control her. For him, she is still a child, who must continue to live under his roof. This is the very perception that Veronica keeps rejecting by insisting that she is not a child any more, that she has the right to self-determination.

5.8. Author, his Goals and Strategies

The first words that Author ever utters to Veronica, “*Don't run away!*” (Fugard 1996:52), may sound like an order but they actually have the pragmatic force of an advice/suggestion. These words define Author's role as adviser to Veronica. The fact that she does not run away does resonate with her desire to distinguish herself from her mother who, as we know, did elope with her boyfriend. About the role of the Author, Wertheim notes the following,

As the character of Author in his play, Fugard acts the role of enabler and devil's advocate for Veronica, warning her that things may go amiss for her and for her dreams. Clearly, however, his intent is not to discourage her but to test her mettle, strengthen her resolve, and encourage her not to lose sight of those goals and dreams.

(Wertheim 2000:218)

I now propose to demonstrate how Veronica is tested and how her resolve is strengthened as a result. The following extract will serve this purpose.

AUTHOR: (...) Listen to me Veronica – take your apple box and go home, and dream about something that has a chance of happening – a wonderful year for Oupa on his akkers with hundreds of pumpkins – or dream that you meet a handsome young man with a good job...

VERONICA: You're wasting your breath.

AUTHOR: Okay, let's leave it at that. But for your sake I hope you don't remember tonight and what I've said to you in ten years' time if like all the other women in the village you are walking barefoot into the veld every day with a baby on your back to collect firewood.

VERONICA: Never!

AUTHOR: Because you know what you'll be dreaming about then, don't you? ... that I've given you a job scrubbing and polishing the floors of my nicely renovated old Landman house.

VERONICA: Never! Now you listen to me. I swear on the Bible, on my Ouma's grave, that you will never see me walk barefoot with firewood on my head and a baby on my back – you will never see me on my knees scrubbing a white man's floor.

(Fugard 1996:67-8)

To study the extract, I will draw on the turn constructional strategies of the characters, topic orientation and turn length. The ways these turns are constructed, their varying sizes and lengths as well as topic orientation (for example, who initiates speech and who follows) are important in defining power relations in the extract (for more on the systematics of turn-taking, see section 2.4.1 above).

Throughout all his turns, not only does Author set the tone of the exchange by asking questions, to which Veronica responds in a laconic, sometimes monosyllabic fashion, he also tends to speak longer. These long turns emphasise his power and dominance in the extract. But Veronica's last turn looks different from the previous one. For a change, she tells Author, "Now you listen to me" (Fugard 1996:67), effectively wresting control of speech from him in a power-grab that reverses their previous roles of him as the speech initiator versus her as follower. By means of the time adverbial "Now" which "designates proximal time" (Huang 2007:147), adding to the sense of the urgency of the speech act, and the imperative "Listen," Veronica has effectively taken control of speech. As Herman (1995:216) observes, "power in action is power to control consequence of speech, to control the sequels to one's illocutionary acts, and to bend others' actions to one's word and will." As a consequence of Veronica's discursive power-grab, the Author is driven into silence. He will reappear later, not only to admit having tested Veronica but also to give her his blessing.

AUTHOR: I was testing you.

VERONICA: Testing me?

AUTHOR: Yes.

VERONICA: Like in the tests at school?

AUTHOR: Sort of.

VERONICA: *And did I pass?*

AUTHOR: *Oh yes. You're strong. I think you've got what it takes.*

(Fugard 1996:84)

Author's praise has certainly boosted Veronica's positive *face*. Veronica had already been blessed by Oupa, which was an instance of mutual *face* maintenance between grandfather and granddaughter. By saying "*God bless you*" (*Ibid.*:82), Oupa is essentially telling Veronica that he wants what she wants (see Brown and Levinson 1987:129), which is the greatest gift he could give his granddaughter. In return, Veronica tells him: "*I love you Oupa*" (Fugard 1996:82), a *face*-giving expression to quell his fears that she may be rejecting him by the fact of leaving. Earlier, by denying Veronica permission to leave, Oupa had wanted the opposite of what Veronica wanted, an FTA to Veronica. On the contrary, as she expresses it in her song, she still loves her valley, but in love the need for closeness or solidarity is as important as the need for space or independence (see section 2.6 above). In Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, these two wants (closeness/solidarity and independence) are translated as positive and negative *face*, respectively.

