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SURVIVAL OF THE DISPOSSESSED

A study of seven Athol Fugard plays

Alan Shelley

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of The Nottingham Trent University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

With Wole Soyinka as his only possible rival, Athol Fugard is the best known African playwright. However, where the Nigerian is actively involved in politics - he has in the past been imprisoned as a result of this involvement, and as recently as June 2005 a rally was held in Ibadan, backed by Soyinka, to promote a conference to end ethnic and political violence in Nigeria - Fugard's politics are to be found in his texts rather than his actions. Fugard, who was born on a farm near the South African Karoo village of Middleburg, has had a most distinguished career as playwright, director and actor, and at the age of seventy three, he is still writing. For the general public he is more likely to be remembered for his role as General Smuts in the Richard Attenborough film, *Gandhi*, but his most substantial acting performances came when he starred in some of his earliest plays, notably *Blood Knot* and *Boesman and Lena*. This thesis does not concern itself with his career as an actor or a director or even with Fugard as playwright *per se*, but rather with a set of texts and the South African politics within them.

It was reported in 1992 that after Shakespeare, Fugard was then the most performed playwright in the USA, but compared to the continuous stream of Shakespearian research, the analyses of the works of the South African dramatist are limited in the extreme and, where scholarly research has been undertaken, it has almost never seen these plays as thoroughly political in their own right. This may arise because all of Fugard's plays are small-scale intimate domestic dramas concerned with the personal, but to ignore their profound political dimension is to ignore ways in which the 'personal is political', and it is that important intersection - the personal in/as the political - which this thesis sets out to analyse. The research into these texts, and the social and political history that informs them, is used to demonstrate how this focus on the politics in these plays, whether conscious or unconscious, results in an analysis that provides a new interpretation of some of the most important political drama of the 20th Century.

The introductory chapter includes some description of the disposessions suffered by the majority of South Africans during the apartheid era, extending from such basic rights as land ownership and freedom of movement to a respect for human dignity, while the politics at the core of these disposessions are reflected in all of the seven Fugard plays analysed in this thesis. In these works the characters represent a cross-section of South African society, from the Afrikaner with an impeccable background and two white women of English origin, through to the black men incarcerated on Robben Island and the homeless Coloured couple, made homeless by the poverty resulting from apartheid. Each of the plays painstakingly and painfully exposes, within the ordinary lives of Fugard's people, different aspects of the politics of life in South Africa and the strategies for attempting to survive those politics.

The thesis concludes with a comparison between the oppression revealed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and that so evocatively presented in these dramas, together with a projection of the survivals that occur in the examples of witness presented to the Commission and those that are explicated from the Fugard texts.

SURVIVAL OF THE DISPOSSESSED

A study of seven Athol Fugard plays

Somehow we survive
and tenderness, frustrated, does not wither.

Investigating searchlights rake
our naked unprotected contours;

over our heads the monolithic decalogue
of fascist prohibition glowers
and teeters for a catastrophic fall;

boots club the peeling door.

But somehow we survive
severance, deprivation, loss.

Patrols uncoil along the asphalt dark
hissing their menace to our lives,

most cruel, all our land is scarred with terror,
rendered unlovely and unlovable;
sundered are we and all our passionate surrender

but somehow tenderness survives.

Dennis Brutus. *A Simple Lust*

Acknowledgements

As an aged, part-time student, living some distance from the University, this research might have been conducted rather in isolation were it not for the crucial mentoring of Patrick Williams, without whom this thesis would never have emerged. Additional insights from Roger Bromley have also been vital to this work, never mind the encouragement he has provided over the years. Dennis Walder was immensely generous in providing the contact details for a number of the people I have interviewed, and I am also grateful to Shula Marks who first introduced me to South African political history. During my visits to the National English Literary Museum at Grahamstown, and from a distance, the staff there have always been more than helpful and it is thanks to them that I was able to see so much of the Fugard archive they maintain. In the early days, Richard Johnson undertook to guide me in the paths of literary theory, but all the time my wife was there as a sounding board and prop, particularly as she corrected my grammar.

SURVIVAL OF THE DISPOSSESSED

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ONE

Introduction

Always historicize!

This book will argue the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts. It conceives of the political perspective not as some supplementary method, not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods... but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation.

(Fredric Jameson *The Political Unconscious*)

Athol Fugard's writing consistently displays the unwithering tenderness spoken of in Dennis Brutus's poem. The playwright's dispossessed occupy a theatrical landscape that is unlovely and unlovable, and feature in some of the most important political drama of the twentieth century, where Jameson's seminal work, with its stress on the political perspective 'as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation', is a more than suitable authority to contribute towards illustrating this importance. Jameson believes that it is only Marxism that 'can give us an adequate account of the essential *mystery* of the cultural past,' and which is 'an ultimate *semantic* precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts' (Jameson 1996, pp.19 & 75). The 'intelligibility' of the literary texts that comprise the seven plays of Fugard, the subject of this research, will be exposed along the lines Jameson indicates but, following Frantz Fanon, the analysis engaged in this study will need to be 'slightly stretched' to account for the rather special political circumstances in South Africa where, in many cases and particularly during the apartheid era, it was race, rather than class, that held centre-stage. Fanon wrote:

When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.

(Fanon 1990, pp. 30/31)

The works discussed in this thesis have been chosen, from an output of over thirty plays during a writing career spanning fifty years, because in them the political perspective is markedly present - and because, from the literary point of view, they are amongst the finest of Fugard's dramas. The texts of six of these plays are those published, with others, in three volumes by the Oxford University Press in 2000 with extensive Introductions by Dennis Walder, namely: *Township Plays*, which includes *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, *Interior Plays*, which includes *A Lesson from Aloes* and *Port Elizabeth Plays*, which includes "*Master Harold*"... and the boys, *Blood Knot* and *Boesman and Lena*. In connection with *Blood Knot*, reference is made to the performance history of this play when the script in use was an earlier and much longer version (*The Blood Knot*), but the text used in this analysis is that contained in the Oxford University Press volume. The script used for *My Children! My Africa!* is included in *Plays One* published by Faber and Faber in 1998. When references are made to any of these seven plays, the page number shown refers to the text edition detailed above.

This thesis has been arranged, in so far as this is verifiable, by dealing with the plays in the order of their stage calendar so as to facilitate the analysis of the sequential history of apartheid legislation as it was promulgated, amended or disbanded. "*Master Harold*"... and the boys is set in the 1950s and this is followed by the chapter on *Blood Knot* and *Boesman and Lena* which are not time specific but the setting is taken to be of the 1960s - if only relying on the dates of first production, namely 1961 and 1969. The analysis of *A Lesson from Aloes* is next. In this case the play is precisely set in 1963 and this is followed by *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* (taken to be of the 1970s - first performed in 1972 and 1973) and culminating with *My Children! My Africa!* which is set in 1984. However, it must be made clear, and this is discussed in Chapter Five, two of these plays, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, are collaborative works and are not claimed to be solely authored by Fugard himself.

There is a bibliography of the impressive resource of Fugard material at the National English Literary Museum (NELM), Grahamstown, compiled by John

Read and first published in 1991. This contains references to nearly 4000 critical articles and reviews, records of interviews and theses etc., but many of these entries cover single page newspaper comments on productions of Fugard plays. This bibliography covers the period from the early 1960s up to and including 1990, a time-scale that embraces the first production dates of all of the seven plays examined in this thesis. Since 1991, this resource has continued to grow, mostly by further play reviews, but apart from this collection, the number of studies - especially full-length ones - is limited. Dennis Walder has contributed two of these, both entitled *Athol Fugard*, the first published in 1984 in the 'Macmillan Modern Dramatist' series and the other in 2003 for the Northcote House series 'Writers and their Work'. *Exploring the Labyrinth: Athol Fugard's Approach to South African Drama* by Margarete Seidenspinner was published in Germany in 1986 but other than these, the most substantial works are those of Russell Vandenbroucke, *Truths the hand can touch: The theatre of Athol Fugard* (1986) and Albert Wertheim's *The Dramatic Art of Athol Fugard: From South Africa to the World* (2000). It was reported in 1992 that after Shakespeare, Fugard is the English-language playwright most performed in the United States and so, when the massive Shakespeare critique industry is considered, it brings into sharp focus the restricted number of serious studies that have looked at the work of the South African dramatist (Barbera 1993, p. xiv).

One academic thesis that does have some direct relevance to the *Survival of the Dispossessed* is that presented by Andrew Foley in 1996 to the University of Natal that focuses on the liberal politics within the works of Athol Fugard and Alan Paton. Except for this study, the resources detailed above do not, in the main, take the political dimension as a principal theme, as does my thesis, and so an analysis of the nature of the politics of Fugard's theatre - both personalised and collective; seemingly understated, but also powerfully and painfully apparent - will be the principal aim of this research. These seven plays are both consciously and unconsciously political and it is this factor that generates the imperative to provide this interpretation of them. In so doing, the aim is to add to those earlier readings, which have generally remained 'unconscious' (to a greater or lesser extent) of the politics of Fugard's work, with

a detailed assessment of the direct relevance of these plays to the historical time of their production - to historicize in the Jameson sense.

It is difficult to say why previous studies have generally neglected to emphasise the political content; one possible reason for this omission may lie with the reluctance of the playwright himself to acknowledge that his work is political.¹ However, for whatever reasons, I believe that the direction taken in this thesis provides a new and valuable contribution to the corpus of other work on Fugard and, I submit, this original contribution has mainly evolved as a result of my personal background, enriched by the deep admiration I have for Fugard as an artist. I have had fifty adult years of contact with Africa, beginning with a career in Nigeria from 1955 to 1979. Since returning to the UK in 1980 I have been closely involved with the region, firstly as the Chairman of The West Africa Committee (a CBI equivalent) during the 1980s and 1990s, and then as a result of continuing business interests throughout the Continent. These interests have entailed frequent visits to South Africa before the trips made specifically for this research in 2000, 2004 and 2005. After retiring in 1992, my interest in Africa was widened as I studied for an MA in African Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies. I am a devotee of the theatre and was a Governor of the Royal Shakespeare Company between 1990 and 2001. As a result of this background, I take a detached, but informed view of the plight of South Africa's dispossessed under apartheid, as described by Fugard, and this plight has been closely researched using a wide range of the historical and political texts available, as detailed in the bibliography.

This research has been significantly amplified by personal interviews with a range of South Africans and others with personal experience of life and culture during the apartheid years, particularly those connected with the world of South African theatre. Outside of this world, long discussions with Allister Sparks, former editor of the Rand Daily Mail who was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of racial unrest in South Africa in 1985, and the late Anthony Sampson who, as a friend of Nelson Mandela, wrote the authorised biography that was published in 1999, were particularly rewarding. I have also benefited from advice and direction, firstly from Professor Shula Marks of the School of

Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, who laid the groundwork for my interest in South African social and political history, and secondly from Graham Pechey, who has a deep love and understanding of the South African literary scene. Of the theatrical people contacted, Brian Astbury, who was instrumental in setting up the Space Theatre in Cape Town (where *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* were first performed), was particularly informative, as was Malcolm Purkey, formerly of the University of the Witwatersrand and now the new Artistic Director of the Market Theatre (he effectively took over from John Kani in 2004), who I was able to meet again when I visited South Africa in April 2005. His views on changes on the theatrical scene since we last met in 2000 were valuable. Finally, Athol Fugard himself has been extremely supportive: after a stimulating interview in 2002, there has been regular personal contact by email.

This research is text-based, but these are performance texts and exposure to the staging of Fugard's plays has provided valuable insights into my interpretation of the seven works discussed in this thesis. In the chronology of writing, and to emphasise in a small way the diversity of venues where Fugard's plays are performed, I have been in the audience for:

<i>Blood Knot</i>	Riverside Studios, London
<i>Hello and Goodbye</i>	Theatre by the Lake, Keswick, Cumbria
<i>People Are Living There</i>	Peele School, Long Sutton, Lincolnshire
<i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i>	The New Vic, Newcastle – under - Lyme
<i>The Island</i>	National Theatre, London (more than once)
<i>Dimetos</i>	Gate Theatre, London
<i>“Master Harold” and the boys</i>	Market Theatre, Johannesburg
	National Theatre, London
	Salisbury Playhouse, Salisbury, Wiltshire
	Haymarket Theatre, Leicester
<i>Road to Mecca</i>	National Theatre, London
<i>My Children! My Africa!</i>	Market Theatre, Johannesburg
	National Theatre, London
	Salisbury Playhouse, Salisbury, Wiltshire
<i>Playland</i>	Donmar Theatre, London
<i>Valley Song</i>	Royal Court Theatre, London
<i>The Captains Tiger</i>	Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond
<i>Sorrows and Rejoicings</i>	Tricycle Theatre, London

Films of *Boesman and Lena* and "*Master Harold*"... and the boys have also been seen.

Throughout this thesis the work of other writers and thinkers who have influenced Fugard will be analysed and placed in context. Although very different in style, Fugard admired William Faulkner and has acknowledged that what he learned from the American Nobel Prize winner was that an artist can be unashamedly regional. As highlighted in Chapter Two, Port Elizabeth was just as essential to Fugard as was Yoknapatawpha County, however imaginary, to Faulkner. Russell Vandenbroucke makes a case for comparing Fugard with Anton Chekhov,² but the clearest parallels were, and are, Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett, and these two influences are accounted for. In Fugard's *Notebooks* there are frequent references to Albert Camus and the extent to which his works are reflected in the plays is reported on throughout this thesis. Fugard saw himself as a man of the South, much like Camus:

You know, ever since I first read Camus - I have never visited his world, but I just read about Algiers - it is the sunshine, and the hard light, that severe landscape, that has struck me. I think there's a resonance there, especially if you go into our stark hinterlands, like the Karoo. Now for me that really becomes the territory where you can see Sisyphus rolling one of his rocks up to the top of a koppie - only to see it roll down again....

(Brink 1990, p. 77)

There are some signs of the influence of Greek theatre in Fugard's dramaturgy, besides those instances where there is a direct reference to the Greeks in *Orestes*, *Dimetos* and *The Island*. Classical playwrights often centred their work at the heart of the family - families that more often than not were visited by tragedy - as does Fugard, although most of his disasters tend to lead to a sense of helpless resignation rather than unmitigated despair. Reference will be made to the writings of Frantz Fanon (most of Fugard's characters are well eligible to join the 'Wretched of the Earth' club), Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault, as well as to a wide range of South African political and historical works. In 1983, Fugard's *Notebooks* covering the years 1960/1977 were published, edited by his old friend, the writer and veteran anti-apartheid campaigner, Mary Benson. These *Notebooks* provide a valuable

insight into the thought processes of the playwright during these years and no apologies are offered for the fact that they are quoted at some length throughout this thesis. All further references to the *Notebooks* will be indicated by 'Nb' and the page number. Some further information on Fugard's family and early life is also given in his book *Cousins A Memoir*, first published in 1994.

Before proceeding to demonstrate how public and political a place Fugard's stage was, reflecting as it did what was happening to the majority of South Africa's public, it is relevant to reveal what lay behind the scenes in the life of the playwright himself and to briefly report on the relevance of black South African theatre on the development of Fugard as a South African playwright.

