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**Social Protest in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) and
My Children! My Africa! (1989)**

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To my family, friends and relatives.

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Abstract:

The present research paper deals with the issue of social protest in South African white playwright Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972, written in collaboration with John Kani and Winston Ntshona, and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989). Our major interest in this paper is to show how these plays are used by Fugard as a tool to defend the oppressed Blacks and to denounce one of the most oppressive systems in the world, namely Apartheid. The discussion is achieved through two parts. The first part explored the issue of segregation in the light of Brecht's concept of "Realism". In both plays, Fugard portrays faithfully how black characters are subjected to different types of discriminatory practices. The second part was concerned with the issue of commitment by making reference to Brecht's notion of "Alienation", Bhabha's concepts of Mimicry, and Ashcroft's et al. concept of "Appropriation and Abrogation". Our focus was on elements such as characters and language that prove Fugard's political commitment.

Introduction:

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the issue of social protest in South African white Playwright Athol Fugard's two selected plays, namely *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989). The task consists of exploring how drama can be a reflection what happens in society and how it can be used as a tool in times of crisis to denounce an oppressive social and political order.

As an art form, Drama has always been concerned with the depiction of social issues. Since the dawn of theatre, plays were meant both to entertain and to instruct. In ancient Greece tragedy was "an intricate part of the civic life of Athens."¹ Tragedians like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides produced plays that deal with daily life issues such as family, religion and politics. In fact, social issues are not only developed in tragedies but in comedies too. Aristophanes was among the first Greek comedians who, through laughter, transmitted political messages. His "comedic conventions ... of political satire are every bit as important and effective in the 21st century as they were in Ancient Greece."²

The idea of a theatre of protest is not new. It existed long before and it continued over time to influence modern theatre. Yet, it remains to say that such theatrical protest was not as overt as the one achieved by modern playwrights. Among the first playwrights to write for a political theatre, during the twentieth century, was the German playwright Bertold Brecht. As a pioneer in this field, Brecht was "first and foremost a political writer."³ Being a Marxist, Brecht rejects all forms of capitalism. He believes that the social gap that separates the classes is unfair. Through his plays, he shows his opposition to the existence of a bourgeois minority while the majority of people live in poverty. Brecht's 'Epic Theatre' is a theatre of protest, addressing and defending the common man.

As a matter of fact, Brecht's ideas on theatre were still influent during the second half of the twentieth century and even afterwards. His conception of Epic theatre influenced a

large number of intellectuals all over the world. Within the field of drama, for instance, many playwrights are inspired by his ideas. They follow his steps using theatre as a means to stand against different forms of oppression. In the South African context, it is the case with Athol Fugard. The latter uses theatre as a means to denounce the injustice of Apartheid.

Moreover, theatre has always been the most accessible of all art forms, especially, in Third World countries where illiteracy rates are high. In Africa, after the independence era, many playwrights, such as Hubert Ugande, have chosen to write plays in order to address common people and to criticize the post-independence governments which they see as not different from the colonial administration. Theatre was a means to vehicle political messages that could not be expressed explicitly in the streets because of political oppression.

In South Africa, Blacks suffered from late colonialism. It is important to mention that from the 1950s onwards, the Apartheid system of segregation became the legal law of the country. In reaction to this, many playwrights, among whom Barney Simon and Athol Fugard are worth to mention, made use of their art to write plays that make the white people conscious of the immorality of Apartheid.⁴

As it has been mentioned above, Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) are concerned with the exposition of issues relating to the Apartheid system of segregation. The aim of this paper is to try to deal with the issue of protest as it is developed in both plays. The task will consist of exploring the extent to which Athol Fugard, a white South African playwright, is committed to the denunciation of the Whites' segregationist Apartheid system.

Review of the Literature:

Soon after the performances of, *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) there has been a spate of critical attention to them. In fact, both plays are criticized from different perspectives.

To start with, in Samuel Okoronkwo's article 'Drama and the Social Reality: A Sociological Perspective on Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*', the critic considers the play to be a perfect model of a historical play that reflects events in society at the time the play was written. Okoronkwo writes: "*Sizwe Banzi is Dead* fits perfectly into our focus of interpretation and analysis of a good sociological drama."⁵ In other words, Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi*, according to this critic, is no more than a historical drama that reflects the 1970s South Africa. He adds:

The play has captured vividly [...] the socio-political and economic realities of Apartheid South Africa, explored through good dramaturgy by representing grim images and themes as obtains in this society.⁶

Unlike other critics, Okoronkwo studies the play, not as an artistic work of art, but as a social product. That is to say, the analysis he achieves is not a literary but a sociological one.

The play has also been criticized from a philosophical dimension. Richard Park has undertaken the task and refers to the play as being an absurd one. He confirms that Fugard is influenced by existentialist ideas of writers such as Albert Camus. Park assumes that Fugard "was so deeply influenced by Camus that each of his plays presents a nearly formulaic expression of existentialist idea."⁷ The critic considers the protagonist of the play to be absurd because of his senseless struggle against the Apartheid system in South Africa. He comments: "in *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*, for example, we are aware that the absurdity under which Sizwe lives is not inevitable but a consequence of Apartheid."⁸ In other words, the absurd in this play is a result of the unfair policies that the Apartheid system imposes on the Blacks; just like Camus' Sisyphus who lives an absurd life because of the God's punishment. The critic concludes his discussion by saying that the play does not offer hope, instead, "a basic pessimism remains"⁹ at the end.

Another critique of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* is provided by Rodwell Makombe in his article 'Crime and Survival in the Postcolonial World/Text'. Makombe discusses the issue of survival which is recurrent in postcolonial writings. The critic argues that "in a repressive environment, where all avenues of personal growth have been blocked, the instinct for

survival takes precedence over moral considerations.”¹⁰ Effectively, the oppressed people’s main concern in life is to survive and live. The difficult economic and social circumstances make it impossible for them to think about moral issues. Makombe assumes that “living in any kind of repressive regime [...] is living like a ghost.”¹¹ For him, Sizwe “has no identity to think about. His children may as well be called after Robert Zwelinzima. What is important for him is survival.”¹² Makombe adds “that when people live in conditions of abject poverty, anything goes for them.”¹³ They can do anything in order to secure their lives.

In his article ‘Drama and the Politics in a State of Emergency’, Nicolas Visser argues that “*My Children! My Africa!* is a central cultural expression of resurgent liberalism.”¹⁴ According to Visser, the play is full of examples that prove Fugard’s commitment to liberal values, such as the debate and the dictionary, which are considered by the liberals as being the legitimate forms of politics.¹⁵ In addition, Visser assumes that Fugard does not only reinstate the liberal values but throughout the play he falsifies and distorts the Apartheid era.¹⁶ In his article, Visser introduces many examples of distortions in order to sustain his claim. The most important one is the political death of Mr. M. Visser argues that such an event is not given too much importance in the play. It is, instead, depicted as “an isolated incident.”¹⁷ Despite the gravity of Mr M’s death, such moment seems to be like the other instances. Fugard distorts the event by reducing its effect in the play. Besides, Mr. M’s death is discussed as a “typical outcome of South African resistance politics in general and school boycotts and other involvements of youth in politics in particular.”¹⁸ Visser argues that Fugard has presented the struggle otherwise. The latter interprets it from a liberal point of view; and it is here that Visser expresses his disappointment with Fugard. For him, instead of blaming the Whites, Fugard, blames the Blacks who are the victims of Apartheid. It is in this way that the play presents a distorted reality.¹⁹

My Children! My Africa! is not only a play that deals with racist issues. Among its important themes is the relationship between different characters, as that which binds the trio, Mr. M, Thami and Isabella together. It is in in this context that Joan O'Mara and Kathleen Long try to explain “how the theatre of Athol Fugard presents the universal themes of friendship, family, and the need for intimacy in a South African context.”²⁰ Both O'Mara and Long recognize the “restricted social interaction permitted between Whites and NonWhites”²¹ because of racism.²² Yet, the critics argue that despite the restrictions imposed by Apartheid, “persons of different races do manage to develop and thrive under such conditions...they develop quality friendships and interracial understanding.”²³

Thomas H. Arthur considers *My Children! My Africa!* to be “a cry of pain for Fugard’s people and country, his children, his Africa.”²⁴ The play portrays some South African characters living in a world where racism and segregation prevail. According to Arthur, the play reflects the Blacks’ anguish. It also projects the hostility in black South Africans’ minds. In the play, only white characters live in comfort. They are the only ones to benefit from such a system as well. The Blacks, on the other hand, are the victims. Besides, Arthur argues that *My Children! My Africa!* “asks how far a people can go in destroying the culture of an opposing ideology before they destroy all values, and ultimately themselves.”²⁵ The play also “questions how far a man can go in defending his life's work before he becomes a traitor, to himself as well as to other.”²⁶ Altogether, the play presents people with different ways of fighting Apartheid. Yet, despite their various attempts, Blacks remain victims.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

It is clear that both, *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) have been criticized from multiple angles. Yet, such criticism is achieved separately. To our simple knowledge, no previous work has undertaken this task. From the review of some of the

literature written on Fugard's suggested plays, it is important to note that though the plays have been approached from different perspectives, much of the critical reception addressed to them highlights the centrality of the themes of segregation, Othering, and racism without really exploring them. Therefore, it remains our concern to endeavor a study of these issues in depth.

Our task in this research paper is to highlight Fugard's stand as a committed playwright and to investigate the extent to which his works is drama of social protest. We suppose that the fact of being a white South African committed playwright was of the utmost difficulty to assume. We also suppose that in spite of his white background, Fugard devoted his production to the defence of the oppressed and the denunciation of Apartheid, at a time when other white South African playwrights celebrated it.

Both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) are works that reflect Fugard's standpoint towards Apartheid. This paper starts from the hypothesis that despite being White, Athol Fugard could have never accepted the injustice taking place in his country. After all, he is also a South African, sharing the same country with the oppressed Blacks. Therefore, he makes use of his theatre as a means to react against the atrocities, and to call for a new South Africa where freedom, respect and equality reign. Throughout our piece of research, we will explore both plays which establish Fugard in the canon of committed playwrights.

Our handling of two different plays written in two different decades, the seventies for the first and the eighties for the second, is not done haphazardly, but it is for the sake and purpose of proving that Fugard remained faithful to his beliefs and commitment. We also suppose that because of his intellectual upbringing and his major influences such as the committed figure Bertold Brecht, Fugard could not escape commitment in his theatre. As a

result, he experiences a new form of theatre in South Africa that makes use of new aesthetic forms to oppose Apartheid.

Endnotes:

¹ Thomas Leonard, 'The Political Experience of Ancient Greek Tragedy' (Master diss., Concordia University, 2011), 101.

² Betty Margaret Guy, 'Aristophanes to Fo: Conventions of Political Satire in Western Theatre' (Master diss., Queensland University of Technology, 2007), 101.

³ Thompson Peter and Sacks Glendyr, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 226.

⁴ David Kerr, *African Popular Theatre* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1995), 225.

⁵ Samuel Okoronkwo, 'Drama and the Rhythms of social reality: A Sociological Perspective on Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*', *Academic Research International* (2011): 23.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Richard Perk, 'Condemned to Choose, But What? Existentialism in Selected Works by Fugard, Brink, and Gordim', *Research in African Literatures* (1992): 67.

⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Rodwell Makombe, 'Crime and Survival in the Post-Colonial World/Text', *African Nebula* (2011): 1.

¹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Nicholas Visser, 'Drama and Politics in a State of Emergency: Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!*', *Twentieth Century Literature* (1993): 486.

¹⁵ Ibid., 489.

¹⁶ Ibid., 495.

¹⁷ Ibid., 498.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 500.

²⁰ Joan O'Mara and Kathleen Long, 'Toward Interracial Understanding: Relationships in Athol Fugard's "Master Harold...and the Boys" and "My Children! My Africa!"', *ERIC* (1994): 1.

²¹ Ibid., 7.