Oupa's blessing also marks the transformation of the old order to the new, the growth of the old pumpkins into new plants, the end of the status quo to give rise to the dynamic of change, the beautiful dreams of the future as embodied by Veronica replacing the dreadful memories of the past, a past marked by Caroline running away from her parents, only to die in "exile". In a sense Caroline died so that Veronica could live and pick up from where she left off. This is also an instance of the old giving way to the new. Even Nieu-Bethesda is not left behind. Once it was an anonymous little Karoo town; now Veronica draws it out of anonymity by promising to sing her song elsewhere. She sings, "*I'll sing your songs/Valley that I love/So that people will know/How beautiful you are*" (Fugard 1996:82).

This passing of the helm from the old generation to the new is equally significant for Fugard's dramaturgy. During apartheid he took it upon himself to expose the injustices to which his fellow South Africans were subjected because of the colour of their skin. With the demise of apartheid and the advent of the new order in South Africa, Fugard has been freed from the apartheid-theme. In the new order, there is almost no limit to the themes available to him. As evidence, in the post-apartheid period he has published a flourishing list of plays, namely *Playland* (1992); *My Life* (1994); *Valley Song* (1995); *The Captain's Tiger: a*

memoir for the stage (1997); *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2001); *Exits and Entrances* (2004); *Booitjie and the Oubaas* (2006); *Victory* (2007); *Coming Home* (2009); *Have You Seen Us* (2009); *The Train Driver* (2010); *The Blue Iris* (2012); and *The Shadow of the Hummingbird* (2014). The above list proves Wertheim right in pointing out that “the modest seeds of *Valley Song*’s plot are nurtured in the course of the play, eventually giving rise to large and meaningful concepts about human, artistic, and South African national growth” (Wertheim 2000:212).

5.9. Conclusion

The close relationship Veronica has with her grandfather, almost father to daughter, made it difficult for her to go on record with her request to leave in pursuit of her dream to become a singing star in Johannesburg. To avoid hurting her “Oupa”, the only family she had left, she chose to go off-record by singing a song, hinting at her abiding need to leave and hoping that he would understand and let her go. But Oupa, for whom Veronica’s impending departure carried the illocutionary force of a rejection, wanted to hold onto Veronica in the same way that he wanted to hold onto his *akkers* and his farming life. Despite all the right reasons Oupa may have had in wanting to keep Veronica from leaving, such as to keep her out of harm’s way – since, as noted, it was in the same city that her mother Caroline had died – Veronica wanted to see to it that her dream came true. Instead of just running away following Oupa’s objection to her request to leave, she changes her strategies. By going off-record Veronica wanted primarily to maintain her grandfather’s *face* at the expense of asserting herself and her dream/goal. Because she did not immediately obtain permission to leave, she decided to go bald-on-record in order to maximise the clarity of her intent to leave, instead of just worrying about her grandfather’s feelings. The shift from indirectness to going bald-on-record also marks Veronica’s development as an individual, her affirmation of herself. Her forcefulness paid off in the end because Oupa relented.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The preceding study has sought to address the question of how the concept of *face* is attacked, supported and maintained in the *Road to Mecca*, *My Children! My Africa!* and *Valley Song!* with the aim of exploring the notion of *face* within the broader context of dramatic language and also to demonstrate, through a discussion of the three plays of Fugard, how this notion might make a contribution to the study and understanding of his work. The analysis/interpretation of these texts, detailed and interesting though it may have seemed, has not been undertaken as an end in itself. Through this exercise I have merely sought to extrapolate some general insights towards my goal of understanding Fugard's work. Some of these are summarised here.

Dramatis personae have goals to achieve; these are often designed to clash, giving rise to conflict, the latter being what characterises drama, in which dramatic characters tend to offend one another (see Burton in Piazza 1999, cited in section 2.5.3.2). Since the notion of *face* is attached to the goals/interests of dramatis personae, the concept has been particularly useful in understanding what motivates a character's action and choice of strategy in the pursuit of those goals. Further determining factors in the identification of dramatic characters' goals/interests are the direct addresses to the audience. This is the case with *My Children! My Africa!* in which characters have made extensive use of this type of address, during which they took the audience into confidence in revealing their individual goals.

While positive *face* has been linked to one's desire to be approved, negative *face* has been described as one's want to be unimpeded. Both of these are actually two sides of the same coin in that they translate into one's freedom (negative *face*) to pursue one's goal/interest (positive *face*). These notions have been very helpful in determining *face*-threatening acts (FTAs), the performance of which forces characters to choose the most appropriate strategy so as to optimise a conversational act. The strategies available to characters include, according to Brown and Levinson's *face*-saving model of politeness, which has been the anchor of my inquiry, doing the FTA bald-on-record, with redress to positive *face*, with redress to negative *face* or simply opting out (not doing the FTA at all, for example when the imposition is too high to redeem with politeness). Characters are known to develop as a result of their changed strategies; for this reason, to tie a character to one strategy is to underestimate Athol Fugard's gift for shaping well-rounded characters. As Collins

(1983:371) observes, “Fugard’s great gift as a playwright is his power, through metaphors taken from ordinary life and deft, deceptively simple writing, to draw characters whose lives initially seem utterly unremarkable but whose manifest goodness and worth can finally engage and hold to the end the sympathy and concern of an audience.”