Fugard considers himself to be an 'Outsider', although it is questionable whether he is a Meursault,³ but what is certain is that he is a white man whose antecedents are mixed, just like those of Morris and Lena but without the tragic consequences of their mixings. As he has said: 'Half of my descent, and maybe all of my soul, is Afrikaner. But I am also the traitor inside the laager' (Henry 1989, p. 56). When asked about his cultural heritage, he replied:

By and large, because of the strength of my mother's personality the Afrikaner culture was more dominant. It is typical of the Afrikaner, and was perhaps emphasised by my mother's family background as a Potgieter - an old, well known Afrikaner family - that we were very tightly-knit. That in some ways may be the origin of the concern in my work with the nexus of family relationships.

(Benson 1977/8, p.77)

It is said that his mother could trace her origins, on her father's side, back to the earliest Dutch settlers, as could Piet Bezuidenhout in *A Lesson from Aloes*.⁴ The origins of the Afrikaner people, as determining Piet's character, are discussed in Chapter Four, but it is crucial in analysing Fugard's work to take this ancestry into account:

I suppose.... that it's in my response to all her stories about the Potgieters of Knoffelville that I recognise my bastardised identity - an Afrikaner writing in English. It is certainly to her that I owe my sense that South Africa does also, just occasionally, give me the opportunity to love and laugh at the Afrikaner in the truly celebratory

sense of those two words.

(Nb, p. 7)

Further:

There are certain things about South Africa.... which achieve their truest statement from the Afrikaner background. The tragedy is that their love of country has become a passionate but shrivelling emotion. Afrikaans has become the language of violence. The Afrikaner has done this to himself

(Benson 1990, p. 187)

It is this heritage that informs the Afrikaner mentality, so perceptively observed in plays like *Hello and Goodbye* and *A Lesson from Aloes*. Fugard's father was English speaking, of Irish and possibly Polish descent, and the portrait of Hally's father we are given in '*Master Harold*' ... *and the boys* represents, more or less, Fugard's relationship with his own father. In *A Lesson from Aloes*, Piet quotes from *Romeo and Juliet* saying that he cannot deny his father, but in Hally's case this is more complicated, as it was for the author himself, who is reported as saying:

I was dealing with the last unlaidd ghost in my life, who was my father. Our relationship was as complex as Master Harold expresses it in the play. I had resentment at his infirmity and other weakness but as Master Harold says, "I love him so."

(Vandenbroucke 1986, p.256)

"Master Harold" ... and the boys reveals the backdrop to his own boyhood in Port Elizabeth which comprised the boarding house and then the tea room run by his mother who was the breadwinner; his alcoholic father had been crippled in an accident⁵ which meant his only contribution to the family exchequer came from occasional fees for playing the piano in public. Fugard was a bright boy and gained scholarships to his secondary school and university. However, in 1953 he left university before taking his degree to hitchhike through Africa with a fellow student and poet, Perseus Adams who, according to Russell Vandenbroucke, 'was Fugard's first friend after Sam Semela' (Vandenbroucke 1986, p.18).⁶ This expedition culminated in spending time as a merchant seaman and then returning to South Africa in 1955 to begin his theatrical

career. Initially he worked as a journalist with SABC radio in Port Elizabeth but moved to Cape Town in 1956 where he married Sheila Meiring, who was already involved with the stage. Together they founded the Circle Players, who performed, amongst other things, Fugard's earliest dramatic efforts, *The Cell* and *Klaas and the Devil*. This latter work was an attempt to transfer J M Synge's *Riders to the Sea* to a South African setting, much as Brecht did with his *Senora Carrar's Rifles* (1937), set in Civil War Spain. Fugard's version was not a success. The couple then moved to Johannesburg where Fugard worked in the Native Commissioner's Court, which dealt with pass offences. As he has said: 'We sent an African to jail every two minutes' (Gray 1982, p.4). At this time he became friendly with people living in Sophiatown and for a while was a stage manager with the National Theatre Organisation. He and his wife then left for Europe, but at the time of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, they returned to Port Elizabeth

One critic suggests that as a writer, Fugard was born in Sophiatown (Khan 1971, p.27). Certainly, contact with the black intellectuals living there was an important ingredient in his political education, but it would appear that the black theatre that had gone before him - or was contemporary to him - had little influence on his development as South Africa's premier playwright. Until the second half of the 20th Century, the received wisdom was to assume that there was no such thing as a black culture in South Africa. Similarly, it was taken for granted that black theatre be dismissed from pre-colonial discourse because, even if evidence of its existence could be shown, it was not worthy of consideration as it failed to follow any of the conventions of Western or European theatre. Even Sipho Sepamla, editor of the black theatre magazine *S'ketsh* wrote that 'theatre is not part of our vocabulary' (Kruger 1999, p. 262). However, elements of early black theatre modes have been carried forward into contemporary South African works with the successful melding of dance and song and narrative and mime - to be seen in a number of plays contemporaneous with Fugard, significant examples being *The Hungry Earth* (1979) and *Woza Albert* (1981).

Dennis Walder, in his introduction to the Oxford University Press volume *Township Plays*, and when referring to the collaborative works *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, wrote: '....their lasting popularity as well as their influence – most drama from South Africa today bears their mark...' (p. xxx), and this was certainly true of at least one of Fugard's contemporaries, Mbongeni Ngema, who saw *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* in 1976. This experience influenced the free-form that led to *Woza Albert*, which was conceived by Percy Mtwa and Ngema when working for Gibson Kente. The final version was brought to the Market Theatre in 1981 after input from Fugard's friend, Barney Simon, who is credited as co-author with the other two. It was one of the most successful productions at the Market Theatre at the time. It is also relevant to note that, like *The Island*, the two characters in *Woza Albert* are Percy and Mbongeni, the same names as the two performers - and the authors of the piece. *The Hungry Earth*, written by Maishe Maponya, was first performed in Soweto in 1979 and was then taken overseas before returning to the Market Theatre in January 1982. The main distinction between *The Hungry Earth* and *Woza Albert* is that Maponya's play most directly speaks in a Black Consciousness mode, but even more so, the biggest difference is that it is an angry play. While *Woza Albert* employs humour, *The Hungry Earth* speaks directly to the audience with barely concealed hatred and antagonism, in striking contrast to the subdued realism of Fugard.

Around 1952, black artists set up the Union of South African Artists with the intention of securing themselves protection from exploitation, but by 1958 this Union had developed into a commercial enterprise, backed by English capitalists, promoting the work of black performers to a mainly white audience. The Union at this time was more interested in musicals than serious drama, but they did provide rehearsal space for Fugard's *No Good Friday* (1958) and directly sponsored the musical *King Kong* (1959), written by Harold Bloom, both of which had a Sophiatown background. Even though the only person involved with *King Kong* with any theatrical experience was Leon Gluckman, who had worked at the Nottingham Playhouse, it was a considerable success, playing to theatres all over South Africa, where colour restrictions allowed, and at the Princess Theatre in London. *King Kong* was a major influence for Gibson

Kente, who became something of a phenomenon in recent black theatre, in that his productions were popular and financially successful. He wrote and produced over twenty of his own brand of musical dramas which were performed mainly in townships throughout South Africa. At times he had more than one company on the road.

Both *King Kong* and Kente's form of theatre were the antithesis of Fugard's tightly controlled domestic dramas, and certainly there was little political comment in these works, but this could not be said for some of Fugard's black playwrighting contemporaries. While Fugard was developing his dramatic skills with the Serpent Players, we can look at what was said to be only the second published play by a black South African writer, *Rhythm of Violence* (1964) by Lewis Nkosi. Nkosi was involved with Fugard in the production of *No-Good Friday*, but Nkosi's play has never been performed and was only published after he had gone into exile to Harvard in 1961. Unlike the ordinary people that inhabit Fugard's plays, *Rhythm of Violence* is concerned with young black intellectuals and their plan to blow up the Johannesburg City Council and a Nationalist Party rally inside the building.

Ten years later, as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* were being first performed, one of the most important plays emanating from black theatre was *Shanti*, described as 'the signature play of...the Black Consciousness Movement' (Kruger 1999, p. 144). There is an introduction to the text of this work provided by Robert Kavanagh Mshengu:

Shanti is political theatre and one of the definitive characteristics of political theatre is that in it art is a means to a political end. In other words aesthetic criteria are superseded by those of political effectiveness. Political theatre is at liberty to use any resources available to the theatre in order to achieve its political objectives. It is true that a political play can simultaneously be a highly excellent piece of art but only if 'artistic' methods serve the political purpose. If they do not, all sorts of allegedly 'inartistic' methods may quite legitimately be used. In political theatre one cannot afford to indulge an artistic phobia regarding statement, manifesto, slogan, propaganda and polemics, or an excessive concern for style, genre and theatrical conventions.

(Kavanagh 1981, p. 65)

In Fugard's political theatre he has never, for a moment, allowed this kind of overstated view to distract him from producing 'a highly excellent piece of art', not least because, as his plays demonstrate, the aesthetic and the political are far from being mutually exclusive. The Fugard texts we have today provide a graphic portrayal of the daily struggle of the oppressed majority in, to quote Rob Amato: 'his most important role, that of a questioner of life and theories, writing in the tragic mode and taking cognisance of the complexity and subtlety of the oppressive structures of the country' (Daymond 1984, p. 204); or, for another critic: 'the plays of Athol Fugard, foreground dissenting voices of personal despair, disintegration, and, sometimes, dogged survival, which reverberate against a wall of political insanity' (Blumberg 1993, p. 241).

Fugard's Sophiatown experience is fully reflected in his first full-length play, *No Good Friday*, which had its debut performance at the Bantu Men's Social Centre on the 30 August 1958 with Fugard playing Father Higgins, who was modelled on Trevor Huddleston. It was during this production that Fugard met Zakes Mokaé,⁷ who created Zachariah in *The Blood Knot* and was the first Sam in "*Master Harold*".. and the boys. When *No Good Friday* was presented for one performance only before an all-white audience at the segregated Brooke Theatre, the cast was required to be all black, so Lewis Nkosi was drafted in to play Father Higgins. At about the same time across the continent in Nigeria, and before the age when world theatre became colour-blind and it was not uncommon to see a black Henry V, two amateur theatre groups, one with white members only and the other with black, were engaged in a joint production of Peter Ustinov's *Romanoff and Juliet*. To fit the parts to the colours available, all of the Russians in the play were white actors while the American ambassador's family and the citizens of Ustinov's Ruritania were black. In real life, Christopher Kolade, who played the American ambassador, is today the Nigerian High Commissioner in London. Tension between the races was not a major concern in Nigeria (unfortunately, as time was to tell, it was tribal and religious differences that became paramount), but this theatrical comparison highlights this further instance of the lunacy of apartheid where an audience in South Africa was required to suspend belief to accept a black Father Huddleston.

Fugard's second Sophiatown play, *Nongogo*, was first performed on 8 June 1959, again at the Bantu Men's Social Centre. These two plays made little impact at the time, but when *The Blood Knot* appeared, Fugard's career as an international playwright had begun. When the first plays of John Osborne and John Arden were presented at the Royal Court Theatre in the 1950s, they could look to a battery of indigenous dramatic influences, from Shakespeare to Shaw - but not so Athol Fugard. Nevertheless, after South Africa's 'angry young man' had presented *The Blood Knot* in 1961, South African theatre in English was never to be the same again. In an interview, Fugard's close friend, the actress Yvonne Bryceland, said about him: 'He has been very much at the disposal of those who need him; we pull lumps off him because we need him. He is the core of theatre in South Africa' (O'Sheel 1978, p.75). Bryceland first saw *The Blood Knot* in 1962 with her husband, Brian Astbury. The play had a major impact on him and in particular elicited some interesting observations as to what represents 'culture' for the white English-speaking South African:

It was extraordinary. We saw it on a night when there was a power cut, so they only had two lights on the stage and it was unbelievably hot. The play was something like nearly three hours long. Athol always said it was one of his most over-written plays but you could have fooled me, I felt it was half-an-hour long! It was one of those pieces that changed my life. It was the first time I'd actually had a sense of a culture that was my own - English-speaking white South African. It's just that you don't seem to have a culture of your own. The Afrikaners have a culture, the blacks have a culture, even the Coloureds have a culture - the Indians definitely have a culture. White South African has this weird thing which is set in America and Britain and you never feel - and suddenly *The Blood Knot* was there and I thought, 'Ah'. Even though it was about a black man and his half-black brother, it was about me for the first time.

(Personal interview. February 2001)

Astbury is a third generation English-speaking white South African and a liberal, much in the mould of Fugard - and clearly very receptive to the Fugard message. However, he does raise an interesting topic on the cultural tensions endemic to the racial mix in his country - and which no doubt are still in place.

One of the political realities of South Africa, experienced by Fugard, concerned control over the written word and theatrical performances; he was working

under the constraints of a censorship system (particularly in the 1960s and 1970s) that was one of the most all-embracing in the world. Fugard's works were, in the main, free from interference from censorship but, however his plays may have escaped too much control by the authorities, his international travel was restricted by the removal of his passport from 1967 to 1971. Nevertheless, it was the apartheid of audiences that most concerned him in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1962 he published 'An Open Letter to Playwrights' that by the following year, and with the support of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, had blossomed into an international boycott. Nearly 300 playwrights from around the world withdrew all performing rights to their works if the audiences in South Africa were segregated. At that time mixed casts and audiences were not prohibited, even if rare, but the apartheid authorities presumably paid little heed to the playwrights' boycott and in 1965, by an extension of the Group Areas Act, they made performances by mixed casts in front of mixed audiences in public theatres an illegal act. Although condemned by many, in that year Fugard changed his mind and allowed some of his work to be seen by segregated audiences. His *Notebooks* are revealing - from December 1965:

A letter in the *Post*.... attacks my decision to play before all-white audiences. Refers to me as having become an 'ally of apartheid' and having contributed to the 'erosion of human decency' in South Africa.

Finally I suppose I talk to white South Africa not because they can possibly profit from hearing from me but because I *must* talk. What is my life without the reality of a 'here and now' in which I belong: how can I cut myself off from it?

.... I can't escape talking to South Africa - even under the compromising conditions of segregated performances.

(Nb, p.129)

We can only conjecture as to the reasons for this volte-face, but there is little doubt that there would have been strong pressure from Fugard the artist to make a decision that would allow his work the widest exposure, however much this might have been contrary to his political sympathies.

This introductory chapter concludes with a section that defines and contextualizes the principal terms used in this thesis. The question of survival, as used in the title to this work, is considered in some detail in Chapter Seven,

although each of the chapters reveal the differing strategies adopted by Fugard's characters in their quest to survive, or the results of them being unable to survive, the politics of their worlds. Additionally, as also reflected in the title, a principal theme of this study is concerned with 'dispossession' and some comments on this are pertinent. Each of the plays dealt with reveal the dispossessions that occur on Fugard's desolate stage, reflecting as they do particular features of the apartheid State and these revelations are used to create an interface between the text and the South African historical, political and social reality.

Apartheid resulted in many South Africans being dispossessed, whether in the material fields of jobs, housing, education and freedom of movement (never mind the crucial matter of the franchise) or just as harmfully, in the psychological dispossession of their dignity and identity - the right to their better self - the classic Marxist alienation, as described in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*:

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?

..... the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another.