²² Ibid., 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Thomas H. Arthur, 'My Children! My Africa! by Athol Fugard', *Theatre Journal* (1990): 247.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

Method and Materials:

1) Methods:

To achieve the discussion of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) as committed plays, this paper will borrow different concepts as developed by different theoreticians, namely, Bertold Brecht's in *Brecht on Theatre* (1964), Homi Bhabha's in *The Location of Culture* (1994) and Ashcroft's et al. in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989).

From the German playwright and theoretician Bertold Brecht, we intend to borrow two notions as they are developed in his theory of the Epic theatre. But before discussing these notions, a definition of the Epic Theatre is required. Epic Theatre is a

form of didactic drama presenting a series of loosely connected scenes that avoid illusion and often interrupt the story line to address the audience directly with analysis, argument, or documentation.¹

After defining the Epic Theatre, we come to consider the notions that we are going to borrow for our discussion. The first one is "Realism." The latter as it is conceived by Brecht is not exactly as the literary stream that characterized most writings of the nineteenth century.

Brecht writes:

we shall take care not to ascribe realism to a particular historical form of novel belonging to a particular period Balzac's or Tolstoy's, for instance, so as to set up purely formal and literary criteria of realism [...] our conception of realism needs to be broad and political, free from aesthetic restrictions and independent of convention.²

Realism for Brecht is not conditioned by a fixed form, but by the social and political events that take place during the time in which the literary work is written. It becomes clear that such a notion of realism is more open to change. Brecht contends that reality changes and, in order to portray it the techniques have to change too.³ Once freed from the form, realistic works focus better on a faithful depiction of society. In his Epic Theory, Brecht argues in favor of realistic plays that are faithful in their depiction of society. He argues that, once in theatre, playwrights "have to show thing as they are."⁴ They must be faithful in the portrayals they

make. Brecht contends that theatre provides people with images of life, but only images that are compared with the real life.⁵

Most importantly, the notion of Realism is linked to what Brecht calls Popularity. Realistic works are those which deal with issues of the masses. Brecht writes: “Popular means intelligible to the broad masses, taking over their forms of expression and enriching them; adopting and consolidating their point of view.”⁶ Popular writings are those which are understood by the masses. They are works which side with them, supporting their arguments against the oppressive minority. In fact, the reason behind Brecht’s support for realism is more related to the function that the German playwright provides his plays with. According to Brecht, realism is a means that playwrights adopt in order to uncover the real intentions of oppressors. He writes:

The ruling strata are using lies more openly than before. Telling the truth seems increasingly urgent. The sufferings are greater and the number of sufferers has grown.⁷

Playwrights generally speak on behalf of the oppressed people. They tell truths in order to defend them. Brecht assumes that “it is in the interest of the people, the broad working masses, that literature should give them truthful representations of life.”⁸

The second concept is what Brecht calls Alienation” or *Verfremdungs Effect*. The latter is a key concept in his dramatic theory of the Epic Theatre. Brecht rejects the Aristotelian Catharsis and favors Alienation instead. Alienation can be defined as the fact “of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labeling them as something striking, something that calls for explanation.”⁹ This technique distances the spectator from the story and prevents him from identifying with the events. Moreover, the aim of Alienation “is to allow the spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view.”¹⁰ Once he is alienated from the events, the spectator is led to question and adopt a critical attitude towards what happened. Such criticism would bring about change in society. However, to achieve Alienation Brecht lists different dramatic devices:

Direct Narration:

The German playwright contends that, once on stage,

it is of course necessary to drop the assumption that there is a fourth wall cutting the audience off from the stage and the consequent illusion that the stage action is taken place in reality and without an audience. That being so, it is possible for the actor in principle to address the audience direct.¹¹

In order to avoid empathy, and in order to generate the Alienation effect, the actor interrupts the story and addresses directly the audience. In the epic plays, people are constantly reminded that what they are seeing on stage is not an illusion but a theatrical demonstration of reality.

Episodic structure:

Brecht rejects a linear plot and favors an episodic one, instead. According to him, scenes in a play should not be interrelated to each other, each one stands for itself.¹² The episodic structure's main aim is to prevent the audience from succumbing to emotions. It reminds them that what they see is no more than separate scenes of a play.

Interruption:

In the Epic plays, events are usually interrupted so as to prevent identification and reinforce the Alienation effect. "Interruption is one of the fundamental devices in producing astonishment rather empathy."¹³

Reason and Argument:

Reason and argument are two characteristics of epic plays.¹⁴ Throughout the play's events, the audience is supposed to make appeal to reason so as to analyze some arguments or juxtapositions that playwrights present on stage. Such a technique enables the spectator to think and criticize.

As far as Homi Bhabha is concerned, we intend to borrow two of his concepts, as they are introduced in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994). The first concept to be borrowed in the discussion is "Mimicry", which "describe[s] the ambivalent relationship between

colonizer and colonized.”¹⁵ In simple words, Mimicry is the attempt to reproduce subjects that would be similar to the colonizer. In fact, colonial mimicry is characterized by its ambivalence. It aims at producing “a reformed recognized Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite.”¹⁶ The colonizer tries to produce colonial subjects that are similar to him but not quite like him. The British Empire, for instance, produced native subjects that are Anglicized but not English.¹⁷

However, the ambivalence that characterizes mimicry is a threat for the colonial discourse. It is a threat because it produces “inappropriate objects that endure its tragic failure.”¹⁸ Such inappropriate objects are not in total conformity with the colonial discourse. And because they are different, they may present a threat for the colonizer. Bhabha writes: “the ambivalence of mimicry, almost but not quite, suggests that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal.”¹⁹ He adds: “mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.”²⁰ It is resemblance because the mimic man resembles his colonizer; but he is a threat because he is somehow different. And because of his difference, it is not easy to control him within the structure of the colonial discourse. Ashcroft summarizes this point in the following words:

The threat inherent in mimicry, then, comes not from an overt resistance but from the way in which it continually suggests an identity not quite like the colonizer.²¹

Mimic people are never innocent. They are not totally obedient while mimicking. “This is because mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics.”²² Within the colonial discourse, colonized people manage ways to resist oppression and dominance, through mocking the colonizer while they mimic him. According to Bhabha, “mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility, signs of spectacular resistance.”²³ Mimicry, in this case, is a form of indirect confrontation.

The last concept to be borrowed is Ashcroft’s et al. “Abrogation and Appropriation”. Language has always been a powerful tool adopted by the Centre, that is the ex-colonial

power, to marginalized colonial societies. However, an increased awareness arose among some of the colonized people such as Chinua Achebe who made use of the same language to counter-attack the Centre. Ashcroft writes:

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place.²⁴

According to Ashcroft, there are two different processes that writers should follow to achieve the writing back process. The first one is abrogation.

Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words.²⁵

The process of abrogation can be explained in the fact that colonized people deny the function which the Centre has attributed to the language, and the discourse it expresses. Thus, everything that includes the correct usage, the meaning of words and the aesthetics is automatically rejected. In this way, the English language is freed from any of the British constraints. Yet, unless it is followed by Appropriation, Abrogation remains a "reversal of the assumptions of privilege, the 'normal', and correct inscription."²⁶ In the *Empire writes Back*, Appropriation is defined as being

The process by which the language is taken and made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience, or, as Raja Rao puts it, to 'convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own.'²⁷

Appropriation is the fact of adopting a foreign language to reflect one's proper culture. In the case of the African countries, it is the fact of expressing the African culture, not in the local languages but in English. Hence, appropriation can be defined as the fact of giving English a new usage different from that of the Centre. In sum, postcolonial writings, according to Ashcroft, are characterized by this double dimension. English is first abrogated and then appropriated in order to serve the Africans' needs. Ashcroft argues:

This literature is therefore always written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the centre, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue.²⁸

2) Materials:

Biography of Athol Fugard:

In this research paper, the focus will be on Athol Fugard as a model white South African playwright who rejects Apartheid through theatrical and artistic forms. Fugard is a contemporary playwright, novelist and stage director. His plays are still having an enormous effect in nowadays Post-Apartheid South Africa and also in other parts of the world. Most importantly, Fugard's origins are of great significance in understanding his works. He was born in 1932 to an “Afrikaner” mother and a father of English descent. He is among the few white South Africans to be known for his denunciation of the Apartheid system. Throughout his career, he has written plays most of which are dominated by themes of violence and segregation. *The Island* (1973), *Master Harold and the Boy* (1982) and *The Road to Mecca* (1987) are only few examples. Fugard is a committed playwright who has disturbed the South African government many times. The consequence is best seen when his play *The Blood Knot* (1961) was banned and his passport cancelled for five years. Thus, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) are two plays that were written in two different periods; the former in 1972 and the latter in 1989. Both plays mirror the Apartheid period, yet in different manners.

a) Synopsis of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972):

Fugard’s “*Sizwe Banzi is Dead*” is a one act play set in Port Elizabeth, a typical Apartheid town in South Africa in the Apartheid era. It is devised in collaboration with two South African actors, namely John Kani and Winston Ntshona. The first scene starts with Styles narrating what occurred when Mr. Ford visited the factory where he works. Disappointed by the way Blacks are treated at work, Styles decides to quit the job and establish his own business to free himself from the white man’s control. Indeed, this is what

he does. After waiting a long time, Styles is given the permission by the white administration to set up his own photography studio.

Once in his studio, Styles tells the audience how he treats his clients and how his work functions. We learn that he meets another character Robert Zwelinzima, who is revealed later to be Sizwe Banzi. The latter comes to the shop in order to take a photograph that he needs for his new Pass Book. In fact, unlike South African Whites, Apartheid compelled the Blacks to have a Pass Book or what Styles calls a reference book in order to travel and look for work. Unfortunately, being a Black and having no permit to stay in Port Elizabeth, Sizwe is obliged to return back home.

Through a flashback, the scene shifts from Styles' studio to Buntu's house where Sizwe and Buntu meet for the first time. In fact, their meeting is prearranged by Sizwe's friend Zola. Buntu, however, could provide no solution except asking Sizwe to get back home. In the following scene, the two new friends discover a dead body and Buntu proposes a solution for his friend. He suggests that Sizwe changes his name and adopts the dead man's identity. At first, Sizwe refuses but, later, he accepts. He has no choice if he wants to survive in the racist environment of Port Elizabeth. The dead man's Pass Book is the only alternative for him to stay in Port Elizabeth. After that, events return back to Styles' studio and Sizwe takes the photograph.

b) Synopsis of *My Children! My Africa!* (1989):

My Children! My Africa! is a two-act play set in Zolile High School, which is located in Camdeboo, a small South African town, in the last decade of the Apartheid era. It opens with a debate, over traditions and modernity, between the black Thami and white Isabella, two students from two different types of schools. While Thami represents the Blacks' school, Isabella is the delegate of the Whites. In South Africa, at that time, race was the primary criterion for separating schools. Moreover, the debate ends with a vote and it is Isabella who

wins as she favors modernity. Unlike Isabella who asks the other students to accept to live with the Whites, Thami rejects the whole idea saying that Whites is a threat for the Blacks' culture and traditions.

About three weeks later, Isabel meets Mr M who asks her to participate with Thami in a regional competition. The award, then, would be divided between the two schools. At first, the team works hand in hand with Mr. M, but as time runs, the relationship between Thami and his teacher gets worse. It is in his monologue that Thami explains to the audience the reason behind his disagreement with Mr. M's.

In the first scene of the second act, Thami comes to confront his teacher and refuses to continue the game. He decides to join an outside mob which boycotts school and ask for an equal education as the one provided for the Whites. In the next scene, Mr M expresses his despair and wishes Thami had never left school. Later in the play, the teacher advises his student Thami to return back to school, but the latter does not listen to him. The black student reacts by participating with the others in the school destruction. He even accuses Mr. M of being a traitor since he declares the names of the boycotting boys to the police. In addition, Thami warns his teacher that he might be murdered if he continues in this way, but Mr. M does not listen to him. As a result, the black teacher is killed by the mob before the end of the play. Four weeks later, Thami meets Isabel and tells her that he has to flee to another country in fear of being arrested. The play closes with Isabel's monologue in which she shows her optimism for the future.

Endnotes:

¹ 'Epic Theatre: Dramatic Genre', last modified 09 March 2015, viewed 23 April 2015, <<http://www.britannica.com/art/epic-theatre>>

² Bertold Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 107-115.