In my conclusion to Chapter two I have attributed a speaker’s choice of whether to be direct or indirect in using language to clarity of intent on the one hand, and maintenance of social comity on the other. Knowing how to strike the right balance between these often-conflicting goals is perhaps the biggest challenge facing dramatic characters in their pursuit of goals during face-to-face interactions.

In *The Road to Mecca*, that challenge is faced by Miss Helen in her struggle to preserve her Mecca against the intrusive decision by the local church to force her out of her home and “unchristian” artistry, while at the same time attempting to maintain her long-time friendship with Marius, the very mouthpiece of the church, who wants to persuade her to sign the form for her transfer to an old-age home. Battling arthritis and old age, Miss Helen turns to her much younger, energetic friend Elsa from Cape Town for help in standing up to a persuasive talker such as Marius. Despite the latter’s attempts to neutralise her influence over the older lady, Elsa succeeds in persuading her friend to decline to sign the transfer form; Miss Helen does so without undermining her friendship with Marius. In fact, in a surprising turnaround, Marius, who has never appreciated his friend’s sculptures, calling them “monstrosities”, now concedes that “I’ve never seen you as happy as this! There is more light in you than in all your candles put together” (Fugard 1985:74).

In *My Children! My Africa!* the fact that a white girl, Isabel, and an underprivileged black pupil, Thami, together with his mentor Mr M, share the stage for the first time sets for a cross-cultural and cross-racial drama between people who until now have been divided by apartheid laws. Their shared interest in education at the beginning of the play, as exemplified by the interschool debate and the preparation for a joint literary competition, is disrupted when Thami, frustrated with the slow pace of change in South Africa, withdraws from the competition to join the struggle, alienating his friend Isabel. His choice of the struggle over education as a means for hastening change in the country sets him on a collision course with Mr M’s passion for the education of the youth.

In *Valley Song*, Veronica and her grandfather/guardian Abraam Yonkers have conflicting goals. For her the advent of a free, democratic and multiracial society means she can “dream

big”. She wants to leave the valley in pursuit of a singing career in Johannesburg. But her grandfather, whose fear of change seems as strong as her desire for something different, objects. At the beginning of the play Veronica, who wants to maintain a good relationship with her grandfather whom she loves, chooses to be indirect in her choice of language at the expense of clarity of intent. As she grows more assertive she becomes more direct and forceful in wanting to leave, until he relents and lets her go.

Striking the right balance between clarity of intent and maintenance of social comity is as determining to a character’s choice of strategies as are the power relations between participants in an interaction, their social distance and the rate of imposition of the FTA being performed. In *Valley Song* it is clear that Veronica, in her decision to be indirect, has taken into account her grandfather’s age, the fact that he holds legitimate power over her as her grandfather and legal guardian and the great imposition on him represented by her decision to leave. However, failure to secure permission for her chosen strategy forces her to go bald-on-record: she even threatens to leave, determined as she is to pursue her dream. In *My Children! My Africa!* Thami’s decision to join the struggle against Mr M’s advice is an attempt to overturn his power over his protégé. The two may have been socially close (Mr M is in fact a stand-in father to Thami whose parents are away in Cape Town) but what each is asking of the other is just too great (Mr M begging Thami to not abandon his education over the struggle and the latter requesting the former, albeit indirectly, to join the struggle) for either one to give in without a fight. In *The Road to Mecca*, Miss Helen and Marius are socially close, being long-time friends and neighbours. On top of this, we know that Marius is secretly in love with his friend. It would seem that they could ask anything of each other. But it is the friendship between Miss Helen and Elsa that prevails because they share much more than do Miss Helen and Marius (both women are rebels against social conventions). It is because of their strong bond that no favour could be too great for either to ask of the other or to do, on the other’s behalf.

Earlier in the study, I argued that group *face* provided a particularly interesting angle from which to analyse the three plays and that for characters adhering to this perspective of *face* the needs of one’s group/cause become superordinate to one’s personal needs; my argument is demonstrated by Thami, whose adherence to and defence of the struggle has superseded all his other needs.

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