(Leitch 2001, p.767)

Fugard's dispossessed belong, not to themselves, but to the alienating apartheid State that imposed, '... a cruel and absurd policy since it is one that aims to bar certain people from partaking fully and completely in the human species, of which all of us, regardless of our color, are representatives'⁸ (Derrida 1987, p. 71). All of the degradations inflicted upon the non-whites in South Africa basically stemmed from the inequality of the franchise, which enabled a minority of South Africans to determine the fate of the 'other'. With political control in the hands of the white populace, these impositions began, naturally enough, with the principal material dispossession - the land.⁹ Political dominance and land control became the bedrock of the apartheid edifice that then proceeded to determine for the dispossessed where they might live or work, how their identity and status was to be established and the standard of

education they would receive, all under a blanket of subjugation that severely restricted their ability to articulate any opposition to these strictures.

The legislation that restricted the movement of these dispossessed brought into existence the reference book, the concrete symbol of the all-pervading domination exercised over the majority of South Africans in the name of apartheid, as illuminated in the first paragraph of an article by Michael Savage:

During the period 1916 to 1984 over 17,745,000 Africans have been arrested or prosecuted under a battery of pass laws and influx control regulations in South Africa. The size of this figure is blunt testimony of the extent to which the pass laws have been used to control the freedom of movement of the African population and to circumscribe their access to labour markets in both urban and rural areas. While it is not only the pass laws which have been employed to 'channel' a flow of black labour into the economy and to place by 1980 some 53 per cent of the African population into the Bantustans (or 'homelands' as they are often officially, but inaccurately, termed), the pass laws have occupied the central position in the process of policing the African population and directing them into places dictated by whites. In short they are a key part of the legal-administrative apparatus aimed at maintaining white domination.

(Savage 1986, p. 181)

Blame Me on History by Bloke Modisane, who played Shark in the first production of Fugard's *No-Good Friday*, has a Postscript on the reference book that vividly illustrates what a farcical horror this was:

I see the South African law as the basis and the instrument of my oppression. I am black, the law is white.

But the law is the law, they said. Well, this is the law.

The 'Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act' No. 67 of 1952 abolished the Pass Laws, so instead of carrying a Pass I carry a Reference Book No. 947067; it has ninety-six pages, is bound in buckram and comes in two colours, the brown and the green. It is divided into five sections...

In the last section is written:

William is exempted from the Urban Service Contract Regulations in terms of Section 3(4) of Act 67/52, having been exempted under regulation 14 bis Proclamation 150/341..¹⁰

Modisane continues:

The principle of the Exemption Pass is to exempt me from carrying a Reference Book, as a result I carry a Reference Book into which is written a certificate exempting me from carrying a Reference Book.

(Modisane 1965, pp.306/310/311)

One of the most vigorous campaigns against the pass laws culminated in the tragedy in 1960 at Sharpeville, near Johannesburg, when 67 black people were killed, mostly shot in the back by the police.

The dispossessed were further constrained as the government, in terms of the Group Areas Act of 1950, stipulated where they might live. One of the most shameful images of apartheid is the scene, repeated over and over again, of the police, bulldozers and GG lorries (so named for the letters on the registration plates of Government transport), imposing the forced removal of people whom the authorities considered to be living in the wrong areas or to be squatters. Joseph Lelyveld¹¹ provides an apt description:

...“GG”...the universal shorthand among blacks for the white government, its pervasive authority, and its arbitrary ways....GG is as predictable as natural calamity. GG scoops you up when you least expect it and drops you somewhere you have never seen....And like natural calamity, it evokes depression and resignation, rather than resentment.

(Lelyveld 1985, p. 123)

The black, the Coloured and the Indian populace were also proscribed as a result of one of the major pieces of racist legislation, the Population Registration Act of 1950 that required the compulsory classification of all South Africans into race groups. Initially this was mainly determined on visual appearance only, but later other tests of doubtful scientific veracity were introduced, although these did not include too much in the way of genealogy otherwise many Afrikaners would have failed the test. This legislation caused considerable grief and heartache for many people. One example is given of a married couple that had their race classification altered five times (Watson 1970, p.19), while Fugard himself refers to a boycott by parents because two children, who had been enrolled at a school, were regarded as Coloured even though they had white identity cards and the mother had been educated at that school (Nb, p.150).

Pieter-Dirk Uys, an Afrikaner satirist, playwright and performer, who was bitterly opposed to apartheid (much of his written work from 1973 onwards was banned), found some of his best material in the 1970s and 1980s from Government pronouncements on race re-classification such as: 'The government announced today that during last month seventy-three blacks were re-classified as Coloured, four Coloureds were re-classified as Indian, one white became a Chinaman, and all Japanese are classified as honorary white.'

Another example of this South African absurdity is acutely illustrated in the following extract from Zake Mda's play, *The Road* (1982), which also shows how the dominant authority can interpret the apartheid strictures for their own purposes:

- FARMER: My God, you are right! You are from there (Lesotho).
- LABOURER: How can you tell just by looking at me?
- FARMER: We can always tell, you know. We have ways and means. We did it with the Japanese when we declared them honorary whites whilst the Chinese remained non-white. We are doing it again with the Chinese from Taiwan whom we have now declared honorary whites and those from the mainland who will always remain non-white because they are communists and we don't trade with them. We are very clever, you know.
- LABOURER: Very clever indeed. So what's the big deal?
- FARMER: Don't you understand, man? It means that I can allow you to sit under my tree. You are a foreign Bantu It's all diplomacy, you see. Come now. You can sit under the tree, although you will have to sit on the other side of that trunk. We can't mix, you know. God wouldn't like that. That's why he made us different.

(Mda 1990, p. 149)

To further underline this fatuity, when Athol Fugard and Yvonne Bryceland were playing Boesman and Lena, they chose to use a minimum of make-up; although playing an ostracised Coloured couple they could as well be taken for poor-whites, highlighting the ambiguity in determining identity for the Coloured people of South Africa (Vandenbroucke 1986, p.98).

It is also relevant to the direction taken in this thesis to consider, in the South African political context, the implication of the term 'liberal' and Fugard's own position within this category. The principal debate on the history and significance of the South African liberal tradition and philosophy is contained in the chapter on *A Lesson from Aloes*, but a few preliminary remarks are included here as an introduction to the subject. Throughout this study Fugard is revealed as a political writer who is not concerned with political theory but one whose works clearly reveal the fundamental nature of his liberal beliefs. He is precisely a liberal because of his concern for the individual and his opposition to violence, but there is perhaps another parallel. His characters are unable to ameliorate their own circumstances - they cannot change the apartheid constraints under which they exist - any more than was the case in the real political arena with the liberals - either as a concept or as an opposition political party. Initially the liberals spoke for the black and the Coloured oppressed, but they eventually found themselves isolated, as they were unable either to accept violence as a political weapon or the alternative of Marxism as a creed. As a result (as is further explored in Chapter Four), they were, to an extent, seen as traitors to the cause that in the past they had notionally espoused.

In context, Fugard's liberal characters, from Sam to Mr M via Piet, vary little - they are all cut from the same cloth (even if Mr M's thinking is mainly misguided), but in the political arena there was a progression from the impotent Liberal Party to the Black Consciousness Movement - provided that the latter can be seen as the inheritor of the former. Mark Sanders, in his recent book *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, believes that this is so:

...it...remains typical to see Black Consciousness as antithetical to liberalism and left nonracialism. The evidence, however, justifies the intellectual-historical hypothesis that, rather than confronting liberalism, Black Consciousness radicalized it as it took it out of the hands of its self-appointed white Anglo-South African custodians.

... there is the strong sense in Biko's writings that Black Consciousness is proposed as the "true" inheritor or the liberal tradition.

(Sanders 2002, p.168)

Sanders goes on to say that according to Biko, if they are *true* liberals, they too are oppressed and need to fight for their freedom, much as Fugard's liberals - even if they have very few weapons available.

Finally a word on the methodology applied in this research. As the following detailed chapters reveal, a mode of textual analysis has been employed that is historically, politically and theoretically informed in order to examine the dimension of the political in Fugard's work that in many ways is so glaringly obvious, and yet curiously neglected. The texts have been analysed through a political prism that takes full cognizance of Fugard's skill as a dramatist, even when the works are the collaborative ones, but it is the analysis of the political content that gives an additional emphasis to the literary merit of these plays. Edward Said, in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, wrote:

My position is that texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted.

(Said 1983, p.4)

These words are pertinent to Fugard and the analytical methodology employed; his texts are clearly 'part of the social world...in which they are located' and they are events in more ways than most texts - particularly in the case of the collaborative works - as they were argued over, re-worked, re-shaped and re-presented to reflect, in dramatic form, the reality outside the theatre. These plays were essentially a part of the social fabric of South Africa during the apartheid years and this is fully emphasised in this study as the politics in the texts is rigorously exposed. To take one example, without the emphasis of 'eyes behind their backs' and the traumas associated with 'passing for white', the biography of the lives of Morris and Zachariah could have appeared as a rather sad, sometimes humorous and yet slightly grotesque South African version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, but this study seeks to demonstrate how acutely this is not the case.

This methodological approach requires a clear definition of the 'political' in the sense applicable to this research. Politics in South Africa during these years

can be equated to the philosophy of apartheid as it was developed and enlarged from the earlier segregation policies - politics and apartheid cannot be separated. Jacques Derrida provided a definition of apartheid in an article entitled 'Racism's Last Word' in the catalogue of an exhibition staged in Paris in November 1983, assembled by the Association of Artists of the World against Apartheid. Derrida makes the crucial point that what was practised in South Africa was a result of racism from a deliberate and carefully enunciated State policy, established by 200 laws made over a period of twenty years:

APARTHEID - may that remain the name from now on, the unique appellation for the ultimate racism in the world, the last of many.

THE LAST; or *le dernier*, as one sometimes says in French in order to signify "the worst"..... as if there were something like a racism par excellence...

(Gates 1986, pp.330/ 331)

Many of these Fugard plays demonstrate the existence of this 'racism par excellence' as they reveal the injustices of the apartheid system, but their dramatic quality is such that, to quoted Dennis Walder from the Introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of *Township Plays*: 'they ...transcend the limitations of immediacy, or agitprop' (p. xxx).

During the last twenty years or more, it has it been accepted by literary critics that 'all literature is political', although there are still many examples of literary analysis that seek to avoid this truism. However, in the case of Fugard's plays, it could be argued that they are doubly political as on the one hand they are part of the unexceptional and universal political nature of texts, while on the other they emerge from one of the most restrictive and confrontational political periods of the 20th Century - the South African apartheid era. When, on the 29th March 1990, Fugard was responding to the award of an Honorary degree at the University of Witwatersrand, he said: 'As South Africans we have lived our lives so farunder the pressure, the constant pressure of very powerful and all pervasive political forces.' These plays cannot help but be marked by these forces, as this thesis will show.

In *A Lesson from Aloes* Piet quotes from the Bible that the first thing that Adam did in Eden was to name his world. However, in South Africa, and principally as a result of apartheid, this was not an easy task as race nomenclature became a complicated and sensitive subject around which both confusion and anger arose. In the broadest of terms the word 'Native' was used for the Bantu-speaking people, of whom the Xhosa and the Zulu were the majority, while for those whose origins were from Europe, however remote, were described as 'Europeans'. This thesis uses a capital 'C' for people of mixed race and a capital 'A' for black Africans (where appropriate), except when the word 'Bantu' is required. For the white populace, 'Afrikaner' is obvious, but for the remainder, titles are more cumbersome - 'Europeans', 'British', 'English', 'English speaking', 'English settlers' etc. - and each instance is rendered on its merits, or as appears appropriate.

NOTES

¹ To some extent he often avoids this by referring to 'bearing witness' - a typical example from the *Notebooks* being: '...my life's work was possibly just to witness as truthfully as I could, the nameless and destitute (desperate) of this one little corner of the world' (Nb. p. 172).

² In an interview c.1983, Fugard said: '...there was a very specific requirement in the case of *A Lesson from Aloes* that had me going back to study and learn from someone else, whom I admire most profoundly - Chekhov. This need to go back to Chekhov arose from the fact that, more than in the case of other plays I've written, the creational concept operated under a bland surface of words, particularly in that very strange first act, where, with the exception of one or two little explosions, the real movement is taking place subterraneously' (Daymond 1984, p.25).

³ The first person narrator of the Albert Camus novel, *The Outsider*.

⁴ Hendrik Potgeiter was one of the four main leaders involved in the Great Trek.

⁵ Like the father in *Hello and Goodbye*, although Harold David Fugard's injuries had been sustained during an accident at sea as a child rather than as a railway worker.

⁶ Sam Semela, who worked for Fugard's mother, was the inspiration for Sam in '*Master Harold*'...and the boys.

⁷ In an interview with Mary Benson, Fugard referred to Mokae as 'one of the really rich working relationships of my life - and also, of course, a very important friendship' (Benson 1977/78, p. 78).

⁸ From a piece by Michel Leiris in the collection *For Nelson Mandela* edited by Jacques Derrida and Mustapha Tlili. This collection is described as 'a literary homage .. by twenty three writers of international acclaim', spanning the scene from Samuel Beckett to Allen Ginsberg.

⁹ 'Archbishop Tutu likes to tell a joke that has an edge of bitter truth to it. "When the white man first came here," Tutu says, "he had the Bible and we had the land. Then the white man said to us, come let us kneel and pray together. So we knelt and closed our eyes and prayed, and when we opened our eyes again, lo! - we had the Bible and he had the land"' (Sparks 1991, p.67).

¹⁰ It is not too difficult to read into the use of 'William', Modisane's first name, the racist inference that was just as likely to lead to the use of the words 'John-boy' in any verbal exchange with him.

¹¹ *The New York Times* South Africa correspondent during some of the apartheid years and an astute commentator on the political scene - and a friend of Fugard.

TWO

Lessons for Hally and a Tale of Two Fathers

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...

(Charles Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities*)

"Master Harold"... and the boys is set in 1950 when, for the dispossessed in South Africa, the times were more often of the worst variety, but in the play there are some moments better than others, particularly when the singular affinity between Sam and Hally is observed. However, before the curtain falls, this relationship is destroyed by an insensitive act of violence of such impact that when the play was previewing in Philadelphia in 1982, and during the scene where Sam asks Willie if he should hit Hally for spitting in his face, a group of young blacks in the balcony screamed out 'hit him, hit him' (Pacheco 1982, p. 25). This sentiment was echoed in the New York black newspaper *New Amsterdam News* which expressed disgust about the apparent unconcern by Fugard, a white writer, for the racist climax that 'set up a situation in which a black man's dignity is so assaulted by a little boy that he had the impulse to hit him... and didn't' (Seidenspinner 1986, p. 211). In an interview with Andrew Foley, Fugard provides a vigorous response to these attitudes:

And a lot of critics in America, especially black critics in America, said, "Why didn't you have Sam beat the living shit out of Hally at that moment?" Now, that would obviously have satisfied them, that would really have made the play in their eyes a contribution to the "cause". Right? Instead - and let me just say that this is not some fictional construction on Athol Fugard's side; that moment actually happened in my life, and what my play shows is what actually did happen. Instead, Sam - though I don't doubt that he wanted to beat me in response to that appalling action on my side - instead, Sam took on the attempt to educate me. Now, the reason why I seized on this incident years later as a writer and took it up and made it the focal point of a drama was because it actually embodies - perfectly - a choice of those very same liberal values that we were talking about just now. If any moments of my writing define me as a liberal, it is those moments when violence is there as a potential choice, when a character says "I can either destroy or I can try to use this to take myself one step higher." In my opinion Sam makes the right choice

and goes one step higher, because hitting Hally would have achieved - what? What would it have achieved? It would have achieved in my opinion absolutely nothing. An act of destruction, an act of violence, is blind and only creates darkness. I believe most passionately that of all the things men and women resort to in terms of their dialogue with other human beings, the most stupid, the most pointless, the most tragic, the most misguided, is violence. Because it only perpetuates itself.