³ Ibid., 110.

⁴ Bertold Brecht, 'Conversation with Brecht', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 14-17.

⁵ Brecht, *Popular and Realistic*, 112.

⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁷ Ibid., 107.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bertold Brecht, 'The Street Scene', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 121-130.

¹⁰ Ibid., 125.

¹¹ Bertold Brecht, 'Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Provides an Alienation Effect', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 136-148.

¹² Bertold Brecht, 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 33-42.

¹³ Nadia Gada, 'Kenyan and Algerian Literary Connections: N'Gugi Wa Thiong'O and Kateb Yacine', (Magister diss., M'hamed Bougara University, 2006), 127.

¹⁴ Brecht, *Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre*, 37.

¹⁵ Bhabha K. Homi, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), 139.

¹⁶ Ibid., 86.

¹⁷ Ibid., 87.

¹⁸ Ibid., 86.

¹⁹ Ibid., 90.

²⁰ Ibid., 86.

²¹ Ashcroft, et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 141

²² Ibid., 139.

²³ Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 121.

²⁴ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989), 37

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 38.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Results:

Throughout our dissertation, we tried to discuss social protest in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* We relied on some theoretical concepts as developed by theoreticians like Bertold Brecht, Homi Bhabha and Bill Ashcroft et al. The selection of those concepts is achieved according to what suits best the analysis. Most importantly, the study assumes that Fugard uses his art to denounce the Apartheid policies that were prevalent in South Africa during the second half of the twentieth century.

After analyzing both plays, we have come to the conclusion that before attacking the Whites, Fugard makes a faithful depiction of the oppressive environment in which his characters live. To depict this historical reality, Fugard has made use of a set of characters and settings that are typical of the Apartheid era. Characters in Fugard's plays are portrayed as being the victims of the Apartheid system. Fugard has also made use of symbolic and real settings in order to emphasize the seriousness of the Blacks' predicament. In exploring the issue of segregation, we have also come to the conclusion that it is not possible for Fugard to avoid developing themes like discrimination, poverty and violence. Such themes reflect the oppression that most Blacks suffered from in the Apartheid era.

After discussing these hurtful truths, we turn our attention into issues that prove Fugard commitment. In fact, after our analysis we have come to the conclusion that Fugard remains faithful to the Brecht's theatrical conventions. He borrows some techniques that Brecht introduces in his epic theatre in order to make the audience think and criticize. Moreover, his commitment is also apparent through the characters and their cunning reaction towards Apartheid. The last element that we come to consider is the use of language. The analysis has revealed that Fugard borrows English and uses it against the Whites. It is a means for him to defend the oppressed Blacks.

Our study of protest in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* has enabled us to attain the following results. Fugard expresses his disappointment with Apartheid policies through the realistic portrayal that he provides in his plays. For this end, he chooses characters, settings and themes which are typical of Apartheid South Africa. However, protest in his plays is not only limited to a realistic portrayal. It is more manifested through the use of some epic techniques which alienate his audience and reinforce the conception of commitment in his plays. Fugard also expresses his commitment through his cunning characters and appropriated English. It is in this way that the white South African playwright uses theatre as a tool to protest against Apartheid.

After what has been mentioned above, it is clear that the discussion of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* is possible. The plays have a lot in common and the theoretical concepts that we have selected are very applicable.

Discussion:

In this section of our dissertation, we will discuss Athol Fugard's commitment to the denunciation of Apartheid. In fact, social protest in both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* will be highlighted through two chapters. In the first chapter, we are going to explore the issue of segregation as it is presented in Fugard's plays. We will discuss the characters and the settings. Our aim, of course, is to show how Fugard makes use of these elements to depict this historical social reality. We shall also discuss three main themes to show how black characters in both plays are marginalized and put in an inferior position by their white country men. We shall use Brecht's concept of "Realism" to discuss all these points. In the second chapter, we will discuss Fugard's political commitment as it is achieved through the alienation of the audience, characters and language. As far as the theoretical framework is concerned in this chapter, we intend to borrow Brecht's notion of "Alienation", Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" and Ashcroft's et al. concept of "Appropriation and Abrogation" to argue on what is being said.

Chapter one: Translating Segregation in Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!*

This chapter intends to study the two plays in terms of characters, settings and themes. First, we will try to argue that Fugard's choice of characters and setting is never done haphazardly. Instead, the South African playwright makes use of a set of characters and two symbolical settings, typical of the Apartheid era. As for the themes, we intend to discuss the themes of violence, poverty as well as discrimination. Such themes are going to be developed in the light of the characters that Fugard makes use of in his plays. Therefore, by studying the settings, the themes and the characters we hope that we will provide the reader with a better understanding of how Fugard develops the issue of segregation in both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!*

To begin with, in 1910, South Africans established the Union of South Africa and achieved self-governance. But during the years to come, white descendants, known as Afrikaners, had tried to take the lead over the country's affairs and keep the natives in an inferior position. Indeed, in 1948, the Afrikaners won the parliamentary election and, consequently, established Apartheid as the official policy of the country. Originally, Apartheid is "an Afrikaans term meaning separation."¹ It came into use during the 1930's. As a policy, it states that Whites are to live at the top of the social ladder in contrast to the colored people, in general, and the Blacks, in particular, who are considered as second class citizens. Because of Apartheid, Blacks lived in segregated neighborhoods and their children studied in segregated schools. They received worst healthcare and had fewer chances to find suitable jobs. In sum, poverty and misery dominated their lives.

a- Typical Characters and Setting:

In order to portray the misery that South Africans experienced in the Apartheid era, Fugard makes use of a specific set of characters. Such characters stand as spokesmen on behalf of the South African black community. Characters in Fugard's plays are given much importance since they echo the voice of black populations in South Africa. However, despite the heavy role that he provides his characters with, Fugard uses a limited number of characters in his plays. An important characteristic of his theatre is the use of a minimum cast. Fugard is not one of those playwrights who use stock characters to build up his plays. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, there are three main figures, Styles, Sizwe and Buntu whose names are of great symbolical value. In *My Children! My Africa!* it is exactly the same number of actors that are present on stage. There is the teacher, Mr M and his two students Thami and Isabel. Consequently, the two plays are equal in terms of the number of characters.

Starting with *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, Sizwe, the protagonist, is illiterate. He can neither read nor write. When Buntu asks him if he reads newspapers, Sizwe answers saying: "I can't

read.”² Because of his illiteracy, Banzi meets many difficulties throughout the play. For instance, when he meets Buntu, Sizwe “tells his story with hesitation and uncertainty of the illiterate. When words fail him he tries to use his hands.”³ Another example is when he tells Buntu his new Pass Book’s number. Sizwe is “pausing frequently using his hands to remember.”⁴ Moreover, Sizwe finds himself in a peril after being discovered by the agents. He does not know what to do. It is Buntu who helps him by providing him shelter and food since he has neither a job nor a residence. These are examples provided by Fugard to reflect the difficulties that uneducated Blacks find to integrate in society. Through characters like Sizwe, Fugard portrays the Blacks as victims in society.

Turning to *My Children! My Africa!* Fugard makes use of two important characters, Mr M and Thami, to depict a historical reality, that of the Apartheid policies towards education of the Blacks in South Africa. In the play, both characters stand for South Africans who have been victimized by the Bantu education. While Thami represents those students who boycotted school in South Africa during the eighties, Mr. M represents all those teachers who were marginalized by such an inferior education.

Mr. M is the most important character in *My Children! My Africa!* His complete name, Anela Myalata, is not a fictional name. It is the name of the real teacher who was murdered by a black mob in South Africa when schools were boycotted. Mr M is portrayed as a peaceful individual. He is a man who devotes his life for the sake of knowledge. Despite being Black, he does not react to Apartheid in the same way Thami does. In short, Mr. M is a man with universal values. He is not only a citizen of South Africa but a citizen of the world. Fugard’s choice of his name is symbolical of the humanity of his character. Mr. M’s name is reduced to the letter “M” which may be symbolic of “Man” with a capital letter. The message may be that Mr. M’s struggle is the one of humanity, not only that of South Africans. As humans, people must seek for peace whatever the circumstances are.

Moreover, the end of the play reveals both Mr. M and Thami to be victims of a larger system which is Apartheid. Mr. M is killed by the boycotting mob because of opposing their ideas. Thami, in his turn, flees to another country in order to escape prison. It is through victimizing them that Fugard shows the negative aspects that Apartheid has on the black community. Mr. M and Thami are representatives of the segregated Blacks in South Africa. Because of Apartheid none of them succeeds in his life.

Brecht argues: “the folk appears with its immutable characteristics, its time honored traditions [...] customs and habits, its religiosity, its hereditary enemies [...] and all the rest.”⁵ In his plays, Fugard uses a set of characters representative of African black people. Such characters are inspired from real South Africans. Fugard uses them as prototypes to refer to different victimized social classes. While Thami is young, Sizwe and Mr. M are of middle age; and while Sizwe is illiterate, Thami and Mr. M are intellectuals. The message that Fugard wants to convey through these characters is that, educated or illiterate, young or old, Blacks in South Africa are subject to racism.

The next element that is going to be discussed in this section is the setting. In Fugard’s *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, the setting is not fictional but real. Events are set in Port Elizabeth, more precisely in New Brighton. In fact, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* is not the only play in which Fugard makes use of Port Elizabeth as a setting. Fugard has other plays that share the same setting, known as ‘Port Elizabeth plays’. “The setting for these [...] Port Elizabeth plays are deeply rooted in the apartheid era.”⁶ Port Elizabeth is known to be as one of the oldest cities in South Africa. It is inhabited mostly by Whites. As a consequence, the Blacks in this town live under daily segregation and oppression. Whites do their best to keep them away from reaching their town. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, for instance, Sizwe is not granted a permit to stay in New Brighton. He is seen as a stranger who should return to his hometown. White authorities justify that this measure falls within the ambit of “Influx Control.”⁷ Most importantly, Port

Elizabeth in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* is representative of the Apartheid areas where segregation is stringent.

The setting in *My Children! My Africa* is the Zolile High school for black students. The school is located in Camdeboo, a small South African town. Nevertheless, only the last scene of the play, when Thami meets Isabel, takes place in an anonymous place. Fugard's choice of a school as a setting for his play is not a result of coincidence; it is done for a symbolical purpose. The setting reveals the white government's intention to dominate the minds of the Blacks through education. It is a new form of colonization achieved through colonizing the Blacks' minds instead of their bodies or their lands. In criticizing the Zolile education Thami says: "we know now what they really are - traps which have been carefully set to catch our minds, our souls."⁸ As all other South African black schools in the Apartheid era, the Zolile High school is instructed by the authorities to adapt "The Bantu Education", an educational system different and inferior to the one destined for the Whites.

So far, Fugard makes use of both symbolical setting and characters who reflect the South African society in the Apartheid era. On Fugard's dramaturgy, Oluwasuji Olutoba Gboyega argues:

The settings of his plays are, specifically, South African and his characters are aligned with several classes in the margins of the society in South Africa in such a manner that the audience encounters the poor Afrikaner, the maltreated coloured wife, the rejects, the underdog, the dispossessed and disinherited etcetera.⁹

Indeed, all of Fugard's plays are set in one way or another in South Africa. Maybe it is because of this fact that many critics consider Fugard to be a local playwright. As far as the characters are concerned, we find all categories of characters in his plays. Thus, his plays are popular plays. It is true that Fugard is white but his plays deal with the problems that most black South Africans suffer from. He tackles issues that he, himself, has never experienced and has never suffered from. Brecht assumes that "the writer is supposed to write for a people without living among it."¹⁰

Brecht argues that theatre should be a faithful depiction of reality, describing society as it is. It must deal with real events that the majority of people experience every day. Brecht states that playwrights “have to show things as they are.”¹¹ In both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* Fugard explores social and historical facts prevailing in the Apartheid era. He remains faithful to the depiction of the South African society. Brecht adds that theatre provides people with images of life, but only images that are compared with the real life.¹² Indeed, Fugard provides the audience with concrete images that are stemmed from the South African black community. All in all, Fugard’s plays are inspired by the segregated situation prevailing in South Africa. As a result, both plays are faithful accounts of South Africa. Through reading the plays one can have a better idea on what occurred in South Africa at that specific period in history. However, a clearer insight into this period will come to view in the next section in which we are going to discuss the themes.

b- Themes:

Brecht writes: “compared with the vast sufferings of the masses it seems trivial and even despicable to worry about petty difficulties and difficulties of petty groups.”¹³ In his plays, Fugard does not bother himself with the whites’ problems. His plays are rather centered on the Blacks, who form the majority, and their daily life sufferings. The development of themes like discrimination, poverty and violence illustrate better this idea.