(Foley 1994, p. 65)

Although the above is taken from an interview given in 1994, Fugard's liberal views in the decades before that date would have been the same; he has consistently seen South African theatre as an instrument for change, an alternative to violence, as confirmed by an extract from another interview:

I don't think there can be any doubt that theatre in the last years - not just in the last years but certainly during the years of apartheid, together with the other arts..... fed into that whole movement that was moving towards the pressures that were building up for change and the important thing about theatre was that it, being a medium in which dialogue is pre-eminent and is the main instrument that theatre uses, it might well have had a consequence in that we finally *talked our way out of a nightmare rather than trying to kill each other.*

(Personal interview. November 2002 – emphasis added.)

The apartheid regime did not fall as a result of 'talking'; the reasons were complex and manifold - economics, sanctions, international and internal pressures - but Fugard's words, those of a poetic playwright, have a place in the argument being presented. Like Mr M in *My Children! My Africa!*, he values the use of words, they are the building blocks of his trade and although unlikely, it is encouraging to think that dialogue might have made as much contribution to the fall of apartheid as did violence. Fanon defended the need for violence by colonized people in their struggle for freedom, imitating the force used by the oppressor:

He of whom *they* have never stopped saying that the only language he understands is that of force, decides to give utterance by force. In fact, as always, the settler has shown him the way he should take if he is to become free. The argument the native chooses has been furnished by the settler, and by an ironic turning of the tables it is the

native who now affirms that the colonialist understands nothing but force.

(Fanon 1990, p. 66)

However, in South Africa the force available to the 'settler' was on such a scale that realistically, passive resistance was the only real option available and, in the main, this proved to be the successful course. The demise of apartheid was principally achieved through non-violent action and this is reflected in Fugard's work where physical aggression on the stage is rare. The burning of the first page of his dictionary portends the violent and horrible death of Mr M, but the murder is not confirmed to the audience until the next scene, when Isabel and Thami meet three weeks after the event. Other minor examples of short-lived violence can be cited, such as when Morris briefly attacks a brother, as does Hester in *Hello and Goodbye*, and when Boesman hits Lena off-stage and beats the dead Outa in front of the audience, but in "*Master Harold*" ...and the boys the spitting incident is so unexpected, so hideously shocking, as to constitute the most violent of actions in any of Fugard's plays.¹ Of even more significance, it is not brother or sister against brother or a Coloured man beating a black man - this is an attack by a white boy on a man who has been a substitute father to him, but who is black.

The violent action on stage, Hally unexpectedly spitting in Sam's face, is not the only hostility on display. The one act of violence that might be justified, Sam hitting out in response to the degradation inflicted by Hally, does not take place but the play illustrates, particularly during the deterioration in the relationship between the spitter and the spat-upon, how insidious was violence in South Africa. The state's authority was predicated on its preparedness to employ physical violence, whether on the streets or in the interview room, but in the majority of instances, citizens experience the oppressive arm of authority either as the threat of violence, or in its psychological or symbolic form.² Unless in the possession of a valid pass with valid stamps, most of the population walk the streets of South Africa with the fear that force might be inflicted upon them at any time. Even when legally allowed to occupy the white man's pavement, the pass holder could have been subject to overt verbal violence, insensitivity or the hurt inflicted by being ignored and unrecognised. When the intolerant Hally calls

Sam a bigot for not appreciating the importance of Charles Darwin (p. 16), Sam, as a result of years of oppression, does not react any more than he does when Hally says he doesn't want 'any more nonsense in here', even though all the nonsense has been caused by Hally's reaction to the possibility of his father's release from hospital (p. 28). As the action proceeds, the temperature in the tea room rises and Hally '*gives Willie a vicious whack*' with his ruler' (p. 30). This leads to Sam being named as a servant who is getting too familiar (and who should now address Hally as 'Master Harold') and then on to the spitting incident. Sam does not physically respond - the stage direction at this juncture reads [*His violence ebbing away into defeat as quickly as it flooded*] - but his verbal reaction sums up how violence inflicted on the oppressed is tolerated to the extent that it is. Sam says to Hally, 'you think you're safe in your fair skin' (p. 46), and indubitably it is the protection provided by race, universal in the perpetration of South African violence, that is instinctively accepted as the norm.

Using differences in colour as an excuse for violence and other indignities is part of the central racial issue exposed in these plays, but it is only in this one that there is a direct representation on stage of one of the primary elements in the real world of apartheid - the confrontation between white and black. In *Blood Knot* (where there was another black and white scenario - the first appearance on a stage in South Africa of a black and white actor together) and in *Boesman and Lena*, the actions of Fugard's victims are principally controlled by the unseen authorities, 'the eyes behind their backs', but in "*Master Harold*"... and *the boys* the political context is up front and open: Hally in the white corner and Sam in the black. It is not, however, as elementary as this. The relationship between Sam and Hally is too complex to be confined to the roped enclosure of a boxing ring ³ but what the juxtaposition of a black Sam and a white Hally in this play does do is to open up an opportunity to compare this relationship with the black and white reality in South Africa, either in 1950, when the play is set, or in the early 1980s, when it was first staged: to compare what happened on that wet and windy afternoon with the social, economic and political fates in store for the myriad white Hallys and black Sams. In principle the apartheid authorities were determined to keep the races as segregated as possible but

this was unachievable due to the need for non-white labour and indeed, for many white people, their most likely contact with their fellow black South Africans was in the kitchen, with their servants, their 'boys'. According to a review by Joseph Lelyveld in *The New York Times* of 24 March 1983, when "*Master Harold*"...and the boys was presented in Johannesburg, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was in the audience, said 'It holds a mirror up to our reality. It shows what we have become.'; and it is this reality, as mirrored by the action on stage, that is analysed in this chapter.

"*Master Harold*"...and the boys is a work of Fugard's mature years; he is reported as saying 'In spite of the pain involved, it has at a technical level been one of the happiest writing experiences I've ever had' (Benson 1997, p.123). It was first performed in 1982 and was the first full-length play Fugard chose for an initial showing outside South Africa; it opened at New Haven in the USA on 12 March 1982, was transferred to New York in May and then to Johannesburg, first presented at the Market Theatre on 22 March 1983. The uninterrupted action of the play - there is no interval - takes place in a real-life location, the tea room at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth. Although Fugard has lived in Johannesburg and overseas, particularly in the United States, and has a special affection for the Karoo⁴, Port Elizabeth was his cultural home, at least during the apartheid years, the place where his touch for 'time and place' is most sure. It is a city redolent of the dispossessed - to quote Christopher Wortham, 'of the lost, the lonely, and the forsaken' (Wortham 1983, p.166) - or, to take Fugard's view:

When I stand on a street corner in Port Elizabeth, I can put together a very plausible scenario for any one of the faces passing in front of me on the pavement... I have mastered the code of that time and place; I can 'read' the motley flow of life on that pavement. That street corner is 'home' in the profoundest sense of the word.... I belong there, and because of that, because it is mine in a way that no other place in this world can ever be, I have a sense of authority when I write about it.

(p.v)

There are only three characters on stage in the play: a seventeen year-old boy Harold shortened to Hally (Fugard's full name is Harold Athol Lannigan and he was known as Hally when a boy) and two black servants, Sam and Willie, who

look after the tea room during Hally's mother's absence. According to the play, both Sam and Willie had previously worked at the Jubilee Boarding House, another enterprise run by Hally's mother in the past. When the play opens, Sam and Willie are found alone discussing ballroom dancing while Hally's mother is at the hospital visiting her husband. Hally comes in from school to finish his homework and reveals, initially, the friendly and yet somewhat condescending relationship he has with these two, particularly Sam, the senior of the servants. However, the news that his father is to be released from hospital changes all that, and there is an angry confrontation between Hally and Sam, climaxing in the spitting incident which replicated what had happened when Fugard himself, at the age of ten, spat in the face of his mother's servant, Sam Semela. In the play this event becomes one of theatre's most disturbing moments, on a par, at one level, with the plucking out of Gloucester's eyes in *King Lear*. In Brecht's *In the Jungle of Cities*, one result of a bizarre quarrel between the two main characters is when one of them calls upon his opponent to spit in the face of a Salvation Army preacher - which he does. Shylock's Jewish gabardine is spat upon in the Rialto and Anne responds to Richard III's unwanted wooing by spitting at him but in context, these Brecht and Shakespeare examples begin to verge on the insignificant compared with Fugard's shocking moment. He commented on the incident, quoting Oscar Wilde: "In 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol,' Wilde says that each man kills the thing he loves - some do it with a word, some do it with a sword. And there's one little boy who did it with spit" (Gussow 1982, p. 88).

In the plays dealt with in this thesis, racism is so fundamental and all-pervasive that before looking at the discrimination on display in the tea room, the racist potential of the author himself does have some relevance and should be briefly alluded to. Another possible title for this work could have been 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Racist' (Hally's artistic efforts at school that day, a caricature of one of his teachers, has resulted in him receiving 'six of the best'), reinforced by comments made by Fugard himself:

It's a political play! If you're going to talk about politics, a little white boy dealing with his indoctrination in South Africa, turning him into a little racist - because that is what that society tried to do to me. Thank God I had a mother who was trying to pull me out of that

indoctrination and I had Sam and Willie who were also teaching me lessons that finally liberated me, but that society was turning me into a little Hitler. You've only got to look at the way I treated those two men in the play.

(Personal interview. November 2002)

Mel Gussow, one-time theatre critic of the *New York Times*, provides similar sentiments:

Fugard was close to his mother, while his father remained at a distance, although in his boyhood they did share a taste for pulp fiction, comic books, and horror movies, as the father and son do in "Master Harold". Fugard said recently, "He was an incredibly gentle man, but he was absolutely without my mother's capacity for rising above the South African situation and seeing people as people. My dad was full of pointless, unthought-out prejudices." In direct contrast, his mother was colour-blind. "Like Piet Bezuidenhout in 'A Lesson from Aloes', she had this set of ideas and human values that put her in radical opposition to the system." Fugard recalled. "She never got involved in politics, but as early as I can remember she had an understanding of the injustice."

(Gussow 1982, p.54)

Fugard acknowledges the contribution made by the real-life Sam and Willie in freeing him from racial prejudice, but, as is revealed, there is no evidence in the play that Hally learns anything from his Sam and Willie that helps him to avoid this prejudice.

The reality Archbishop Tutu referred to is revealed as we observe the tea room as a microcosm of South Africa and compare how hegemony works in both spaces. Apartheid South Africa provides an intriguing arena for a debate on the Gramscian concept of hegemony in a country where coercion by the State is well in evidence, given that, for Gramsci, hegemony is about the replacement of coercion with consent. To maintain hegemony, the dominant group need to actively develop and spread this ideology through the civil society where it needs to be continually nurtured and evolved to maintain the support of the subordinate classes, on which it depends. This is neatly described by Raymond Williams:

A lived hegemony is always a process... Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis.

Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, re-created, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own.

(Williams 1977, p. 112)

The white population exercises political domination with little active consent by the mass of the population, even if their dominance 'has to be continually renewed, re-created, defended and modified' (and in South Africa's case, to be defended with awesome force), but in the tea room it is possible to look for a concrete analysis of a 'lived hegemony' as we trace the hierarchical lines of control within the small community of players and see where there is consent, and where coercion. There is very little dispute as to who is at the top of the tree. Hally's mother is the licensee of the tea room and the owner of the goodwill of the business.⁵ Like Mrs Fugard, Hally's mother is the breadwinner and the employer of Sam and Willie, at least in Sam's eyes, but obfuscation arises when Hally, in his confused state, finally breaks the bond between them:

HALLY Good. Because what you've been trying to do is meddle in something you know nothing about. All that concerns you in here, Sam, is to try and do what you get paid for - keep the place clean and serve the customers. In plain words, just get on with your job. My mother is right. She's always warning me about allowing you to get too familiar. Well, this time you've gone too far. It's going to stop right now.

[No response from Sam.]

You're only a servant in here, and don't forget it.

[Still no response. Hally is trying hard to get one.]

And as far as my father is concerned, all you need to remember is that he is your boss.

SAM *[needled at last.]* No, he isn't. I get paid by your mother.

HALLY Don't argue with me, Sam.

SAM Then don't say he's my boss.

HALLY He's a white man and that's good enough for you.

(p. 42/43)

Hally's father only comes into the chain of command when it is a question of race. Sam is not the father's servant but, as in the outside world, when it comes to taking sides, any white man or woman is superior to Sam. The tragedy of South Africa is that this assumed racial superiority permeated the whole of a society where, for example, the itinerant Boesman, poverty stricken both materially and intellectually, might look down on an intelligent Sam because Boesman is Coloured and Sam, to him, is a *kaffer*. In another instance, the poor-white Hester as a girl can with impunity chase away the vegetable seller because he is, her word, a 'coolie'. Hally of course has a filial relationship with his mother and father, but clearly that with his father is problematic, veering from disgust and shame to love. Hally exercises control on behalf of his mother, and yet Sam is also seen as being in charge, acting for her in the running of the enterprise when she is absent, and in his ongoing role in *loco parentis* on behalf of the father. During most of the action the relationships are finely balanced but by the end of the play that between Hally and Sam changes from consensual to coercive as "Master Harold" assumes the role of master. Perhaps the end of the play clarifies the position. From the spitting incident until Hally leaves the scene, the Gramscian image of consent that is in place with all of the parties on stage is shattered and Hally takes on the dominant coercive role assuming, if somewhat prematurely, his allotted position as a white man in his particular South African society. Alternatively, is Hally's assumption of the racist role only temporary, as observed by Sheila Roberts below, and not the first step on the ladder of his destiny, devoid of any rungs devoted to compassion or liberalism?

Hallie, a boy, lacks power in the social hierarchy, just as women and urban blacks do. So he (figuratively) beats Sam down to give himself a temporary delusion of power.

(Roberts 1982 p.32).

Although the play does not show this, if Hally does develop into a non-racist Athol Fugard, Sheila Roberts' concept of a temporary assumption of power may be justified. However what the theatregoer clearly sees on stage is a precise example of how, even in the hands of a boy - provided he is a white - the power is far from illusory and probably not even temporary.

Willie and Sam are both servants but Sam is the senior. On the labour front, Willie does most of the cleaning, on his knees, while Sam wears the white coat of the waiter. This is a perfectly understandable hierarchy in the work place, but again Sam is more to Willie than his senior, he is adviser and teacher, much as he has been to Hally. At the bottom of this snapshot of South African society we have Hilda, Willie's girl-friend. In this hierarchy there is a woman at the top of the pile and at the bottom; the white father indirectly causes the white child to abuse the black man, and the black man hits the black woman. To underline the gap between the woman at the top and the one at the bottom, observe the franchise: in South Africa white women were granted the vote in 1930, sixty years before black citizens, male or female.

Sam and Willie's menial position in this hierarchy is the same as for the majority of urban-black or Coloured people in apartheid South Africa. It has been argued that the racial question developed, above all, to be a matter of ensuring a supply of cheap black labour, a factor that became an integral element in the whole miscellany of apartheid racist ideology. Not that this is any comfort to the oppressed - they are exploited, whether by the capitalist under the heading of class or as a result of the rules of petty apartheid. These urbanised workers were supplemented by labour from outside South Africa. Willie originated in what is now Zimbabwe, while Sam Semela was a native of Basutoland, as presumably was Sam in the play - he showed Hally a 'real Basuto arse' (p. 45). Basutoland (now Lesotho) was a desperately poor country; it is estimated that by 1956 half of their men folk were working in South Africa, just like Sam.

It is not, however, the hierarchical lines of control observed in this Fugard family, nor the position of labour, that represent the major lessons delivered in this play; these involve racism on the one hand as contrasted with love and romance on the other. To realise this conjunction, the relationship between Sam and Hally is of paramount concern, particularly as each become both teacher and student. This assumption of a duality of position is described by Paulo Freire, the radical Brazilian educationalist, who wrote in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.

(Freire 1996, p. 61)

Freire introduces the banking concept of education to explain what normally happens, namely that the teacher deposits knowledge and the students receive these deposits, in contrast to the ideal set out in the quotation above. What he refers to as 'authentic' education is not carried out by Hally *for* Sam or Hally *about* Sam but rather Hally *with* Sam. Whether any 'authentic' education takes place during the action of this play will be revealed as this chapter unfolds.

Chapter 3 of Freire's book deals extensively with dialogue, and the essence of dialogue, the *word*. He continues:

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world....

But while to say the true word... is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone

Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanising aggression.

If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings.

(Ibid, p. 69)

He goes on to say that dialogue cannot exist without certain constituents, principally love, humility, faith in humankind, hope and critical thinking, all of which figure strongly in much of Fugard's work, particularly 'love'.⁶ 'Founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence' (Ibid, p. 72).

The dialogue between Hally and Sam, as the lessons are presented, can be tested against Freire's thesis in the South African political context. Does this dialogue contain love, hope, faith and humility and are there some words that are 'false'? Is it established that both parties have an equal right to the words that are true and do they both achieve 'significance as human beings'? In the case of Hally, there is more evidence of arrogance than humility. He mocks his father over the comics left for him to read and boasts that, like Tolstoy, he has educated Sam, his peasant, which is repeated later in the play with the line, 'Oh, well, so much for trying to give you a decent education. I've obviously achieved nothing' (p.31). Hally's arrogance at this point is a further example of how instinctively he assumes the mantle of the white racist as he reflects the false, but inherent presumption, that his mission is to civilise and educate the native. This is to be achieved by imposing upon him the white man's culture (to fill the supposed void created by the native having no culture or proper understanding of his own) but all the time accepting the long-standing racist assumption that this astonishing benevolence is ultimately wasted as the blacks fail to make use of the white man's gift. Freire refers to this as 'cultural invasion' - an invasion that necessarily contains violence, as manifested in Hally's case by the final degradation of spitting in Sam's face. The consequences of this invasion are tellingly elucidated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

Whether urbane or harsh, cultural invasion is thus always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture, who lose their originality or face the threat of losing it. In cultural invasion..... the invaders are the authors of, and actors in, the process; those they invade are the objects. The invaders mold; those they invade are molded.....

All domination involves invasion - at times physical and overt, at times camouflaged, with the invader assuming the role of a helping friend. In the last analysis, invasion is a form of economic and cultural domination....

Cultural conquest leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are invaded; they begin to respond to the values, the standards, and the goals of the invaders. In their passion to dominate, to mold others to their patterns and their way of life, the invaders desire to know how those they have invaded apprehend reality - but only so they can dominate the latter more effectively. In cultural invasion it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes.

For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority... The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them.⁷

(Freire 1996, pp.133/134)

Even when recalling the pleasure of the kite-building incident, Hally cannot accept that Sam initiated this - he takes for granted Sam's 'intrinsic inferiority'. 'The sheer audacity of it took my breath away. I mean, seriously, what the hell does a black man know about flying a kite? (p.23). He cannot grant Sam the full proportion of credit as he says 'We've done it!' and 'I was so proud of us!' (p. 24). In contrast, when quizzed about leaving Hally and the kite tied to a whites-only bench, the concrete representation of apartheid, Sam refuses to spoil the memory by telling him the truth.

The dialogue reaches its ugly climax when Sam warns Hally to be careful, whereupon Hally provides his version of the truth:

Of what? The truth? I seem to be the only one around here who is prepared to face it. We've had the pretty dream, it's time now to wake up and have a good long look at the way things really are. Nobody knows the steps, there's no music, the cripples are also out there tripping up everybody and trying to get into the act, and it's called the All-Corners-How-to-Make-a-Fuckup-of-Life Championships. [*Another ugly laugh.*] Hang on, Sam! The best bit is still coming. Do you know what the winner's trophy is? A beautiful big chamber pot with roses on the side, and it's full to the brim with piss. And guess who I think is going to be this year's winner.

(p. 41)

The only truth in the Freire sense that is provided by Hally's contribution to the dialogue is to underline to the audience how false is Hally's concept. The crippled truth that he alleges is recognised by him alone manifests itself only as a reflection of his relationship with his father, who is not only crippled in the body, but also in the mind as a result of the innate racism imbibed from the Afrikaners, who continued to cripple those over whom they exercise their political power. Although it is this relationship that is soon to destroy the 'love, hope, faith and humility' that has existed between him and Sam, the pretty

dream that he mocks was genuine in the hands of Sam, but in his anger and confusion, Hally cannot recognise it: he can only destroy with dialogue that is just as false, just as unequal as the political relationships that subsist between the white and the black in the country as a whole. What chance is there for Hally to avoid the societal norms? He repeats his father's words, 'You must teach the boys to show you more respect, my son' (p. 44) and the ambiguity at the end of the play makes it difficult to say that any of the dialogue has enabled Hally to achieve much in the way of 'significance as a human being'. This is the central tragedy of *"Master Harold"... and the boys*.

Clearly the dialogue between Hally and Sam and the circumstances of their relationship cannot help but be tarnished by the politics of race in the country where they live, which makes for a difficult testing ground for Freire's theories. However, his basic tenets are a useful tool to employ in the process of a deeper investigation of one aspect of the understanding between the two of them, even if not always apparent to Hally, and that is love; or as Errol Durbach describes it later in this chapter, 'a failure of love'. To quote from Freire again: 'Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people' (Ibid, p.70). Even with the inherent arrogance, and the uncertainty injected by his confused relationship with his father, Hally's intercourse with Sam, until he hears the news from the hospital, is suffused with real affection for Sam (perhaps the only friend of his boyhood, as was the case for Fugard). On Sam's part, he strives and has striven so that his partnership with the boy should be like a 'Love-story with happy ending' (p. 4). This love is exhibited when it is revealed that the kite was built to counter Hally's shame about his drunken father. This shame returns when Sam makes Hally see that the dance competition can be 'beautiful' and 'exciting', but tragically this is thrown back in Sam's face, both metaphorically and in practice (with spittle), when the real father's crippled state is projected into the idyllic scene on the dance floor, as painted by Sam. 'Do you want to know what is really wrong with your lovely little dream, Sam? It's not just that we are all bad dancers. That does happen to be perfectly true, but there's more to it than just that. You left out the cripples' (p. 41).

After the application of Freire's theories, it is now appropriate to visit the political lessons in the play as enacted in the classroom on the stage. The first of these is delivered in silence as it concerns not the dialogue or the action of the drama, but the set. All of the tables and chairs, except for one of each, have been cleared and stacked to one side, indicating that on that wet and windy day, no further customers are expected at this presumably whites-only establishment. The positioning of the furniture can indicate that, for a short period of time, this tea room is seemingly a safe haven for Willie and Sam, or at least a piece of neutral space, temporarily removed from the grip of the Group Areas Act. However, observe the single table and chair. This is the all-too evident reminder of reality - this cafe is not an ersatz dancing school for black people but an establishment owned by whites, with a single table and chair (not really available for use by Sam and Willie) reserved, like the park bench in the kite flying episode, for a member of the ruling class, in this case Hally.

This is the first instance of Fugard's careful dramaturgy where, although the set remains more or less static, the right to the space changes as the play progresses. At the outset it belongs, with reservations, to Sam and Willie. It then goes through a number of metamorphoses during Hally's presence, i.e. the banter between him and Sam about his and their school work; the memories of kite flying; the two telephone conversations that so dramatically change the mood; the talk about the Eastern Province Ballroom Championships; the ugly climactic episode of arses and spittle; and finally back into the possession of Willie and Sam as they dance together to the strains of 'Little man you've had a busy day'. The way in which the space that is the tea room apparently changes ownership at different times during the play, depending on which set of characters is dominant (even some off-stage, as with Hally's father), is intriguing, but as the audience leaves the theatre, they are in no doubt as to the legitimate titleholder of this space. As everyone in South Africa is classified by race, virtually all property is similarly designated, as in Fanon's colonial world:

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall Apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if

we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies.

(Fanon 1990, p.29)

The 'lines of force' become only too evident in that tea room.

In this deserted schoolroom, deserted to the extent that there are no trappings of education other than Hally's schoolbooks, we might almost be in a Freire classroom since it is questionable who is the teacher and who is the pupil. Hally says to Sam '...I've educated you'. (p.18) but as mentioned in the interview with Andrew Foley at the beginning of this chapter, Fugard maintained that Sam Semela 'took on the attempt to educate me.' Nevertheless, in the play they appear to mentor each other, as Freire would approve, but, with what is seen as the second lesson, the positions are clear-cut: Sam is instructing Willie, firstly in the art of the quickstep and then in the mysteries of romance.⁸ One critic, (Jordon 1993 p. 469), considers that the correct genre for this play is that of romance and refers to *The Political Unconscious* and Fredric Jameson's interpretation of Northrop Frye in this regard:

Romance is for Frye a wish-fulfilment or Utopian fantasy which aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday life in such a way as to restore the conditions of some lost Eden, or to anticipate a future realm from which the old mortality and imperfections will have been effaced. Romance, therefore, does not involve the substitution of some more ideal realm for ordinary reality.... but rather a process of *transforming* ordinary reality:

(Jameson 1981, p. 110)

Willie asks Sam what is romance but the political and racial parameters of the play reveal that romance may be hard to find and Frye's 'future realm from which the old mortality and imperfections will have been effaced' difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, Sam tells Willie that the judges must see Hilda and he 'dancing their way to a happy ending' (p. 4/5) and that Willie should imagine Hilda to be Ginger Rogers. Willie's unromantic response to this is to retort: 'With no teeth? You try' (p.5). Although violence and incipient racism are not too far from the surface, the first scene could easily be categorised as being primarily about love, or more particularly about a failure of love, as suggested by Errol Durbach:

It would clearly be misleading to claim that *"Master Harold"... and the boys* addresses the growing complexity of apartheid politics in the South Africa of 1987. It is a "history" play - a *family* "history" written, like O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, as an exorcism of the tormented ghosts of his childhood..... It deals with a rite of passage clumsily negotiated, a failure of love in a personal power-struggle with political implications. Alan Paton, writing in the same time-frame of history, projects a similar vision of tenuous hope for racial harmony - and also the dreadful consequences of its deferment. Msimangu, the black priest in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, speaks the powerful subtext beneath the action of Fugard's play:

But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love. Because when a man loves, he seeks no power, and therefore he has power. I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it.

He was grave and silent, and then he said somberly, I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they are turned to loving, they will find we are turned to hating.

(Durbach 1987, p. 513)

During this second lesson, devoted to love and romance, Sam optimistically dreams of a bright future for Willie and Hilda that might come true on the dance floor. However, Willie's prospects away from the 1950 Eastern Province Championships are as limited as those of any other black man of that time in South Africa - and even in the ballroom there is a problem that is of Willie's own making, rather than arising from any apartheid stricture. Hilda, his partner and the mother of his illegitimate child, has run away because of ill-treatment by him. She has resorted to the authorities:

Reports me to Child Wellfed, that I'm not giving her money. She lies! Every week I am giving her money for milk. And how do I know is my baby? Only his hair looks like me. She's fucking around all the time I turn my back. Hilda Samuels is a bitch!

(p.5)

The truth, or otherwise, of Willie's protestation is not revealed but when Sam asks Willie what he would have done if Hally had spat at him, he replies:

Me? Spit at me like I was a dog? [A thought that had not occurred to him before. He looks at Hally.] Ja. Then I want to hit him. I want to hit him hard!

[A dangerous few seconds as the men stand staring at the boy. Willie turns away, shaking his head]

But maybe all I do is go cry at the back. He's little boy, *Boet* Sam. Little *white* boy. Long trousers now, but he's still little boy.

(p. 45/46)

As Fugard has stressed, violence does no one any good, but is Willie really compassionate about the little boy? He knows that hitting a white person can have dire consequences - but not so hitting a black woman, as they are at the bottom of the heap of ethnic discriminations in South Africa. When Lena threatens to go to the police because of beatings by Boesman, he mocks her and tells her that they would advise him to finish her *en klaar* ⁹ (p. 207). However, in the case of Willie, ballroom dancing has a civilising effect and by the end of the play he promises to apologise to Hilda and beat her no more - and try and absorb Sam's lessons on love and romance.

The next lesson reflects the year in which the play is set, 1950. This was a pivotal time in the history of apartheid legislation, being the year in which the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Amendment to the Immorality Act and the Suppression of Communism Act were all first introduced. There are no direct references to any of this legislation in the play but there is no doubt that Sam, and perhaps Hally, are aware of the reality that Archbishop Tutu referred to. When Hally tells Sam he has had six strokes of the cane that day at school it opens up the following dialogue:

SAM On your bum?

HALLY Where else? The days when I got them on my hands are gone forever, Sam.

SAM With your trousers down!

HALLY No. He's not quite that barbaric.

SAM That's the way they do it in jail.

HALLY *[Flicker of morbid interest]* Really?

SAM *Ja*. When the magistrate sentences you to 'strokes with a light cane'.

HALLY Go on.

SAM They make you lie down on a bench. One policeman pulls down your trousers and holds your ankles, another one pulls your shirt over your head and holds your arms...

[*Sam and Willie demonstrate*]

HALLY Thank you! That's enough.

SAM ... and the one that gives you the strokes talks to you gently and for a long time between each one. [*He laughs*]

HALLY I've heard enough, Sam! Jesus! It's a bloody awful world when you come to think of it. People can be real bastards.

SAM That's the way it is, Hally.

HALLY It doesn't *have* to be that way. There is something called progress, you know. We don't exactly burn people at the stake any more.

SAM Like Joan of Arc.

HALLY Correct. If she was captured today, she'd be given a fair trial.

SAM And then the death sentence.