- **Discrimination:**

One of the dominating themes in both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* is discrimination. Blacks in these plays are discriminated and put on the margin of society. In this part of the discussion, we shall discuss the theme of discrimination as it reaches different social spheres like work, administration and education. This is to show that, in the Apartheid era, “the policy of segregation extended to every aspect of society, with separate sections in public transport, public seats, beaches, and many other facilities.”¹⁴

At work, Blacks are not considered as human beings but as slaves. They are exploited in a very inhuman way. Whites make them work long hours for meager wages. The worst of it, Blacks have to work in very bad conditions with no protection. When they are hurt, they fall desperately as victims. In describing his old work, Styles says: “dangerous work that. Big machines! One mistake and you are in trouble.”¹⁵

Moreover, the Whites’ hypocrisy is apparent when Mr Ford, the general owner, visits the factory. In the following lines, Styles refers ironically to the way their boss treats them on the day of Mr. Ford’s visit:

Tell all the boys they must now go to the bathroom and wash themselves clean. We needed it! into the bathroom, under the showers...hot water, soap...on a Thursday! Before ten? Yo! What’s happening in the plant? The other chaps asked me: “what’s going on, Styles? I told them: Big-shot cunt from America coming to visit you. When we finished washing they gave us towels...(laugh). Three hundred of us, man! We were so clean we felt shy! Standing there like the ladies in the front of the mirror.”¹⁶

He adds:

New overall comes, wrapped in plastic. Brand new, man! ... Then, next door to the tool room...brand new tool bag, set of spanners, shifting spanner, torque wrench – all of them brand new – and because I worked in the dangerous hot test section I was also given a new asbestos apron and fire – proof gloves to replace the ones I had lost about a year ago. I’m telling you I walked back heavy to my spot. Armstrong on the moon!¹⁷

Here, Styles uses irony and satire in order to criticize the whites and their unfair treatment towards the black workers in the factory.

Yet, at the end of the day the workers have worked more than they did before. Styles says: “double speed on the line! Make up for production lost! It ended up with us working harder that bloody day than ever before.”¹⁸ It means that, Blacks could not escape a reality which states that once they are at work, they must toil until they are exhausted. On this exploitation, Styles comments:

I took a good look at myself. What did I see? A bloody circus monkey! Selling most of his time on this earth to another man. Out of every twenty four hours I could only properly call mine the six when I was sleeping.¹⁹

Such a comment is a direct criticism of the capitalist system. In the play, Blacks are not only victims of Apartheid but they are victims of a larger corrupted system that is Capitalism.

Because of discrimination practices, Blacks are excluded from nearly all economic opportunities. Whites see themselves as being superior, so all good jobs are reserved for their small community. Blacks, on the other hand, are excluded from sharing the profits South Africa makes. They have few chances to get good and well-paid jobs because of their race. As a result, only dangerous and poor jobs are left for them. Moreover, after finding no solution for Sizwe's problem, Buntu proposes for his friend to look for a work in mines, which are the only sites where Blacks can find a job easily. Since working there is extremely dangerous, Whites prefer to leave such jobs for the second class Blacks. Sizwe refuses Buntu's offer. He argues:

I don't want to work in mines. There is no money there. And it's dangerous, under the ground. Many black men get killed when the rocks fall. You can die there.²⁰

Most important of all, one major discriminatory issue in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* is the Pass Book. In fact, The Pass Book can be defined as being that administrative measure which is created by the white man to keep his fellow Black in control all the time. Such a measure is also intended to reduce the black identity and comprise it in a small Reference Book. On this issue, Fugard writes:

When the white man looked at you at the labour Bureau what did he see? A man with dignity or a bloody passbook with an N.I number? Isn't that a Ghost when the white man sees you walk down the street and calls out, 'Hey, John! Come here'... to you, Sizwe Banzi... isn't that a ghost.²¹

Buntu tries to convince Sizwe that the Pass Book is a tool used by the Whites to dehumanize the Blacks. The latter are not considered in the same way as white citizens. They are like ghosts whose identity is reduced to an I.D number.

In the case of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, The Pass Book is the main obstacle for Sizwe to remain in Port Elizabeth. Having no permit on his Pass Book that allows him to stay in Port Elizabeth Sizwe has no choice but to hide in his friend's house Zola. After being discovered by the government agents, he describes in detail how he is taken brutally from one office to another. Sizwe says:

They drove straight to the administration office... and then from there they drove to the Labour Bureau. I was made to stand in the passage there, with everybody looking at me and shaking their heads like they knew I was in big trouble. Later, I was taken into an office and made to stand next to the door.²²

Sizwe is given back his Pass Book with a stamp on it and a Pink Card. This is the administrative procedure adapted by white agents when a Black is found without a valid permit to stay in a certain place. After humiliating him, Sizwe is provided with a deadline of three days to go back to his town. All this make his presence in Port Elizabeth illegal. But Sizwe is stubborn. Under his friend's advice, he joins Buntu for help.

However, despite being born in Port Elizabeth, Buntu has had problems as Sizwe. Buntu expresses his anguish in the following words:

If I had to tell you the trouble I had before I could get the right stamps in my book, even though I was born in this area! The trouble I had before I could get a decent job...born in this area...the problem I had to get this two-roomed house... born in this area.²³

From these words, one can easily come to the conclusion that segregation in South Africa concerns all the Blacks. The fact of being born in a town like Port Elizabeth does not spare Blacks the repercussions of segregation. The conclusion is this, every black citizen in South Africa is subject to the Apartheid discriminatory practices.

Another problem that Blacks in South Africa and even in other African countries suffer from is bureaucracy. Generally speaking, colored people meet many difficulties when it comes to civil or legal documents. White officials do not treat Blacks seriously. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, both Styles and Sizwe face this reality. After leaving the factory, Styles decides to start his own business. But before he opens his photographic studio, he must first get the permission from the Administration Office. Of course, since he is Black, Styles has to wait longer than Whites do. Indeed, it is only after more than two months that he is granted the permission. In the following lines, Styles explains his long wait and despair. He says:

I applied for permission to use the room as a studio. After some time the first letter back: 'your application has been received and is being considered'. A month later: 'the

matter is receiving the serious consideration of the board'. Another month: 'your application is now on the director's table.' I nearly gave up, friends.²⁴

However, Sizwe's case is even worse than the one of Styles. In order to get a Residence Permit that would allow Sizwe to stay in Port Elizabeth, Buntu explains the whole procedure that his friend should follow. He argues:

You talk to the white man, you see, and ask him to write a letter saying that he's got a job for you. You take that letter from the white man and go back to King William's Town, where you show it to the Native Commissioner there. The Native Commissioner in King William's Town reads that letter from the white man in Port Elizabeth who is ready to give you the job. He then writes a letter back to the Native Commissioner in Port Elizabeth. So you come back to the Native Commissioner in Port Elizabeth. So you come back here with the two letters. Then the Native Commissioner in Port Elizabeth reads the letter from The Native Commissioner in King William's Town together with the first letter from the white man who is prepared to give you a job, and he says when he reads the letters: Ah, yes, this man Sizwe Banzi can get a job.²⁵

All what Buntu says summarizes only half of the procedure. The other half is as follows:

So, the Native Commissioner in Port Elizabeth then writes a letter which you take with the letters from The Native Commissioner in King William's Town and the white man in Port Elizabeth, to the Senior Officer at the Labour Bureau, who reads all the letters. Then, he will put the right stamp in your book and give you another letter from himself which together with the letters from the white man and the two Native Affairs Commissioners, you take to the Administration Office here in New Brighton and make an application for Residence Permit, so that you don't fall victim of raids again.²⁶

Sizwe must follow all these steps in order to get a Residence Permit. Of course, this is not fair for a citizen to go through all these administration troubles in order to get only a Residence Permit. Sizwe, as all the Blacks in South Africa in the Apartheid era, is not treated as a native of the country. He is a stranger in his homeland.

Throughout history, oppressors have always adopted unfair techniques in order to dominate their subjects. Brecht states: "we shall remind ourselves that powerful institutions have long prevented this folk from developing fully [...] without background or development."²⁷ In South Africa, education is one means among many that the oppressive whites use to segregate the oppressed Blacks and prevent them from getting out of their backwardness. Thus, the last field where discrimination is apparent in the selected plays is

education. This issue is better developed in *My Children! My Africa!* The Zolile High School where Mr. M teaches is a black school. It is in this way that Fugard introduces a historical reality in this play. There were two types of schools in the Apartheid era; those of the Whites and those of the Blacks. One can easily deduce that race was the measure that the white Apartheid government adopted to separate schools. As a matter of fact, the education provided in white schools was better than the one provided in the black ones.

Moreover, the type of educational programs that the state provides for the Blacks is very inferior. It is known under the name of “the Bantu Education”. The latter is intended to limit the Black’s level and intellectual skills. This idea is well illustrated in Thami’s words: “they have been forcing on us this inferior education in order to keep us permanently suppressed.”²⁸ Mr. M and Thami are trapped in such an inferior program of education. Both characters are aware of this fact, and they both reject the Apartheid’s policies. The following words uttered by Mr. M are very significant, “learning undigested by thought is labour lost, thought unassisted by learning is perilous!”²⁹ It means that education and thinking cannot be separated from one another. And in the case of the Buntu Education, learning is not assisted by thinking. Blacks are not free to learn. They are dictated what to learn and what to ignore.

Nevertheless, the way Mr. M and Thami react to the unjust education is not the same. Unlike Thami, Mr. M prefers freedom and thought instead of violence. He says: “I believe that, using only words, a man can right a wrong and judge and execute the wrongdoer.”³⁰ As a matter of fact, their disagreement stands for a reality that imposes itself at the end of the Apartheid era. At that time, Blacks faced a paradox in the way they should react to the Apartheid unjust policies. Unable to reach a compromise, they were divided into two groups. Some of them chose violence and direct confrontation; this group is represented by Thami in the play; and those who went through a peaceful struggle, represented by Mr. M.

- **Poverty:**

One of the major consequences of being discriminated is poverty. South Africa is a rich country in terms of natural resources. However, the wealth of the nation is not shared equally, which is due to the policies of Apartheid. While the White minority lives in comfort, Blacks live in poverty. Brecht writes: “a peculiar unity is conjured up of tormentor and tormented, exploiter and exploited, liar and victim.”³¹ Moreover, the following words reflect best the Blacks’ misery:

One of the direct consequences of the exploitation of Apartheid System in South Africa is the sheer impoverishment of the blacks. The Blackman was plunged into a complete state of lack, materially and spiritually, besides political. Practically, the black in South Africa owns nothing, even himself, since his life has been turned into that of servitude. He could not even afford to clothe himself by buying from the shops – a luxury, which is far beyond him, but forced to go to the sales house – which rather conjures up a sense of a place where rejected items are stored and consequently sold at cheap rates.³²

Samuel Okoronkwo writes down these words to describe the financial circumstances in which most Blacks lived in the Apartheid era. As the critic assumes, the main cause of poverty is the Apartheid system. It is the marginalization of the Blacks that causes their cultural and economic poverty. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, poverty reigns over Fugard’s characters. Except for Styles, who becomes better off with his new business, Sizwe and Buntu are poor characters.