(p.11/12)

From within the relatively benign settings of Hally's classroom (off-stage) and the near-deserted tea room, this text furnishes access into the history of corporal punishment in South Africa. According to 'World Corporal Punishment Research', published on the Internet at corpun.com (February 2005):

Apart from present-day Singapore there can hardly be another country where judicial corporal punishment (JCP) was used as widely as in twentieth-century South Africa. JCP evolved over a long period from traditional use under British colonial administration for serious crimes only, to a mandatory requirement in the 1950s and 1960s for many crimes in the case of adult men. In a milder form it was also over many decades a routinely inflicted penalty for males under 21 for any offence.

A few years after Hally's caning, the Criminal Laws Amendment Act of 1953 was introduced which allowed punishment for protest against any law to include ten lashes. Statistics available on the website referred to above do not differentiate between the number of black and white offenders who were whipped in the approximate time-frame of "*Master Harold*"...and the boys (nearly 60,000 punishments for the years 1951-1957) but what is available are

the numbers for the years 1957-1958 where of the 18,542 punishments, 96 per cent were administered to non-whites.

The symbolic act of 'six of the best', applied to Hally's clothed arse (in contrast to the naked one Sam is constrained to present to his tormentor later in the play) and seen in the wider political context of South Africa, reminds us that, in addition to judicial corporal punishment, beatings were common occurrences, particularly of suspects in detention. Most of these widespread detentions were authorised under the Sabotage Act of 1962, and the General Law Amendment legislation of a 1963, known as the 'Ninety-day Act'. These punitive laws, where suspects could be detained without an arrest warrant and denied access to a lawyer, made illegal a wide range of activities that were considered as dangers to public safety. These included trespass and the illegal possession of weapons where the prescribed penalties ranged from a minimum jail sentence of five years to a maximum of the death penalty. Hally thought that a latter-day Joan of Arc would receive a fair trial, but under this legislation the onus would have been upon her to prove that her activities were not politically motivated. This scenario was more vital than Dickens illustrating, through Wackford Squeers, the cruelty in 19th Century education in Britain. Hally's non-barbaric punishment takes place in a white school but across the playground and into John Vorster Square, or the fifth-floor where Steve Daniels is taken, the beatings are administered and, to a large extent, authorised by the State. The example of Steve Biko is referred to below but, following the image painted by Sam of the bench used for the heavily ironic 'light cane', consider this description, using a desk, from evidence given by Ntombizanele Elsie Zingzondo to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

Kruger took off my jersey and my shirt and pulled me up to the desk. One of them took off my bra. They forced me to bend over the open drawer so that one of my breasts would hang in the drawer. They then slammed the drawer shut so that my breast was squashed. They did this three times to each of my breasts. They also pulled handfuls of hair out of my head.

(Krog 1999, pp. 171/172)

This is the political history to which the text refers but in the field of social history, reflecting the class, or race struggle, the words 'strokes with a light

cane' lead us to consider the role played in South Africa of corporal punishment between the races as it has developed over centuries. Physical punishment for black workers, from the time of the first settlement until well into the Twentieth Century, had its origins in the need for the white capitalist to completely control his black labour or to overcome any resistance to the decision as to where that black worker might live. This was generally manifested in the use of the sjambok¹⁰, totem of the rural Boer autocrat farmer, or the police batons wielded during so many incidents. The violence represented in these beatings can be seen to have always reflected an instance of capitalism, whether in the control of the farm worker¹¹ or the subjection of the dissident, where such dissidence was upsetting the normal exploitation by the white bosses of the black labouring mass.

On canings, the fictional Sam and his creator could well be speaking from personal experience. During Fugard's time with the Native Commissioners Court he recalls, 'There I saw more suffering than I could bear - canings and prison sentences - for ludicrous violations of the bureaucratic maze of apartheid' (Pacheco 1982, p. 25). However, the cynical view as to the fate of Joan of Arc may be too close to the truth to be lightly dismissed. Many similar so-called 'enemies of the State' within South Africa were denied any semblance of a fair trial, one of the most famous examples being Steve Biko. He was detained, not for the first time, by the security police at a roadblock in the town where Fugard found his inspiration, Port Elizabeth. After intensive interrogation, he was left in a coma for three days before being sent, still unconscious, 700 miles to a prison hospital in Pretoria where he died. The cause of death was established as brain damage. He was not burnt at the stake but his trial was not fair either; it took place in the interrogation cell.¹²

With the reference to a trial for Joan of Arc, these stark political realities are alluded to in the play, but what is not mentioned is the impact such actions can have on the oppressors as well as the oppressed, although we do see what effect the later exchanges between Sam and Hally have on each other. Breyten Breytenbach, from first hand experience wrote, 'What happens in bare rooms where all time has been twisted is not just dirty work - it is the heart-rending flowering of evil which will profoundly modify all the actors' (Breytenbach 1984,

p. 342). When Breytenbach refers to all the actors he is including the interrogators, just as the interrogation that ensues during that afternoon in the 'bare' room that is the St George's Park Tea Room involves both Sam and Hally. Fanon was able to comment on this phenomenon based on his clinical experiences while a psychiatrist in an Algerian hospital during the rising against the French. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he gives details of two European policemen who had become mentally disturbed as a direct result of the torture they had inflicted on Algerians in custody. One of these men was so affected that he began to torture his own wife and children, but in the end he asks Fanon to try and cure his behavioural problems so that he could continue to torture Algerians 'without any pricking of the conscience'. Fanon's comment on this was to write: 'we may well find a whole existence which enters into complete and absolute sadism (Fanon 1990, p. 217). In context, Hally has not derived any pleasure from the cruelty inflicted upon Sam, but as a result of his actions, both the oppressed and the oppressor are psychologically damaged and their relationship is unlikely to be restorable to its former state. Paulo Freire is of the same view:

As the oppressor dehumanize others and violate their rights they themselves also become dehumanised. As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors their humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression.

(Freire 1996, p.38)

On the evidence provided by the text, it is doubtful whether Sam, the understudy father, manages to restore Hally's humanity, severely stressed during the play by the off-stage spectre of his biological father.

This surrogate father will have received very little formal education, but over some years his close relationship with Hally has meant that their schooling has paralleled and perhaps equalled each other. However, there is one subject at least where Sam is higher in the class than Hally, and that is revealed when they discuss Napoleon and the 'equal opportunities for all' that he is said to have espoused. In a light-hearted way, but with serious undertones, Sam tells Hally 'I'm all right on oppression' (p. 14), an assertion made no doubt from first-

hand experience. Hally might feel he is oppressed by some of his teachers and to some extent by his father, due to his own ambivalent feelings, but Sam is oppressed in many arenas - park benches for one example. Although not as puerile as the comic books left for Hally's father, the scholastic exchange between Sam and Hally, where they discuss candidates for men of magnitude and compare Wilberforce to Tolstoy and Jesus to Mohammed, is somewhat trite if not ironic in the context of South Africa: these ethical men might well find their beliefs very difficult to promote in Port Elizabeth. However, there is a deeper meaning to all this; the most eminent candidate for the title of a 'Man of Magnitude' could be Sam himself, even if he has little 'magnitude', little importance in this South African world. Sam is no fool and if more education had been available to him, could he have been the social reformer (p.12) who was going to rescue his people - the leader of 'The Struggle for an Existence' (p.15)?

Fugard has described Sam Semela as the man in whom he had discovered 'the presence of dignity, pride, compassion and wisdom' (Benson 1997, p.123) and as the fictional Sam is drawn, he undoubtedly possesses such a high degree of understanding, humanity and common sense that he might be seen as one of nature's intellectuals. In his hypothetical role as the leader of 'The Struggle for an Existence', he would have received the support of Fanon who was particularly involved with intellectuals developing a cultural identity for the oppressed in their struggle for freedom. Extending this view to the sphere of the Gramscian organic intellectual, the Italian thinker wrote that all men are intellectuals, but not all have in society the function of intellectuals. Although Sam attempts to organise Hally's development and Willie's dancing career, he does not, on the surface, have an intellectual function in this tea room. However Gramsci goes on to write, in the section of the *Prison Notebooks* entitled 'The Formation of the Intellectuals':

Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a "philosopher", an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to

sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought.

(Hoare, 1999, p.9)

Sam certainly is a man who 'participates in a particular conception of the world' and 'has a conscious line of moral conduct'. Fugard demonstrates Sam's sense of pity and understanding of Hally's relationship with his father as Sam encourages the boy to recall his younger days and the Jubilee Boarding House where he visited Sam and Willie in the servants' quarters, leading to the building of the kite. It is at this point that Sam most displays his worthiness to be termed a man of magnitude and an entitlement to the appellation 'intellectual', particularly when his insignificant and lowly status in the South African political world is taken into account.

Although most of the dialogue at this stage is Hally's, the stage manager or teacher of the next lesson is Sam. Even at the age of ten Hally can be sceptical about Sam's skills as a kite builder but this view intensifies the joy when he discovers how successful this exercise turns out to be: 'I was running, waiting for it to crash to the ground, but instead suddenly there was something alive behind me at the end of the string, tugging at it as if it wanted to be free' (p. 24). Sam, the kite's architect, might also wish to be free, but he is not. As Hally is told later, Sam leaves him sitting on a bench in the park with the kite because he does not want to spoil the occasion by telling Hally that he is not allowed to sit on the same bench. This is one of the few direct references in the play to an apartheid regulation. At this time the government had been challenged in the courts over the separation of public facilities, facilities that the appellants claimed should be equal. However, in 1953, the government removed the opportunity to contest this inequality by enacting the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act covering public premises and transport, which enabled provincial authorities to extend this legislation to such things as park benches. Although the revelation by Sam of this prejudice is an essential ingredient in understanding his relationship with Hally, what is more telling is the explanation, eventually given to Hally, as to why Sam had made the kite in the first place. After the spitting incident has taken place, Sam reminds Hally of the time that he had helped to carry his drunken father home from the Central Hotel Bar,

(where Hally had first needed to obtain permission for Sam to enter the premises) and of the aftermath and its place in the kite-building exercise:

After we got him to bed you came back with me to my room and sat in a corner and carried on just looking down at the ground. And for days after that! You hadn't done anything wrong, but you went around as if you owed the world an apology for being alive. I didn't like seeing that! That's not the way a boy grows up to be a man!But the one person who should have been teaching you what that means was the cause of your shame. If you really want to know, that's why I made you that kite. I wanted you to look up, be proud of something, of yourself...

(pp. 46/47)

This whole episode is suffused with Sam's wisdom and honesty but the sense of freedom and the gratitude of Hally are all destroyed, as if the kite had suddenly plunged to earth, by the telephone call from his mother saying that his father might be allowed home. However, before Hally becomes the archetypal white racist, Sam, by bringing to life the forthcoming Eastern Province Ballroom Dancing Competition, recaptures the mood of lightness and optimism. Sam's message, as he describes this competition, is blatantly escapist. The black man and woman can flee from the drudgery of their everyday existence to the ballroom but Hally responds that 'There's more to life than trotting around a dance floor...':

SAM It's a harmless pleasure, Hally. It doesn't hurt anybody...

HALLY I didn't say it was easy. I said it was simple - like in simple minded, meaning mentally retarded. You can't exactly say it challenges the intellect.

SAM It does other things.

HALLY Such as?

SAM Make people happy.

(p. 31)

The paradox is that at the black man and woman's haven that is the dance floor, the steps of the dance, the waltz, the foxtrot, the quickstep, are European - not even like Lena's steps, as she says to Outa, 'not like your dances. No war dances for us' (p.234). Lena's perception on Outa's dance reflects the

archetypal image of the 'native' as portrayed in much of Western popular culture - scantily-clad warriors stamping the ground around the camp fire. To some extent this view was thrown back into the face of Western culture with the story told by David Williams¹³ concerning UK journalists covering the celebration of Nigerian Independence in 1960. They had needed to file their articles three hours before the midnight lowering of the Imperial flag, articles that referred to happy Nigerians dancing in the streets. As these journalists drove through the streets of Lagos at midnight they found only orderly groups of citizens wending their way home, whereupon one journalist shouted from his car: 'Dance, Dammit, you're meant to be dancing' (Crowder 1987, p. 21). This is the form of racial arrogance Hally displays at times throughout the play, as instanced in his approach towards ballroom dancing as a subject for a school essay, where he displays all the elements of an archetypal white bigot:

Yes, gentlemen, that is precisely what I am considering doing. Old Doc Bromely - he's my English teacher - is going to argue with me, of course. He doesn't like natives. But I'll point out to him that in strict anthropological terms the culture of a primitive black society includes its dancing and singing. To put my thesis in a nutshell: The war dance has been replaced by the waltz. But it still amounts to the same thing: the release of primitive emotions through movement.

(p.34)

These black men and women are finding comfort from appropriating an artefact of the white cultural hegemony¹⁴ with the result that, in this play, ballroom dancing becomes a potent symbol of harmony for them, a group association much like churchgoing¹⁵ even though utilising wholly European techniques. Fugard also uses the ballroom symbolically to suggest that if the harmony, manners and courtesies observed there could be translated to South African society as a whole, a lot of collisions could be avoided, collisions that occur every day between the oppressor and the oppressed. When Hally, for his 500-word essay, says, 'Would I be stretching poetic licence a little too far if I called your ballroom championships a cultural event?' (p. 34), Sam replies that Victor Sylvester has written a whole book on the subject. Victor Sylvester was the acknowledged master of ballroom dancing in the United Kingdom in the 1940s and 1950s and in his introduction to *Dancing for Millions*, he writes that the English style has won universal popularity and that it has even pierced the Iron

Curtain (Wertheim 2000, p. 144). It also appears to have penetrated the iron curtain of apartheid, although it can be assumed that this does not give the authorities any cause for concern. Ballroom dancing is a popular pastime for black people in South Africa¹⁶, a communal activity that perhaps, for an hour or two, gives some meaning to their lives (as it clearly does for Sam and Willie). In *Move Your Shadow*, Joseph Lelyveld describes a national ballroom championship for blacks (and 'browns' - his word) that he attended in Durban, where, to quote him: 'the contestants, responding on some level to the idea that they were part of us, would be graded on their ability to do it our way.' He makes the point that the music 'the death rattle of Jimmy Dorsey' was not the music or rhythm of the townships but the real interest in his article is the attitude one of the black winners, Steward Dephoko, displays to the condescension of the white judge, Trevor, (who Lelyveld describes as a 'blue eyed colonial subaltern'). Trevor tells the contestants to work on their basics and Steward accepts this. The piece ends, as though written by Sam:

So Trevor's way is Steward Dephoko's. One day, with violins playing and soft lights casting beguiling shadows, they may appear in their patent leather dancing shoes, each immaculately attired, at the same ballroom dancing contest and dance as equals. It is the dream of a happy ending to apartheid.

(Lelyveld 1985, pp.246-248)

In Fanon's essay 'Racism and Culture' he shows how the oppressed group tries to 'imitate the oppressor and thereby to deracialize itself' (Fanon 1970, p. 48). He continues:

Having judged, condemned, abandoned his cultural forms, his language, his food habits, his sexual behaviour, his way of sitting down, of resting, of laughing, of enjoying himself, the oppressed *flings himself* upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man

(Ibid 1970, p.49)

As regards ballroom dancing, Sam is not drowning. To him, and many other urban black South Africans, this has become part of their culture with no political overtones, but clearly Freire's 'cultural invasion', already referred to, can take many forms. At one extreme, the Mau Mau in Kenya took Christian

hymns and converted them into revolutionary songs of protest. Alternatively, the pragmatist approach would suggest that the culture of the oppressor is absorbed so as to be able to try and compete with him on more equal terms, as set out in a letter written in 1944 by Professor Z K Matthews of Fort Hare University to trade unionist A W G Champion:

The fact of the matter is that in our position in this country, we cannot afford to live as if the white man is not present in this land. He is here and has made his culture the dominant culture of the country. As long as this is the case, we as a people must become proficient in those elements of his civilisation which will enable us not only to understand him but to compete with him on equal terms in every field of life. This question is not merely an educational question, but it is also a political question. Our political future is bound up with it.

(Hirson 1981, p.226)

Sam further explains to Hally:

SAM There's no collisions out there, Hally ... like being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen.

HALLY [*Genuinely moved by Sam's image*] Jesus, Sam! That's beautiful!

Hally warms to these ideas and moves the dream onto the international stage:

HALLY ...You know, Sam, when you come to think of it, that's what the United Nations boils down to.... a dancing school for politicians!

SAM And let's hope they learn.

(pp. 36/37)

Tragically, Hally has not absorbed the lesson, nor can he see how Sam is teaching him to understand the world differently, and for the better. His father cannot dance, he is on crutches, but Hally is about to bump violently into Sam, who can dance but who is unable to avoid the tragic collision to come. Avoiding collisions, like proper dialogue, involves a mutuality that, as this play tragically reveals, is not available to Sam and Hally. Despite his best intentions, apartheid cripples Sam and as Hally says: 'the cripples are ...out there tripping up everybody' (p. 41).

The lesson at the climax of the play is, on the surface, particularly related to racism but in fact it is here where this section of the drama can most accurately be entitled 'A Tale of Two Fathers'. The contrast and contest (at least in Hally's psychology) between the two fathers is fascinating when the character of each is considered within the South African political context. On the surface Sam is severely handicapped in this competition, not only is he black but his identity in the tea room is that of a servant. Despite this, the play demonstrates how, up until that wet and windy afternoon, Sam had been successful in his role as a surrogate father. For a son of his own, Sam would have been using a different set of norms in the education of a younger male, but in the case of Hally, Sam has instinctively (in his persona as a natural intellectual) provided support for Hally as the reverse side of the coin that displays the defects in the character of his racist father. There is also another obstacle for Sam to overcome in this contest (and only the playgoer is fully aware that there is a contest; Sam did not view it that way, and as for the real father, it would not, for the merest instant, have entered his mind) and that is the element of love. There has clearly been a great deal of affection between Sam and Hally but when it comes to the crunch and Sam remembers how they carried his father back from the Central Hotel Bar, Hally's reaction is to say (with a stage instruction of '*Great pain*'), 'I love him, Sam' (p. 46). While the real Sam and Willie were teaching Fugard lessons that prevented him being turned 'into a little Hitler', he acknowledged that he was ashamed of the weakness and infirmity of his father but he loved him, even though, as quoted earlier in this chapter, the father was 'full of pointless, unthought-out prejudices'. Hally's uncertainty is painful in the extreme. As was the case with Fugard, Sam may have been the only friend of Hally's boyhood but any recollections of this nature are subsumed by the prospect of returning home and finding his demanding father there. He allows these conflicting emotions to explode to the surface with the racist joke of 'what's not fair', and when Sam's riposte pushes Hally to the final degradation of spitting in Sam's face, he uses Sam as a scapegoat to exorcise his guilt over this ambivalence towards his father. Fanon describes this guilt:

....if the world of moral sickness is to be understood by starting from Fault and Guilt, a normal person will be one who has freed himself of this guilt, or who in any case has managed not to submit to it. More

directly, each individual has to charge the blame for his baser drives, his impulses, to the account of an evil genius, which is that of the culture to which he belongs (we have seen that this is the Negro). This collective guilt is borne by what is conventionally called the scapegoat. Now the scapegoat for white society - which is based on myths of progress, civilisation, liberalism, education, enlightenment, refinement - will be precisely the force that opposes the expansion and the triumph of these myths. This brutal opposing force is supplied by the Negro.

(Fanon 1986, p.194)

This section of the play can also be seen as Hally's coming-of-age. To quote Rob Amato:

It seems to me that Hally cannot stay in the world of the tearoom, has lost that magic afternoon world, cannot accept Sam's several attempts after the spitting to save the situation, because the resurrection of the trauma makes him, again, at seventeen, perceive of himself as guilty of the one crime which South Africans who are white simply can't commit. The central commandment of the hegemony of apartheid may be 'Show not thy weakness to thy neighbour race, to the helots'.

(Amato 1984, p. 212)

In this context, Hally has revealed his weaknesses over many years, one example being that, contrary to the norm, he has acknowledged that the two servants were probably the only friends of his childhood years. However, the final weakness, the resort to shameful violence, has destroyed the generally non-racial relationship he had hitherto enjoyed in a world that might have transcended the racial reality, but now Hally has to get into step with his racist brothers. When Sam is explaining that there is no bumping into each other on the dance floor, Hally responds with the words 'You've got a vision, Sam!', that are accompanied with the stage instruction, '*Deep and sincere admiration of the man*' (p. 37). With this admiration, and by overtly accepting Sam's friendship and guidance, Hally has broken Amato's commandment - such friendships between the races are a sign of weakness. This is no accident, but Doris Lessing's view still applies - Hally has brought down the whip:

...when a white man in Africa by accident looks into the eyes of a native and sees the human being (which it is his chief preoccupation

to avoid), his sense of guilt, which he denies, fumes up in resentment and he brings down the whip.

(Lessing 1994, p.144)

Just as other dissidents in South Africa have been punished without trial, so this confused white representative of the ruling class considers that the native has gone too far and Sam is 'whipped', precisely as Doris Lessing suggests. Hally cannot tolerate the goodness in Sam and tragically displays all of the worst characteristics of the white racist State. In *The Grass is Singing*, set in what is now Zimbabwe and from where the Lessing quote is taken, there is relatively no relationship between the rural white and black that has any similarity to that between Hally and Sam; for instance on the farm, the communication between master and servant is normally conducted in what is referred to as 'kitchen kaffir' to such an extent that "...most white people think it is 'cheek' if a native speaks English" (Ibid. p. 119). At least verbally Hally and Sam are relatively equal, but the first quote from Lessing is particularly pertinent to this play. With what can perhaps be seen as the naivety of youth, Hally accepts Sam's friendship and sees the humanity in this 'native' but the drama Fugard provides is to show how this can be so comprehensively shattered by events that are triggered both by Hally's personal circumstances and temperament, but also due to the need to bring himself back within the inviolable code of black/white relationships in South Africa. In Lessing's novel, the black and white link is different, being between a disturbed and basically naive white woman and a black servant, with an added sexual dimension, but where the black participant is both victor and victim. However, in Sam's case there is no retaliation; he is a good man who like so many of his compatriots is punished without trial so as to comply with the written and unwritten rules of the racist State relating to 'keeping the native in his place.'

Sam eschews violence but racial prejudice can destroy the strongest of friendships. When cracks in a relationship occur between brothers in *Blood Knot* and the couple in *Boesman and Lena* and *A Lesson from Aloes*, what real chance is there for a black man of forty-five years of age to have a lasting friendship with a seventeen year-old white boy, highlighting the irony in the title of the play? The person who is referred to as "Master" is a teenager, but the

inverted commas indicate that there is some ambivalence. Is he the Master in authority or is he only a 'Little *white* boy' as Willie refers to him? Against that, the boys are unquestionably mature men. In South Africa the term 'boy' as a form of address was universal whatever the age of the black man, as referred to in *Blood Knot*:

ZACHARIAH What's this 'old fellow' thing you got hold of tonight?

MORRIS Just a figure of speaking, Zach. The Englishman would say 'old boy' but we don't like that 'boy' business, hey?

ZACHARIAH *Ja*. They call a man a boy...

(p. 74)

The lesson of the last scene is underlined by Hally's last words, 'I don't know anything any more.' and Sam's response, a final attempt at reconciliation, which Hally ignores and leaves. At this, and despite what has gone before, Willie becomes the pacifier and tries to comfort Sam, a prime example, apropos the Brutus poem, of 'tenderness surviving'. The final chorus is not chosen at random:

'Johnny won your marbles,
Tell you what we'll do;
Dad will get you new ones right away;
Better go to sleep now,
Little man you've had a busy day.'

(p.48/49)

It has been a busy day in Hally's growing up but his dad is not going to be putting anything right. Once more at the end of a Fugard play there is a sense of isolation in an unhappy world. This is true for Morris and Zachariah and, even though there is some hope as Boesman and Lena depart, they are also forsaken characters. Sam and Willie might be considered fortunate amongst the dispossessed of South Africa; they have jobs and a relatively benign employer, but fundamentally they are just as disadvantaged as the remainder of the non-white populace of their country. We can conjecture that Sam harbours more expectations from life than a Boesman or a Lena, but the cruelty of Hally's

treatment traps Sam just as certainly as Winston and John are trapped on Robben Island. In *The Island*, the white warders are not physically present in the drama, but in Hally's case he is the oppressor centre-stage and when offered the alternative of walking away from apartheid, simply exits the sorry scene. As Doris Lessing emphasizes, his recognition of humanity in a black man has led, perhaps inevitably, to him abandoning a friendship across the racial divide - a friendship that could have been a precious jewel in the barren world of apartheid. He does not know what will happen next. Sam appeals to him to gain something from the events of the afternoon and advises him to turn his back on apartheid and racism, 'You know what that bench means now, and you can leave it any time you choose. All you've got to do is to stand up and walk away from it' (p.48); discard prejudice and emulate Nelson Mandela by taking the 'Long Walk to Freedom' - but he does not. "Master Harold" exacerbates the racial prejudice by taking the few coins left in the cash register, in contrast to 'the boys' who use their bus fare, their remaining coins, for a tune from the jukebox, the last dance. They then close up the tea room and begin their long walk through the rain to New Brighton - but Sam cannot take the action he has advocated for Hally; the bench is still there for him, and he and Willie cannot turn their backs on the reality of apartheid - they cannot 'stand up and walk away from it'. Like the kite tied to the 'whites-only' bench, they are inevitably tied to their segregated spaces in the apartheid world they inhabit, a world that Fugard has dramatically brought into the tea room to such effect as to make tangible to the audience the reality of the bench, and the kite that symbolises a freedom not available to its maker - it is tied down.

This play is Fugard's most personal - it is a representation of the domestic scene of his boyhood - but however personal, the political resonance clamours to be heard. This clamour, as this chapter reveals, is not just over the apartheid of park benches but, more crucially, about how the reality of South Africa in the 1950s was already impacting on relationships across the colour divide - and as this study continues - even with people within the same ethnic groupings. The next chapter deals with such relationship in two different locales inhabited by Coloured South Africans whose affiliation with each other is severely strained by the politics of apartheid, as Fugard so acutely observes.

NOTES

¹ And it is still so. One of the students of Dr. Miki Flockemann of the University of the Western Cape, taken to see this play in the year 2000, 'actually screamed with shock' at the spitting incident (Personal interview. October 2000).

² Fugard's post-apartheid work, *Playland*, is concerned with memories of violence - the white character of atrocities in Namibia and the black man of a murder he has committed. In Fugard's own words, circa 1990: 'Useful comparison with the innocence of the two brothers in *The Blood Knot*. Morrie and Zach face the threat of violence. Martinus and Gideon live with the consequences of violence which in a sense is the story of South Africa during the 35 years of my writing career (Fugard 1993, p.534).

³ In Brecht's *In the Jungle of the Cities*, there is a motiveless contest between two protagonists that one critic has suggested is not totally absurd if likened to a boxing match, where the audience is not concerned with why the fight is taking place, neither should they be in the play (Thomson 2002, p.52). However, in the case of Sam and Hally, we are crucially involved in the 'why and how' of the causes of their conflict.

⁴ The setting for *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*, *The Road to Mecca*, *Playland*, *Valley Song* and *Sorrows and Rejoicings*.

⁵ In real life, Fugard wrote in *Cousins*: 'It had replaced the Jubilee as our source of income and was to remain that, and my mom's pride and joy, for the next thirty years (Fugard 1994, p. 20).

⁶ As an example, Freire quotes from a speech by Che Guevara, 'Let me say. ...that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality' (Freire 1996, p.70).

⁷ Like Fanon's 'drowning man' in the quotation on page 49.

⁸ Fugard identifies with Beckett's Krapp, a person who looks back on his earlier life, as does Fugard in this play. In conversation with Mel Gussow, Fugard said, "I'm already starting to play back the tapes." When asked if he is a romantic like Krapp, he replied, "Oh yes. It's never flawed my writing. It's flawed my life" (Gussow 1982, p.89).

⁹ Emphatic expression, 'that's that'; 'finished and done with'.

¹⁰ A stout rhinoceros or hippopotamus hide whip (Branford 1980, p.258).

¹¹ In 1936, the Masters and Servants Act, where a breach of a labour contract was a criminal offence, was revised to allow for the whipping of African juveniles if they broke such contracts.

¹² The introduction to Donald Woods' book, *Biko*, begins: 'On Tuesday, 6 September 1977, Stephen Biko was taken by South African political police to the Sanlam Building in Strand Street, Port Elizabeth, Cape Province, where he was handcuffed, put into leg-irons, chained to a grille and subjected to 22 hours of interrogation in the course of which he was tortured and beaten, sustaining several blows to the head which damaged his brain fatally, causing him to lapse into a coma and die six days later' (Woods 1979, p.13). On hearing of Biko's death, JT Kruger, the Minister of Law and Order, said: 'His death leaves me cold' (Daily Despatch, East London 15 September 1977).

¹³ Journalist, well-known in West Africa during the 1960s, when he wrote for the *West Africa* magazine.

¹⁴ This appropriation was widespread: at Mister Johnson's last party there were 'two thickset Yoruba girls, dancing an American fox-trot together' (Cary 1976, p.209).

¹⁵ The prizes at the Eastern Cape competition are to be presented by the Bishop of the All African Free Zionist Church.

¹⁶ Obviously not confined to the black population. Fugard and his sister were ballroom dancing champions when young.

THREE

God's Stepchildren and White Man's Rubbish

'We are all God's children', he said.

'But is God Himself not white?' asked Cachas.

And, as the Rev. Andrew Flood hesitated for a reply, she made a suggestion:

'Perhaps, we brown people are His stepchildren,' she said.