Sizwe is a black South African citizen who left his family, a wife and four children, in King William’s town to look for a job. His presence in Port Elizabeth is mainly financial. He goes there in order to look for a job and improve his social status. Sizwe is obliged to work in order to feed his family. In the letter that he writes for his wife, he says: “spend the money I am sending you carefully. If all goes well I will send some more each week.”³³ These words reflect the difficulty that Sizwe meets in supplying his family. His wife should be careful in the way she spends what he is sending to her. Due to poverty, Blacks, unlike Whites, are not

allowed to spent money on futile things. Instead, they should keep it only for necessary expenses.

The fact of leaving one's family and hometown in order to look for a job elsewhere is only reflective of the difficult economic circumstances in which black South Africans live. In fact, Sizwe is only one example that Fugard makes use of in his play to refer to a whole social class which lives in poverty. Sizwe's low social status can be noticed from the way he is described on stage. His clothes and his physical posture are the best means that Fugard introduces on stage to portray Sizwe's. Once in Styles' studio, Sizwe

Walks nervously into the studio. Dressed in an ill-fitting new double-breasted suit. He is carrying a bag with a hat in it. His manner is hesitant and shy.³⁴

The way he is dressed and the way he walks are hints for the reader or the audience to deduce Sizwe's social and financial position in society.

In *My Children! My Africa!* both Mr. M and Thami belong to the low social class. Being Black in South Africa makes it hard to improve one's financial situation. Despite working as a teacher all his life, Mr. M is still unable to secure a better life. In describing the place where he lives, Mr. M says:

The little matchbox you put in your pocket is my room at the reverend Mbopa's. But I'm not complaining. It has got all I need – a table and a chair where I correct homework and prepare lessons, a comfortable bed for a good night's insomnia and a reserved space for my chair in front of the television-set in the Reverend Mpoba's lounge.³⁵

It is probably due to this financial lack that Mr. M decides to remain a bachelor. As everybody knows, marriage means more money spending. Similarly, Thami's case is not different from that of his teacher. Thami's mother is a domestic servant, and his father works for the railways company. Thami declares: "my father is Amos Mbikwana and he works very hard for the baas on the railway."³⁶ Thus, we can deduce the poverty that Thami and his family suffer from.

At the end of the first act of the play, Thami utters an important monologue where, for the first time, he expresses his inner struggle. He accuses the white men's policies for the impoverishment of the Blacks. He rejects their claims that they seek to build a better future for all South Africans. Thami is desperate when he sees those who once in the past had dreamed of having a brighter future but now are living in misery and poverty. He describes them in tragic terms. He says:

I see a generation of tired, defeated men and women crawling back to their miserable little pondoks at the end of a day's work for the white baas or Madame. And those are lucky one. They've at least got a work. Most of them are just sitting around wasting away their lives while they wait helplessly for a miracle to feed their families, a miracle that never comes. We have grown up watching their humiliation. We have to live every day with the sight of them begging for food in this land of their birth, and their parent's birth.³⁷

Isabel, instead, is the only white character in the play. Unlike her black friends, she is well off, coming from a middle class family. Her father owns a pharmacy in the town. Like most of middle class people, she likes to play hockey in free time. The fact of having a maid at home reflects the financial easiness in which Isabel's family lives. When Thami asks Isabel about what she has eaten in the morning, Isabel answers:

Auntie, our maid, put down in front of me a plate of steaming, delicious jungle which I sprinkled a crust of golden brown sufar, and while that was melting on top I added a little moat of chilled milk all around the side. That was followed by brown-bread toast, quince jam and lots and lots of tea.³⁸

Her morning breakfast reveals the social status of her family. Because of poverty, Blacks could have never been able to afford such a food in the Apartheid era. Nevertheless, in addition to being discriminated and impoverished, Blacks in South Africa are also exposed to violence.

- **Violence:**

The last theme that we are going to discuss is the theme of violence. It is important to say that the violence that Fugard portrays in his plays is not acted only by the white man. It is, instead, as we are going to see, acted by both Blacks and Whites. Yet, in one way or another,

the white man remains responsible for such brutality. Violence in South Africa is the whether the result of the Blacks' reaction towards the Apartheid policies or the consequence of poverty.

Whites have no respect towards the Blacks. This is clearly seen when Sizwe is taken by force from his friend's house. The government agents enter violently and take Sizwe without giving him a chance even to dress up. Sizwe defines this act as being a raid. He says:

Yes, it was a raid. I was just wearing my pants. My shirt was lying on the other side. Just managed to grab it as they were pushing me out.... I finished dressing in the van.³⁹

Similarly, the white government in *My Children! My Africa!* acts violently towards the boycotting boys. After the black boys leave school, government agents have not tried to settle down discussion with them. Instead, the police give them no choice but to return back to school. However, after the burning of the school and the death of Mr. M the police arrest nearly all the boys who are implicated in this affair. In his last meeting with Isabel, Thami says that the police men are arresting all the boys who boycotted school. He says: "some of my friends have already been detained. They're pulling in anybody they can get their hands on."⁴⁰

Everywhere in the world, where there is poverty there are always crimes. When a man is hungry, he can rob and kill in order to survive. In fact, this is what happens in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. In this play, Fugard gives us a faithful description of Port Elizabeth's streets at night. Sizwe and Buntu get out of the bar; they find the dead man who is revealed later to be Robert Zwilinzima. Fugard includes this event in his play to point out to the insecurity that reigns in Port Elizabeth, especially at night. The following conversation explains briefly how New Brighton is described at night:

Buntu: When I looked carefully I saw it was a man. Dead. Covered in blood. Tsotis must have got him. Let's get the hell out of here before anybody can see us.

Man: Buntu... Buntu...

Buntu: listen to me, Sizwe! The tsotis might still be around

Man: Buntu...

Buntu: Do you want to join him
Man: I don't want to join him
Buntu: Then come.⁴¹

From the above conversation, one can deduce that South African towns are not secure at night. Because of such a curfew, the street is empty at night. For security measures, people prefer to stay home. In fact, what terrify the black people at night are the criminal gangs that commit crimes most of the time. In the play, for instance, Buntu assumes that it is the “Tsotsies” who have probably killed Zwelinzima. In the Apartheid era, the Tsoties were gangs of young black men who live in urban areas and who participate in criminal activities. Such groups come as a result of the misery and poverty that dominate the urban areas.

In *My Children! My Africa!* the relation between Whites and Blacks is dominated by tension and hate. Each ethnic group lives separately because of Apartheid. This fact generates a kind of insecurity between the two groups. For example, before moving to the Zolile High School, Miss Brockway, the school principal, calls the police to accompany Isabel and to make sure Blacks do not hurt her. In the following words, Isabel describes the insecurity and fear that characterize the Blacks' and Whites' relationships:

She [Miss Brockway] also said she had checked with the police and it would be alright provided we were driven straight to the school and then straight out afterwards. There has been a bit of trouble in the location again and people are starting to get nervous about it.⁴²

In the play, violence is a means for the black school boys to express their rejection of the Buntu Education, in particular, and the whole Apartheid system, in general. The school boycott is followed by violent events between the police and the boycotters. The following words are uttered by Mr. M depict the tension and the clash between the Whites and the Blacks. Mr. M says:

A police car came around the corner and suddenly there were children everywhere throwing stones and tear gas bombs falling all around and I knew that I wasn't dreaming, that I was coughing and choking and hanging on to a lamp-post in the real world.⁴³

In fact, what happens in the school is only a mirror of the violence that occurred in South Africa in the mid-eighties. Instead of protesting peacefully, as Mr. M suggests, Blacks went through violent demonstrations. The best example is Thami who rejects his teacher's ideas and joins the mob. He thinks that a peaceful fight will bring nothing. It is only through war and violence that Blacks can get their rights. Thami argues: "we have woken up at last. We have found another school...the streets, the little room, the funeral parlors and the location."⁴⁴ In fact, Thami's words are similar to Nelson Mandela's words as they are expressed in his *Long Walk for Freedom*. Mandela writes:

As I condemned the government for its ruthlessness and lawlessness, I stepped across the line: I said that the time for passive resistance had ended, that nonviolence was a useless strategy and could never overturn a white minority regime bent on retaining its power at any cost. At the end of the day, I said, violence was the only weapon that would destroy apartheid and we must be prepared, in the near future, to use that weapon.⁴⁵

In this passage, Mandela like Thami, speaks about radicalization in the protest. He expresses his change of attitude after realizing that a peaceful fight as Mr. M suggests is not able to achieve the Blacks rights. Instead, Mandela turns his attention to the use of violence as a means to bring change.

The discussion of themes like discrimination, poverty and violence reveals Fugard to be a playwright who writes realistic plays which tackle issues that the majority of Blacks witness every day. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* Blacks, who consist of the majority are impoverished, discriminated and violated. Through such portrayal Fugard's plays become, as Brecht assumes, "intelligible to the broad masses, taking over their forms of expression and enriching them; adopting and consolidating their point of view."⁴⁶ Due to the issues they tackle, they are understood by the majority of South African Blacks. As Brecht assumes, "the gap between the writer and the people has not grown so wide as might be thought."⁴⁷ *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* are works which side with

the Blacks and support their arguments against the oppressive white minority. They are works that speak from the Blacks' point of view.

In South Africa, Whites represent the oppressive minority. In Brecht's terms; whites in South Africa "are using lies more openly than before."⁴⁸ Hence, "telling the truth seems increasingly urgent. The sufferings are greater and the number of sufferers has grown."⁴⁹ It is this task that Fugard undertakes in his plays. The South African playwright reveals how Blacks are treated in South Africa. In the case of *My Children! My Africa!* and *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, black characters are marginalized in society. Because of the difference of their culture, history and color of skin, Whites consider them to be different and inferior.

Blacks in South Africa suffer from segregation which apartheid laws impose on them. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, Sizwe is asked to go back to his town. He is not allowed to remain in Port Elizabeth. This is because he is Black. Being so, he should have a permit in his Pass Book that would allow him to remain there. In *My Children! My Africa!* Thami and the other Blacks are provided with the Bantu education, which is inferior in comparison to the one provided for the Whites. Thus, both Sizwe and Thami are put on the margin of society. In fact, the white man has made use of Apartheid to justify Apartheid practices. It is in this way that Fugard uncovers the Whites intentions to segregate the Blacks and keep them in an inferior position. Unlike other White South African playwrights, Fugard could not accept what was happening in South Africa. He sympathizes with the blacks. "It is natural to turn to them, more necessary than ever to speak their language."⁵⁰

Endnotes:

¹ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998), 17.

² Athol Fugard, 'Sizwe Banzi is Dead', in *Athol Fugard: Township Plays*, ed. Dennis Walder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 172.

³ Ibid., 170.

⁴ Ibid., 188.

⁵ Bertold Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 107-115.

⁶ Oluwasuji Olutoba Gboyega, 'A Comparison of Video Interpretations of Athol Fugard and the Printed Text', (Master diss., University of South Africa, 2012), 71.

⁷ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 171.

⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁹ Gboyega, 'Comparison of Video and the Printed Text', 31.

¹⁰ Brecht, *The Popular and the Realistic*, 107.

¹¹ Bertold Brecht, 'Conversation with Brecht', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 14-17.

¹² Ashcroft, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 18.

¹³ Brecht, *The Popular and the Realistic*, 107.

¹⁴ Ashcroft, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 18.

¹⁵ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 151.

¹⁶ Ibid., 152.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 155.

¹⁹ Ibid., 156.

²⁰ Ibid., 174.

²¹ Ibid., 185.

²² Ibid., 170-171.

²³ Ibid., 174.

²⁴ Ibid., 157.

²⁵ Ibid., 172-173.

- ²⁶ Ibid., 173.
- ²⁷ Brecht, *The Popular and the Realistic*, 108.
- ²⁸ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 50.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 22.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 51.
- ³¹ Brecht, *The Popular and the Realistic*, 108.
- ³² Samuel Okoronkwo, 'Drama and the Rhythms of social reality: A Sociological Perspective on Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*', *Academic Research International* (2011): 22.
- ³³ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 191.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 164.
- ³⁵ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 24.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 39-40.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 42.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 8.
- ³⁹ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 170.
- ⁴⁰ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 66.
- ⁴¹ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 180.
- ⁴² Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 12-13.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 54.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 42-43.
- ⁴⁵ Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1994), 93.
- ⁴⁶ Brecht, *The Popular and the Realistic*, 108.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 107
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.

Chapter two: Commitment in Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!*

Fugard's commitment in art cannot be separated from his political commitment. To say it differently, there is synchronization between both his aesthetic theory and his political one. The point is that there are certain techniques that most committed playwrights apply in their plays in order to transmit a social or a political message. According to Richard Horney, Fugard masters perfectly this code. He argues that the relation between aesthetics and politics, or more specifically, between the text and the political act is the theme of Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!*¹

It is of great importance to point to Fugard's political beliefs before analyzing his plays. Before being a playwright, Fugard is a liberal white South African citizen who is in continual disappointment with the government policies. It is his liberal stand that urges him to use theatre as a means of protest, in the same manner as the German playwright and theoretician Bertold Brecht used his Marxist ideas to support his cause. Concerning the relationship between art and politics, Brecht writes:

When I read Marx's *Capital* I understood my plays. Naturally I want to see this book widely circulated. I wasn't of course that I found that I had unconsciously written a 18 whole pile of Marxist plays; but this man Marx was the only spectator for my plays I'd ever come across.²

Most importantly, it is in the Brechtian manner that we refer to Athol Fugard as being a political playwright. In an interview he had with Lloyd Richards, Fugard says: "political commitment is an automatic by-product of my being a storyteller."³ Here, he argues that his political commitment is a natural outcome of being a playwright. Hence, Athol Fugard is both backed by his political tendencies and Brecht's dramatic theory. It is this combination that allows him to write plays in which social reality, daily challenges and defending his people are his most important concerns.⁴

In this part of our discussion, we will discuss the issues that prove Fugard's commitment in both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* In fact, commitment is well expressed through the alienation of the audience and the use of cunning characters. We will try to demonstrate how Fugard uses these elements to express his commitment and his opposition to Apartheid policies. We will discuss the use of language which is a powerful means in postcolonial writings. Thus, our task consists of explaining how Fugard makes use of these tools to denounce Apartheid's oppressive and segregationist policies.

a- Alienating the audience:

Like Brecht, Fugard is a committed playwright who uses theatre as a means to denounce oppression. The South African playwright addresses a specific audience and opposes a specific regime. Brecht argues: "the oppressors do not always appear in the same mask."⁵ However, in spite of addressing an audience different from the one in Germany, and in spite of opposing a different regime, Fugard remains faithful to Brecht's Epic conventions. In expressing his commitment, the South African playwright borrows some Epic techniques which aim at alienating the audience and prevent it from being lost in emotions. Thus, this section will be dealing with the effect that Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa* have on the audience.

As far as the structure is concerned, Fugard's plays are episodic. Brecht favors an episodic structure over a linear one. In his epic plays, each scene is separated from the other.⁶ Brecht believes that such a structure reminds the spectator that he is always watching a play. It is a way to avoid succumbing to illusions. People are aware that the events they are seeing are only part of a play. Such a structure distantiates the spectator from the story.

Sizwe Banzi is Dead is a good example to illustrate the episodic structure. This play has a complicated structure in comparison with the other plays of Fugard. It contains only one scene, the scene in which Styles narrates his story in his photographic studio. But this scene is

interrupted by many other scenes using the technique of flashback. After meeting Styles, Sizwe prepares himself for a photograph and it is at this moment that the scene is transferred to the episode in which he writes a letter to his wife. A new scene is introduced when he meets Buntu. The next scene is when he and his friend Buntu find the dead body. After finishing his letter, Sizwe is back to Styles studio and it is here that play closes. In short, all these episodes are not linked together in terms of linearity of time; each one occurs apart.

In *My Children! My Africa!* the structure is less complicated but it is still episodic. The play is divided into two acts, six scenes for the first and five for the second. Five out of the eleven scenes are monologues in which every character stand alone to expose his thoughts. The other scenes, on the other hand, contain all the events that construct the play. As it is the case with the first plays, there is no direct link between the scenes. Each one tells events that occur apart from the other. For instance, in the first act of the play, three weeks pass before the team meets again. In the second act, it is only after four weeks of the death of Mr. M that Thami meets Isabel again.

In addition to the episodic structure, Brecht proposes another alternative to avoid empathy. It is the use of interruptions which is better known as “The Interruption Technique”. Such technique is less used in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. An example is When Styles presents the photographs that he has stuck on the wall. As he narrates the events he starts to get emotional but, suddenly, there is “a knock at the door.”⁷ Consequently, he interrupts his narration and answers the door. In *My Children! My Africa!* interruption technique is widely developed. It is recurrent many times, especially, after each monologue. One example is when Mr. M interrupts Isabel’s monologue. Isabel is surprised by Mr M’s abrupt interruption. Thus, she reacts in the same way as Styles does. She stops her long and affecting speech and turns to speak to Mr. M. The same thing happens when the same character interrupt Thami and Isabel’s private dialogue. Mr. M acknowledges his interruption saying: “Don’t let me

interrupt you. Please carry on. I'm most interested in your reply to that question.”⁸ Fugard borrows this technique in order to delay and paralyze the emotion of the audience.”⁹ Such a technique is also intended to “produce astonishment rather than empathy.”¹⁰

However, alienation is not only dependent on the structure and interruptions. It is also manifested through argument and reason. Fugard's characters express opinions towards different issues. They are not passive observers but active commentators whose role is not only limited to the exposition of events but also to the demonstration of their comments, judgments, and arguments as well. In other words, these characters are not the type of characters who accept a reality which is imposed on them. Throughout the plays, they oppose oppression and try every time to find out solutions for their daily life problems. In his plays, Fugard makes use of the Epic technique of Reason and Argument. His characters contradict each other and provide argument for the audience. In simple words, the Reason and Argument technique can be explained as a “dialectical confrontation between characters.”¹¹ Fugard borrows this technique in order to push the audience to make appeal to reason and analyses the contradictions that are presented on stage.

In *My Children! My Africa!* Fugard introduces an argument between the black Thami and the white Isabel. Thami argues against Isabel's claim that women should be liberated from the traditional discourse which limits them to domestic activities. Thami opposes her point of view, saying:

The opposition has spoken about the exploitation and the need for women's liberation. Brothers and sisters, these are foreign ideas. Do not listen to them. They come from a culture, the so-called Western Civilization, that has meant only misery for Africa and its own people...The opposition has not been able to refute my claim that women cannot do the same jobs as men because they are not equals of us physically and that a woman's role in the family, in society, is totally different to that of a man's. These facts taken together reinforce what our fathers, and our grandfathers and our great-grandfathers knew; namely the happiness and prosperity for the tribe and the nation is achieved when education of the little ladies takes these facts into consideration. Would it be right for a woman to go to war while men sit at the sewing machines? I do not have milk in my breasts to feed the baby while my wife is out digging up roads for the Divisional Council.¹²

Here, Thami argues that women are only needed at home to raise children and to do the home work. Men, instead, work outside to secure the family's living. To say it differently, Thami in this case wants to reestablish the traditional African way of life. This is why he makes reference to the African ancestors to reinforce his claim. In sum, Thami does not accept Isabel's ideas because he thinks that they are dangerous and could lead to the loss of the African values.

Isabel, on the other hand, contradicts Thami's claim. In replying to him, she says:

I know and you know that Africa no longer lives in the past. For better or for worse it is part now of the twentieth century and all the nations on this continent are struggling very hard to come to that reality. Arguments about sacred traditional values, the traditional way of life, etcetera etcetera, are used by those who would like to hold back Africa's progress and keep it locked up in the past. Maybe there was time when a woman's life consisted of bearing children and hoeing the fields while men sharpened their spears and sat around waiting for another war to start. But is a silly argument that relies on that old image of primitive Africa for its strength. It is an argument that insults your argument. Times have changed. Sheer brute insults your intelligence. You do not need the muscles for a prize fighter when you sit down to operate the computers that control today's world.¹³

This passage is one among the most important passages in the play. It introduces two main ideas. Starting by the less important, Isabel assumes that physical strength is not needed to work in the modern world. Hence, this allows women to work and use their intelligence instead of their muscles. In this way, she refutes Thami's argument that limits women to domesticity. Second, and most important of all, is the new South Africa that Isabel is trying to refer to. According to her, traditions belong to the past; South Africans must accept the fact that modern South Africa has changed and it is no more the one of the past. People have no choice but to accept these changes. In this passage, the audience is provided with an argument that is not going to be solved in the play. It is up to the audience to choose which one to support.

In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, the following conversation illustrates the argument between Buntu and Sizwe:

Sizwe: I don't want to lose my name, Buntu.

Buntu: you mean you don't want to lose your bloody passbook! You love it, hey?
Sizwe: Buntu, I cannot lose my name
Buntu: All right as Robert Zwenlinzima you could have stayed and worked in this town. As Sizwe Banzi...? Start walking, friend. King William's town. Hundred and fifty miles. And don't waste any time! You've got to be there by yesterday. Hope you enjoy it.¹⁴

Buntu advises Sizwe to use the dead man's Pass Book in order to remain in Port Elizabeth. Sizwe, on his turn, is hesitant and afraid of doing so. He does not want to change his identity. In this case, it is up to the audience to make appeal to reason and judge who is right and who is wrong.

In addition to their arguments, Fugard's characters interrupt their narrations and address directly the audience. The latter is considered as another character that is present on stage. The audience is defined by words such as, "friend", "you", "man" and "good people". For instance, in his monologue Thami talks to the audience saying, "Do **you** understand me, **good people**?"¹⁵ Sizwe Banzi addresses the audience similarly. He says, "I must tell **you** **friend**."¹⁶ It is in this way that Fugard's plays succeed to destroy the "fourth wall"¹⁷, the Brechtian term which refers to what separates the audience from the actors. According to Brecht, the audience "can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place."¹⁸

Most important of all, Alienation is the main concept in the theory of the epic theatre. Instead of Catharsis, Brecht wants his audience to feel alienated from the plays' events. And in order to alienate the audience, the playwright needs to embody some epic techniques in his play. In the case of Fugard's plays, the techniques that the South African playwright has made use of in both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* are the episodic structure, Reason and Argument, Interruptions and Direct Narration. However, as Brecht argues, alienation is not only achieved by acting. Music, songs, dances, chorus, placards and films are other means to achieve it.¹⁹ Here, we come to notice that alienation is achieved through the use of many devices. Fugard has not made use of all of them. In fact, the theory of the Epic theatre is only partly realized even in Brecht's own works.²⁰ Even so, his plays are considered

as epic plays which have an alienating effect on audiences. In addition, most playwrights borrow partially from Brecht's theory; and it is the case with Athol Fugard.

Through the use of an episodic structure, Reason and Argument, Interruptions and Direct Narration spectators are aware that the play is no more than a demonstration of real life. In this case, theatrical illusion is discarded. Frank Salamone assumes that "Fugard never lets the audience forget that they are in the theatre, and the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* is always at work."²¹ In other words, the audience in Fugard's plays is distanced from the events; which is the principle of Alienation. Indeed, Fugard borrows Brecht's techniques in order to alienate his spectators. By alienating them, he allows them "to criticize constructively from a social point of view."²²

Yet, having the alienation effect does not mean that emotions are denied. The main idea of the epic theatre is that it gives less importance to the audience's emotions than it does to reason. Instead of being lost in emotion, the spectator has to follow the plays' events. But at the same time it is not right to reject emotions in this type of drama.²³

To say that Fugard alienates his audience and prevent it from identifying with the events, never means that his plays are devoid of emotions. In both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and in *My Children! My Africa!* one cannot deny the presence of emotions. One technique that proves this claim is the use of monologues in which characters turn to their emotions. We choose to call them monologues and not soliloquies because they are designated for an audience that is considered as another actor on stage. The way Sizwe writes the letter, for instance, can be considered as a monologue in which he is informing his wife about what happened to him. In fact, the use of monologues is at its best in *My Children! My Africa!* Overall, there are five monologues which are acted by the three actors. In sum, this is just a short hint at the issue of empathy versus alienation. The point is that, it is true that Fugard tries to alienate his audience, but this does never mean that he rejects emotions.

In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, the audience may be affected by what happens to Banzi. But such emotional sensation may urge people to question why Banzi is obliged to use the dead man's Pass Book and why he is not free to work where he wants to. In *My Children! My Africa!* emotions are even much stronger. We may identify with the characters but the question that we ask is why violence is used and why the blacks are discriminated. In this case, we sympathize with the characters but our reason is always at work.²⁴

In Epic plays, the audience is no more the passive recipient of the dramatic theatre. It "is capable of thinking [...] of reasoning, [and] of making judgments."²⁵ By making the audience critical, we come to the real aim of Epic plays which is change. Generally speaking, epic plays are written in order to bring about change in society. Brecht assumes that "theatre became an affair of philosophers, but only for such philosophers as wished not just to explain the world but to change it."²⁶ Of course, change does not happen inside the theatre. It is up to the audience to achieve it outside.

In the case of Fugard's theatre, change is not really seen in his plays. *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* ends with Sizwe's pessimist view. Sizwe says: "A black man stay out of trouble? Impossible, Buntu. Our skin is trouble."²⁷ Despite succeeding to remain in Port Elizabeth, Sizwe does not act to change his future; he remains hopeless. In *My Children! My Africa!* there is no change either. Yet, this play closes with an optimistic utterance by Isabel who says: "the future is still ours, Mr. M."²⁸ Change does never occur inside theatre and it is up for people to achieve it outside. Theatre is only a tool for the playwright to incite people to act outside. Epic plays, thus, are directed to an audience that would think and then act outside theatre for the good of society. It is this task that Fugard has undertaken in his plays.

In his *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* there is a reality that the playwright presents. Blacks suffer from discrimination in different social spheres such as education and work. The major issue, thus, is racism. And for the white people of South

Africa, this may seem natural because their consciousness considers it in this way. It is exactly this predicament that Fugard has tried to solve. Through his plays, Fugard targets the white audiences in order to convince them that Apartheid is an unequal system of governing. Yet, even if he writes plays in the epic model, Fugard is never imposing his ideas on people. He presents facts and it is up to the audience to act and judge if he is right or he is not. In his plays, the South African playwright is only reflecting what happens in society. He, then, gives people the freedom to take action. Brecht argues on this issue saying:

In the epic theatre moral argument only took second position. Its aim was less to moralize than to observe. That is to say, it observed and then the thick end of the wedge is followed: the story's moral.²⁹

It means that epic plays are not like the morality plays of the middle ages. They present social realities in an authentic manner. It is only after observing such a reality that these plays conclude with providing the audience with a moral conclusion.

In sum, the epic element cannot be denied in Fugard's plays. The political engagement, the realistic portrayal, the episodic structure, the Reason and Argument, Interruptions and Direct Narration that we have discussed are all characteristics of the epic theatre. Fugard uses all these elements in order to make people aware and lead them to act against Apartheid.

b- Mimicking Apartheid:

After discussing the influence that is exercised on characters, we come to discuss their reaction against oppression. In spite of living in an oppressive environment, characters in both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa!* stand against Apartheid policies. Throughout the plays, they manage ways to resist the harshness of life. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, the general setting is Port Elizabeth, but almost one third of the play's events takes place in Styles' photographic studio. The latter symbolizes hope and refuge from the harshness of Port Elizabeth. In other words, the studio is the spot where Fugard provides his characters with peaceful and dreaming moments, something that the Apartheid system has

failed to do. At the beginning of the play, Styles informs us that he was not different from the other workers at Ford's company. He worked very hard, yet, he couldn't afford a better life.

He says:

I took a good look at my life. What did I see? A bloody circus monkey! Selling most of his time on this earth to another man. Out of every twenty four hours I could only properly call mine the six when I was sleeping. What the hell is the use of that?³⁰

In reaction to this, Styles decides to start his own business and seeks better financial conditions. Effectively, he leaves his job and sets up a private photographic studio, where he takes people's photographs. In fact, Styles' new job offers him better economic opportunities. With his new business, Styles lives better and can afford what he couldn't in the past. The point is that, the photographic studio is the opportunity that Fugard provides Styles with, in order to escape the poverty and inequality of the Apartheid laws. Once in his studio, Styles feels that he has achieved a victory. He says:

I stood here in the middle of the floor, straight! You know what that means? To stand straight in a place of your own? To be your own...General Foreman, Mr. Baas, line supervisor-the lot! I was tall, six foot six and doing my own inspection of the plant. So I am standing there, here, feeling big...³¹

Such a victory is, of course, a victory over Apartheid. Styles is no more dependent on Whites to secure his living. He has done something that not all the Blacks in South Africa can do at that period of time. And it is here that Fugard's commitment to the Blacks' cause is apparent. By making Styles fully independent, he raises the issue of identity that Blacks in South Africa suffer from. The message that he transmits through the character of Styles is that Blacks should be no more dependent on Whites. Instead, they should have their own identity and live as independent citizens in society.

As we have already said, the setting in this play reflects the Blacks' future hope. Through his pictures, Styles defends and preserves the Blacks' identity. He explains his vision in the following words:

When you look, at this, what do you see? Just another photographic studio? Where people come because they've lost their Reference Book and need a photo for new

one?...No, friend. It's more than just that. This is a strong room of dreams. The dreamers. My people. The simple people, who you never find mentioned in the history books, who never get statues erected to them, or monuments commemorating their great deeds. People who would be forgotten, and their dreams with them, if it wasn't for Styles. That's what I do friends I put down, in my way, on paper the dreams and hopes of my people so that even their children's children will remember a man...this is our Grandfather...and say his name.³²

Styles considers that his photographs go beyond their practical use, that is for Pass Books. They represent the Blacks' dreams and their hopes in living a better life; far from being segregated by the Whites. The best example provided in the play is when Styles prepares Sizwe's picture. He proposes that the picture should be as a movie, with a wallpaper that represents a futuristic city. Styles provides Sizwe with a "pipe in mouth, walking-stick in hand, [and] newspaper under the other arm."³³ He also advises him to take the picture walking. All this, is intended to capture the dream that Sizwe may one day escape poverty and return home as a boss.

Sizwe, on his turn, reacts in his own way to Apartheid. After his arrest, Sizwe is required to return to New Brighton. This is something that he does not do. Sizwe decides to oppose the white men's order. At first, he stays illegally at Buntu's house. Then, after finding the dead body, Sizwe accepts Buntu's proposal to use the dead man's Pass Book. It is only when he forges his Pass Book that Sizwe's troubles are over. In a word, Sizwe has to adopt a deceptive behavior in order to survive under Apartheid. In the letter that he sends to his wife, Sizwe writes:

I've got wonderful news, for you in this letter. My troubles are over, I think. You won't believe it, I must tell you. Sizwe Banzi, in a manner of speaking, is dead! I'll tell you what I can.³⁴

After using Zwilinzima's name, Sizwe's identity is somehow dead. It is for this reason that Fugard entitles his play *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. Sizwe with his new Pass Book and new name can remain in Port Elizabeth and work to feed his family.

In *My Children! My Africa!* the use of the Zolile High School as a setting signifies the ways through which the Apartheid government of South Africa has tried to colonize the

Blacks' minds by imposing on them inferior programs illustrated by the Buntu Education. However, despite being used for this end, black characters, such as Thami, know how to use it in order to free their minds from any moral constraints whatsoever.

Both Mr. M and Thami are aware of the intentions of the Apartheid government. They know that the education they are provided with is only meant to restrict the Blacks' imagination and prevent them from thinking. By making his characters aware, Fugard transmits a message, that despite working with an inferior educational program, Blacks are still able to think and act. The best example is Thami's reaction to Oom Dawie's claims that the government intends to make the Blacks active citizens who can contribute to the building of the nation. Thami comments:

Does Oom Dawie think we are blind? That when we walk through the streets of the white town we do not see the big houses and the beautiful gardens with their swimming pools full of laughing people, and compare it with what we've got, what we have to call home? Or does Oom Dawie just think we are very stupid? That in spite of the wonderful education he has given us, we can't use the simple arithmetic of add and abstract, multiply and divide to work out the rightful share of twenty five million black people?³⁵

In fact, it is this awareness that makes of the Zolile School a symbol of decolonizing the Blacks' minds despite Apartheid segregationist practices. Mr. M, for instance, has always tried to find some ways to free his pupils' minds from what Apartheid imposes on them. When Thami confronts him, Mr. M tells him:

Where were you when I stood there and said 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 despite what the 'Buntu 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.³⁶

Mr. M confirms that, in one way or another, he succeeds to subvert the "Buntu Education", and consequently, liberating the minds of his students. He sees Thami as a concrete example of his achievement. Mr. M thinks that Thami's intellectual capacities and his ability to be a

significant member in the mob are the proofs of his success. In sum, both Thami and Mr. M oppose Apartheid. Yet, while the former is violent, the latter is peaceful.

All in all, Styles, Sizwe, Thami and Mr. M are characters who, despite oppression, figure out ways to act against Apartheid and establish their own rules. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, Styles uses his photographs to give hope to the Blacks. Sizwe, on the other hand, forges his Pass Book in order to remain in Port Elizabeth. In *My Children! My Africa!* both Mr. M and Thami use the inferior education which is imposed on them to counter attack the South African government. The four characters act differently, but their aim is the same; it is to subvert the Apartheid discourse.

According to Bhabha, one characteristic of colonial discourse is mimicry. The latter “describe[s] the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized.”³⁷ Mimicry can be understood as being the attempt to reproduce subjects that are similar to the colonizer. In fact, relationships between the colonizer and the colonized are so much complicated. So often, colonized people are supposed to reproduce the colonial discourse that is implied on them. This is known as the fact of mimicking the colonizer. It is the act of reproducing the colonial discourse. In Fugard plays, the characters are supposed to mimic the practices that Apartheid imposes on them. The choice of styles’ name illustrates better the idea of mimicry. Styles is a characters who adopts different styles of behavior whenever he mimics white characters.

In fact, colonial mimicry is characterized by its ambivalence. It aims at producing “a reformed recognized Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite.”³⁸ The colonizer tries to produce colonial subjects that are similar to him but not quite like him. For example, in *My Children! My Africa!* the South African government provide both Whites and Blacks with education. However, the type of education both races receive is not the same. Such an inferior education provided for the Blacks may influence negatively the future Black generations. Blacks are educated, but not like the Whites. Nevertheless, the

ambivalence that characterizes mimicry is a threat for the colonial discourse. It is a threat because it produces inappropriate citizens who are not in total conformity with the colonial power. Bhabha argues that the threat is not a form of direct resistance but comes from the fact that it creates identities that are similar to that of the colonizer but not quite.³⁹ Effectively, Styles, Sizwe, Thami and Mr. M are considered as “inappropriate objects”⁴⁰ because they are different from the Whites and because of their difference, it is not easy for the Whites to control them within the Apartheid laws.

In addition to being a threat, mimic people are never innocent. In the plays, the characters are not totally obedient while mimicking. Their mimicry “is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics.”⁴¹ It is not a serious reproduction of the colonial discourse but a sly one. According to Bhabha, “mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility, signs of spectacular resistance.”⁴² This is a form of indirect confrontation. Thus, what Styles, Sizwe, Mr. M and Thami do in the plays is a form of mockery. It is true that they operate within Apartheid and do not succeed to overcome segregation; but their deeds are considered as acts of resistance. They imitate the colonizer but mock at him at the same time. In brief, it is through mocking Apartheid laws that these characters resist and fight the South African government.

c- Language:

The last element that proves Fugard’s commitment is language. The latter is used by Fugard as a powerful tool to denounce Apartheid. Through this section we will try to discuss Fugard’s use of English as a medium, not to segregate the Blacks but to defend them. To achieve this task, reference will be made to Ashcroft’s et al. concept of “Appropriation and Abrogation” as it is developed in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989).

The first element of language that we are going to discuss is the choice of names. In the plays, there are two types of names, those given to characters and those given to places. It

is true that Fugard writes in English, but nearly all the names that he makes use of in both plays do not belong to the English language; except names of some places like King William's Town and Port Elizabeth. The names Fugard uses are taken from the native South African languages such as the Buntu and Xhosa languages. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, Fugard uses a set of local names to refer to different settings. For instance: Mapija street, Chinga street, Mdala street and Mbizweni Square. Similarly, in *My Children! My Africa* Fugard follows the same method. He uses names of places such as: Camdebo high school, Karoo pharmacy, Kwaza road, Dlamini Street and Jabulani Street.

Besides, Fugard chooses symbolic names for his characters. "Sizwe" is a character who stands for the victimized and oppressed people of South Africa. The name that Fugard gives him is not chosen at random. Sizwe Banzi is a symbolic name chosen by Fugard to refer to the whole South African nation. In Xhosa, an official South African language spoken in the southern east region of the country, "Sizwe means 'nation' and Banz(s)i means 'large'."⁴³ As a result, the whole name of 'Sizwe Banzi' refers to the "large nation" of South Africa. And if Fugard chooses these two words it means that he intends the character of Banzi to be a mirror for the Blacks' predicament in the Apartheid era.

Again, symbolism is embodied in Fugard's choice of the name of Buntu, which is a combination of "Bantu" and "Ubuntu". The former, written with "a" instead of "u", is the name of a family of languages spoken in South Africa and in other African countries. It is also the name attributed to those people who speak these languages. In the case of South Africa, Bantu is both a language and an ethnic group. Ubuntu, on the other hand, is an old African idea which is originated in the Zulu and Xhosa languages. It is translated as "humanity towards others."⁴⁴ Ubuntu includes all the virtues that keep harmony and the spirit of sharing among people in society.⁴⁵ Indeed, the Ubuntu's philosophy is apparent in Buntu's personality. Buntu is a character full of humanity towards his black fellow Sizwe. He risks

himself by hosting an illegal black citizen in Port Elizabeth. All in all, Buntu is a character who stands for a whole ethnic group and who embodies the characteristics of traditional African philosophy.

In addition to Sizwe and Buntu, Fugard uses other person's names that reflect his commitment for the Blacks' cause. In both plays, numerous names are referred to. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, the names that Fugard suggests are: Matothlana, Zwelinzima, Jolobe, Ntshona and Bokhilane. In *My Children! My Africa*, other person's names include: Mbikwana, Magada, Bonisile, Mbopa, Myalatya, Pumla.

All these names are not selected haphazardly by the South African playwright. Fugard writes in English and uses these names in order to show the world that he is taking side with the Blacks, and he is supporting them. Fugard could have used White names, but he does not do it. Using Blacks' names allows him to remain closer to the Black people whom he defends through his drama.

The second element to be discussed is the 'Billingsgate Language' that Fugard uses. Violent and vulgar expressions are often recurrent in both plays. In theatre, playwrights, usually, use a formal language to attract the audience's attention and gain its respect. However, it is not the case with Athol Fugard. The latter's drama is a realistic one; and in order to give a realistic portrayal of what black South Africans live, Fugard feels that it is necessary to use some raw and harsh words. In fact, such type of language reflects "the anguished and the abused psychology of the people."⁴⁶ It is the natural outcome of oppression. Speaking in a rude manner is a way for black characters to express their frustration and externalize their inner struggle.

A close reading of both plays reveals that Fugard makes use of nearly the same terms. Starting with the rough expressions, words like "hell", "damn", and "bloody" are recurrent in the plays. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, the adjective "bloody" is used by Styles and Buntu to

define anything they speak about; for instance, “bloody day”, “bloody fool”, “bloody monkey”, “bloody book”, “bloody Pass Book”, “bloody name”, “bloody white man”, “bloody lungs”, and “bloody miracle”. The use of bloody by both characters reveals their outrage vis-à-vis the life they live. There are also other cases of the use of rough words like “hell” and “damn”. In both plays, expressions like: “hell”, “to hell”, “dammit”, “it’s a hell of” and “I don’t care a damn” are often repeated. Worse than the rough words cited above, Fugard uses some vulgar terms. The following expressions are found in both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa*: “shit”, “fuck”, “piss”, “bastard” and “arse licker”.

Ashcroft claims that Appropriating English is a technique that most postcolonial writers use. In our case, Fugard is not an exception. Fugard appropriates English through techniques like “Glossing” and “Untranslated words”. “Glossing” is the “parenthetic translations of individual words.”⁴⁷ In his plays, Fugard annexes translations for many native words. In *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* Glossing is illustrated through examples like “Gpokra Izi Khuselo Zamehlo Ndawo” which means “eye protection area”. Similarly, this technique is widely used In *My Children! My Africa*, Glossing in this play includes examples like “akona” which means “not good enough” and “nkululeto meaning freedom”.

The second technique Fugard uses to appropriate English is “Untranslated words”. In *The Empire Writes Back* Ashcroft describes “Untranslated words” as a “selective lexical fidelity which leaves some words untranslated in the text.”⁴⁸ Indeed, in Fugard’s plays many native words are not provided with a translation. For instance, in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, some of the untranslated words are: “Tshotsholoza”, “kulezondawo” and “Vyabaleka”. Similarly in *My Children! My Africa*; for instance, “Amandela” and “Vetkock” are two examples which illustrate this technique. In sum, Fugard uses many terms that he borrows from the Bantu or Xhosa languages. But while he translated some of them into English, many others are left with no translation. It is up to the reader to figure out their meanings.

Fugard writes both *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *My Children! My Africa* in English, but unlike other Whites who use this language to segregate the Blacks, Fugard uses it to defend them. In the *Empire writes Back*, Ashcroft argues:

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place.⁴⁹

Yet, to state that Fugard defends the Blacks through the English language without explaining how is an ambiguous claim. First, Fugard, as many other postcolonial playwrights, abrogated the English language. Abrogation as it is defined in the *Empire writes Back* as the

refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words.⁵⁰

In other words, Fugard in his plays frees the English language from the discourse that it is used to express. English has long been used by the Whites to reinforce their difference from the Blacks. It is the oppressive tool of the colonial power. Fugard, in his turn, rejects the function that Whites attribute to this language.

After freeing English from the colonial constraints, Fugard appropriates it to his own needs. According to Ashcroft, Appropriation is

The process by which the language is taken and made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience, or, as Raja Rao puts it, to 'convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own'.⁵¹

Fugard gives the English language a South African spirit. He makes it bear the burden of the South African experience and reflect the Blacks' culture. He gives it a new usage, different from that of Whites. In his plays, English is no more oppressive, instead; it is a tool to fight Whites' oppression. In a word, Fugard abrogates English and then appropriates it to his personal use. It is in this way that he uses it to counter attack Apartheid.

Endnotes:

¹ Richard Hornby, 'Political Drama', *The Hudson Review* (1990): 123.

- ² Bertold Brecht, 'The Epic Theatre and its Difficulties', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 22-24.
- ³ 'Athol Fugard: the Art of Theater', last modified 03 January 2015, viewed 10 January 2015, <<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2416/the-art-of-theater-no-8-athol-fugard>>
- ⁴ Oluwasuji Olutoba Gboyega, 'A Comparison of Video Interpretations of Athol Fugard and the Printed Texts', (Master diss., University of South Africa, 2012), 104.
- ⁵ Brecht, *the Realist and the Popular*, 110.
- ⁶ Bertold Brecht, 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 33-42.
- ⁷ Athol Fugard, 'Sizwe Banzi is Dead', in *Athol Fugard: Township Plays*, ed. Dennis Walder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 164.
- ⁸ Athol Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1990), 50.
- ⁹ Nadia Gada, 'Kenyan and Algerian Literary Connections: N'Gugi Wa Thiong'O and Kateb Yacine', (Magister diss., M'hamed Bougara University, 2006), 127.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid., 134.
- ¹² Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 2.
- ¹³ Ibid., 3.
- ¹⁴ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 184.
- ¹⁵ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 42.
- ¹⁶ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 187.

- ¹⁷ Bertold Brecht, 'The Theatre for Pleasure and Theatre for Instruction', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 69-77.
- ¹⁸ Bertold Brecht, 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 91-100.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 96.
- ²⁰ 'Studying Bertold Brecht', last modified 22 November 2014, viewed 06 December 2014, <<http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/drama/brecht.htm>>
- ²¹ Frank A. Salamone, 'The Dramatic Art of Athol Fugard: From South Africa to the World by Albert Wertheim', *Africa Today* (2002): 154-155.
- ²² Bertold Brecht, 'The Street Scene', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 121-130.
- ²³ Bertold Brecht, 'The Epic Theatre and its Difficulties', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 22-24.
- ²⁴ 'Studying Bertold Brecht'.
- ²⁵ Bertold Brecht, 'The German Drama: Pre-Hitler', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 78-81.
- ²⁶ Brecht, 'Theatre for Pleasure and Theatre for Instruction', 72.
- ²⁷ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 191.
- ²⁸ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 68.
- ²⁹ Brecht, 'Theatre for Pleasure and Theatre for Instruction', 75.
- ³⁰ Fugard, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, 156.
- ³¹ Ibid., 157.

³² Ibid., 159.

³³ Ibid., 168.

³⁴ Ibid., 169.

³⁵ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 42.

³⁶ Ibid., 50.

³⁷ Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 139.

³⁸ Ibid., 86.

³⁹ Ibid., 141.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 86.

⁴¹ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998), 139.

⁴² Ibid., 121.

⁴³ 'Sizwe Banzi is Dead: Study Guide', last modified 17 November 2014, viewed 22 December 2014,

<http://www.courttheatre.org/pdf/guides/Siwe_study_guide.pdf>

⁴⁴ 'Ubuntu Philosophy', last modified 1 December 2014, viewed 6 December 2014,

<[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ubuntu_\(philosophy\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ubuntu_(philosophy))>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Samuel Okoronkwo, 'Drama and the Rhythms of social reality: A Sociological Perspective on Athol Fugard's Sizwe Banzi is Dead', *Academic Research International* (2011): 23.

⁴⁷ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989), 60

⁴⁸ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 32.

Conclusion:

This research paper has allowed us to explore the issue of social protest in white South African playwright Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989).

The claim of "Art for art's sake" might be still influent in some art forms, but not in Fugard's theatre. Plays are not intended only to make people laugh, but also to serve a social goal. According to Brecht, theatre is both entertaining and instructive. Its aim is to defend the oppressed people. From this perspective, we have shown that theatre is a tool that many playwrights use in order to make the voice of their people heard. Athol Fugard, the South African playwright, is no exception. Despite being white, Fugard, challenges the Whites' segregationist practices. Through plays like the plays that we have selected, he opposes the Apartheid system and defends the Blacks.

After discussing the two plays in the light of the theoretical framework that we have selected, we have come to realize that both plays fall within the ambit of protest theatre. Despite the time that separated their publications, both plays have the same purpose, which is to defend the Blacks and denounce Apartheid. Here, we come to the conclusion that, throughout time, Fugard remained faithful to the black cause. Indeed, nearly all the plays that he wrote before the nineties are committed plays. *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) are only two examples. Now, we come to confirm our hypothesis that, in spite of his white background, Fugard uses theatre to defend the Blacks and to stand against Apartheid.

In order to explain how the idea of protest is reflected in both plays, we have first analyzed the issue of segregation. We have discussed how Fugard makes use of a set of characters, setting and themes in order to provide a faithful treatment of the issue of segregation which characterizes South Africa in the Apartheid era. Second, we have discussed

how Fugard alienates his audience and how he uses characters and language to express his commitment and his outrage against Apartheid. In brief, social protest in Fugard's plays is achieved first, through revealing hurtful truths, and second, through denouncing apartheid practices. What we have discussed in the first chapter can be considered as a justification for Fugard's commitment. Fugard criticizes and attacks Apartheid only after realizing the devastating repercussions that this oppressive system has on the Blacks.

Through this modest paper, we hope that we have provided a better understanding of how Fugard makes use of theatre to protest against Apartheid. We also hope that we have offered new perspectives for further research. However, our paper's scope did not allow us to deal with all issues that underlie the two plays. We believe that too much can be said about the form of Fugard's plays, in particular, and South African theatre, in general. So, we invite other students to undertake the task and discuss the techniques and conventions that characterize some of Fugard's plays such as *The Blood Knot* (1961) and *The Road to Mecca* (1987).

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