(Sarah Gertrude Millin *God's Stepchildren*)

As is revealed, there is some walking involved in the next two plays (*Boesman and Lena* are constantly on the move, and Morris walks away from Zachariah for a time), but the 'God's Stepchildren' who are featured in this chapter can, no more than Sam and Willie, 'stand up and walk away' from the constraints of apartheid. Applying Sarah Gertrude Millin's description 'God's Stepchildren' to the title of this chapter is wholly appropriate, concerned as it is with *Blood Knot* and *Boesman & Lena*, where the principal characters have a family relationship and are Coloured. Millin, who was a confidante of the Afrikaner establishment and a friend of General Smuts, published in 1924 her fifth novel, *God's Stepchildren*, an invective against miscegenation expressed, according to J M Coetzee, in terms of 'blood, flaw, taint and degeneration' (Attridge 1998, p.100). These 'brown people', the Coloureds of today, are a direct result of the very origins of South Africa. When Cape Town was first settled, the founders of that society needed labour, so, while elsewhere slaves were being exported from Africa, Van Riebeeck was importing them into the continent, mainly from the Far East. The officers of the United East India Company, then the world's largest commercial enterprise, did not generally take their wives to the Cape (in 1663 there were said to be only seventeen white women at the station) and so these officers, and eventually the free burgher farmers, bred from female slaves and the indigenous Khoikhoi these 'God's Stepchildren' - a mixed ancestry destined to occupy, both materially and psychologically, a no-man's land between the white farms and suburbs of the privileged and the African tribal kraal. In the first twenty years of occupation by the 'white tribe of Africa', 75% of

the children born at the Cape were non-whites, adding to the supply of slaves at little cost to the establishment; a foretaste of how, as a result of segregation policies, the homelands of the 20th Century became responsible for reproducing the supply of cheap labour. Morris and Zachariah Pietersen in *Blood Knot* and Boesman and Lena (not afforded the dignity of a surname) are of this stock and, in the context of these plays, treated as rubbish by the white man.

The action of *Blood Knot* is confined to the interior of a *pondok* in Korsten, on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth, built with a patchwork of scraps of wood, cardboard, and corrugated iron. The play covers a period of a week or so in the lives of two brothers, who evidently share the same mother, but probably have different fathers. Morris is sufficiently light-skinned to pass for white while Zachariah is palpably black. Morris left his brother ten years ago to see if he could exist in the 'white world' away from Korsten, but returned unexpectedly a year before the action of the play begins. Zachariah has a menial job in a local park while Morris stays at home and performs the role of housekeeper. Before Morris's return, Zachariah had spent any surplus from his weekly wage on drink and women but now Morris controls the purse strings as he saves for the 'impossible dream' of getting away from Korsten and buying a small two-man farm. In Scene 1, Zachariah remembers his happier days and tells his brother 'I want woman'. Morris quickly diverts Zachariah's desires into the idea of a female pen pal, and to this end Morris writes a letter on behalf of his illiterate brother. Eventually Zachariah warms to the idea but Morris's scheme for a safe substitute for the real thing backfires when they discover that Ethel, the pen pal they choose, is white and has a policeman brother. This makes the game more exciting to Zachariah and so, when Ethel threatens to visit Port Elizabeth, he uses their savings to buy suitable clothing so that Morris can take his place and pretend to be a white Zachariah. The practical danger of exposure by Ethel evaporates when she writes to say that she has become engaged, but the more lasting danger of a serious rift between the brothers is acted out as Morris, donning the new clothes, becomes the white man and treats his brother as the subservient black. Zachariah eventually rebels at this

play-acting but the ring of the alarm clock brings them back to reality - a reality with very little future.

The first four-hour version of the play, under the title *The Blood Knot*, had its initial performance in Johannesburg on the evening of Sunday, 3rd of September 1961 before a black and white invited audience - only 60 or so people according to Mary Benson (Benson, 1997, p.5), with the windows draped with blankets to keep out the noise of drumming from a nearby mine compound. However, as already made clear, the text to be analysed in this thesis is of the considerably shortened version, now entitled *Blood Knot* and published for the first time in 1987. Members of this first audience may have been familiar with two earlier South African plays that dealt with the taboo of sex across the colour line, namely *Kimberley Train* (1958) by Lewis Sowden and Basil Warner's *Try for White* (1959), although in both cases the relationship was between Coloured women and white men. There is no record that either of these works had any influence on Fugard but the Coloured heroine in *Kimberley Train* repeats an important message contained in *Blood Knot*, namely that there are more differences between the white and the non-white than simply the colour of their skin:

Don't you understand: It's not enough to pretend to be white. You have to know of the colour within you and not care a damn! That's what makes people white. I wasn't able to do it ...

(Orkin 1991, p.88)

However, theatregoers at this time are unlikely to have recalled an even earlier and less controversial example of this genre, a 1938 play by H I Dhlomo, called *Ruby and Frank*, a story of love between a Coloured woman and an African man, and only the Afrikaans speakers would have known of Bartho Smit's play *Die Verminktes* which exposed the hypocrisy of the Afrikaners' condemnation of inter-racial sex while indulging themselves in the secret exploitation of black and Coloured women (Kruger 1999, p.104). Although Fugard may not have been influenced by, or even aware of, earlier South African plays dealing with sex between men and women of different ethnicities, there was one work on the subject of passing for white with which he was directly involved. While in

Europe he performed in a play called *A Kakamas Greek* written by David Herbert, an actor Fugard had met in Cape Town. The play concerns three men, Gabriel, an albino black trying for white, Akadis who claims to be Greek but is actually a Coloured man called Okkie, and Skelm who, like Lena's Outa, is black but says nothing during the play. Athol Fugard played Okkie. Critics saw the influence of *Waiting for Godot*; Herbert had played Estragon in Pretoria before leaving South Africa (Vandenbroucke 1986, p. 41).

After the opening at the Rehearsal Room of the African Music and Drama Association's Dorkay House, with Fugard playing Morris and Zakes Mokae Zachariah, *The Blood Knot* was performed 140 times in South Africa in 1961 and 1962 where, according to Nadine Gordimer, the principally white, English-speaking audiences "sat fascinated week after week, as if by a snake" (Kruger 1999, p.110), and was then brought to the New Arts Theatre Club in Hampstead with Zakes Mokae and Ian Bannen. After performances at a number of venues in the USA, it spent nine months off-Broadway in 1965 and was voted 'Best Play of the Year' by the *New York Times*. Since then it has been performed many times in the USA, the UK and the rest of the world and, with some restrictions during the apartheid years, around South Africa.

The minimalist setting in *Blood Knot* is taken to a further extreme in *Boesman & Lena*, where there is no set other than the imagined stark mudflats adjacent to the Swartkops River. Unlike the mud literally coating the stage in Robert Lepage's striking production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the National Theatre in 1992, the Swartkops River mud only materialises as that caught between Lena's toes which she squashes in her fingers saying 'Mud! Swartkops!' (p.193). The real mud on the National stage was used to facilitate the physical action of the play but in Lena's case, the invisible mud she extracts from between her toes only symbolises the deprived existence and muddled relationship of the two itinerants. As to plot and action, there is virtually none. Boesman and Lena have walked that day from Korsten (home to Morris and Zachariah) where the couple's shack has been demolished by the authorities who have told them to '*Vat jou goed en trek*' (Take your things and go). Lena wearily complains, 'Another day gone. Other people lived it. We tramped it into

the ground. I haven't got so many left, Boesman' (p.196). They spend part of a night on the mudflats where an old Xhosa man, Outa, joins them. His entrance exacerbates the tension between Boesman and Lena but his very presence miraculously provides an infusion of hope into Lena that enables her to turn the tables against him. At the end of the play, she emerges with the strength to continue her life with him, still in what Fugard describes as the 'camaraderie of the damned' (Nb, p.205), but in a more equal relationship, released from the chain of Boesman's violence. Outa dies during the night and before dawn they pick up their 'things' and trek on.

There is a revealing indication as to how this work was staged, in practical terms, in an extract from the *Notebooks* concerning a performance in Durban in 1970:

.... on stage all that the actors will need - props, the material for the pondok, clothing

When the audience is in, without dimming house lights, actors come on - barefoot, rehearsal clothes - and in front of audience put on their 'character' clothes. Outa takes a box and sits at the back of the stage, his back to audience. Boesman and Lena load up their bundles and walkround and round the stage. Lena falls behind.

.....When Lena sees Outa for the first time, the actor must turn to face the audience.....Lena and Boesman never leave the stage.

(Nb, p.185)

Boesman & Lena had its first performance at the Rhodes University Little Theatre in Grahamstown on the 10th of July 1969 with Fugard as both director and playing Boesman and Yvonne Bryceland taking the part of Lena. In the *Notebooks* it is recorded that Fugard wrote that Yvonne Bryceland's performance was 'awesome in its range and authenticity, in the blunted bewilderment which she used as the dominant tone' (Nb, p.235). According to a review of 12 July in the *Cape Argus* there were eight curtain calls on the first night. The reviewer wrote of 'a grim and powerful play with a sustained flow of wit and joy shining off its surface of misery and desolation' (Gray 1982, p.80). Although in 1967 Fugard had refused to allow the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT) to present *People Are Living There*, (he did not want to

be associated with a Government-sponsored theatre), by 1970 he permitted a production in Cape Town of *Boesman & Lena* involving PACT and the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB), again starring Yvonne Bryceland and himself. It was then presented on two occasions in New York in the same year, with Zakes Mokaé firstly as Outa and then as Boesman. John Berry, who became an influential friend of Fugard, directed the off-Broadway production. Berry had left the USA as a result of the McCarthy witch-hunt¹ and then lived, off and on, in Paris for the rest of his life. However, he returned to America to produce *Blood Knot* off-Broadway in 1964 and then again in 1970 to champion Fugard's work and introduce *Boesman & Lena* to American audiences with what was described in Berry's obituary in *The Times* of 11 December 1999 as a 'landmark' production. No doubt his insights into these works of Fugard were nurtured when, as early as 1942, he acted in, and assisted Orson Welles in the direction of a stage version of Richard Wright's novel of racial prejudice, *Native Son*.

Immediately after a version of *Blood Knot* was shown on BBC television in 1967, Fugard had his passport withdrawn, said to be for reasons of State security although he believes it was done to persuade him to leave South Africa on the so-called 'Exit Permit', never to return. In 1971 his passport was returned, which enabled him to travel to London to produce *Boesman & Lena* at the Royal Court and the Young Vic. Since then, the play has been presented all over the world in locales as varied as Potsdam, Windhoek, Stuttgart and Londonderry and, in 1974, a film version was shown at the Edinburgh and Berlin Film Festivals. A new film was issued in 1999, made in the USA and directed by John Berry, who died that year at the age of 82. However, back in South Africa the play was set as a school text in the Cape in 1985 but, after thousands of copies had been purchased, the Department of Education banned its use in schools on grounds of unacceptable language; in particular the use of the word 'Hotnot'. Clearly, whoever included the play in the syllabus was not familiar with its content, or was it simply another case of South African bureaucracy gone wrong? At any level the work is a portrait of two degraded and pitiful South Africans, made pitiful and degraded by the policies of the

State, so why the officials of the Cape Department of Education should find offensive the bastardization of 'Hottentot' beggars belief. After all, it is Lena who appends the abusive appellation of 'Hotnot meid'² to herself - although when Boesman taunts her about who she is and what her name is she replies 'I want to be a Mary' (p.207). Incidentally, *Boesman and Lena* has been produced in France as *Ta vue me dérange, Hotnot* (Seeing you disturbs me, Hotnot). (Ait – Hamou 1990, p.60).

Before analysing the political content of these two plays, it is fitting to consider one of the writers and thinkers who significantly influenced Fugard's work, namely Samuel Beckett, and the affinities between the two playwrights are discussed in this chapter as there are a number of parallels exhibited in *Waiting for Godot* and *Boesman and Lena*. In an interview reported in *Plays and Players* of 21st February 1973, Fugard was asked why most of his plays are for two voices only. In response he gave an intriguing insight into his philosophy on playwriting, and the connection with music, and these views are worthy of inclusion in full, indicating as they do, *en passant*, the regard he has for Samuel Beckett:

When you have just one voice or, at the most, two voices, you have got a chance of an exploration in depth. I have learnt more about writing plays from Bach's unaccompanied violin sonatas and his unaccompanied cello suites than from anything I've ever read by a writer outside of Samuel Beckett. I could not live without music. Music is, I suppose, the most sublime assault on silence and also the most sublime challenge to it. Just behind that comes a voice. Just words, imagery, a biography, a life. Space and silence are for me the two definitive challenges in theatre. The one the actor fills with his body, the other he fills with his noise and, finally, with silence itself. Those are for me the two dimensions. It is a definition I formulated for myself 10 years ago, and I have never had any reason to go beyond it.

(Coveney 1973, p. 37)

He also used the analogy of music in a 1972 interview when, although acknowledging the influence of Brecht, he said that for him Beckett meant much more, describing his work as 'Superbly orchestrated pieces of chamber music...' (Gray 1982, p.112). In 1981, Fugard's collaborators, John Kani and

Winston Ntshona played the lead parts in a memorable version of *Waiting for Godot* at The Old Vic in London, but two decades earlier, in 1962, Fugard had directed this play at the Rehearsal Rooms in Johannesburg with an all-black cast. At the time he considered this production as important to him as *The Blood Knot* and it is recorded in the *Notebooks* that he told the cast that '...Vladimir and Estragon must have read the accounts of the Nuremberg trials - or else they were at Sharpeville...Choose your horror - they know all about it' (Nb, p. 62). A few years later he was back with *Waiting for Godot* and the Serpent Players when he highlighted, in a 1967 interview, how relevant this play was to black South Africans: "When we did *Waiting for Godot*, that image of disoriented man, dislocated man, of absurd man, pointlessness and meaninglessness, the Africans took the play and made it their own statement' (Seidenspinner 1986, p.133).³ It is not therefore surprising to find, in both *Blood Knot* and *Boesman and Lena*, clear comparisons with Samuel Beckett's work and it is revealing to see how the comments recorded in the *Notebooks* for 1962 are echoed in an interview forty years later:

Read Beckett's *Malone Dies* over Christmas. Hard to describe what this book, like his *Godot*, *Krapp* and *Endgame*, did to me. Moved? Horrified? Depressed? Elated? Yes, and excited. I wanted to start writing again the moment I put it down. Beckett's greatness doesn't intimidate me. I don't know how it works - but he makes me want to work. Everything of his that I have read has done this - I suppose it's because I really understand, emotionally, and this cannot but give me power and energy and faith.

Talking to Sheila about Beckett's humour, I said, 'Smile, and then wipe the blood off your mouth.'

Beckett has for me succeeded in 'making man naked again'. How to be clearer in what I mean? When it rains - the rain falls on the skin of Beckett's characters.

(Nb, p.67)

At an interview in 2002, it was put to Fugard that, as he likes to describe himself as a 'storyteller', why did he admire Samuel Beckett, hardly a teller of tales. His response was to reconfirm the influence of this writer: 'He was incredibly important to me Why do I admire Samuel Beckett? I think my admiration comes out of the way in which he, in a sense, helped liberate my craft and most

important of all I think that Beckett is an extraordinary poet of the theatre' (Personal interview. November 2002).

A further description of *Waiting for Godot*: 'a meditative rhapsody on the nullity of human attainment' (Fletcher and Spurling 1978, p.68), could so easily be applied to *Boesman and Lena* (and to most of the other plays contained in this study) and it is therefore unsurprising that the Fugard play is often directly compared with the Beckett work. One critic, to accentuate the similarity, suggested a new title for Fugard's play - *Walking for Godot!* and it could be said that for Boesman and Lena the white man is their Godot - they wait on his command. The word 'Godot' is evidently French slang for a boot - hardly appropriate for the barefooted Boesman and Lena - but apt if their life is seen as being under the heel of an oppressor. Beckett does not provide the 'time and place'⁴ as given in such detail in *Boesman & Lena*, but when Estragon asks Vladimir 'where are we now' and receives the reply 'Where else do you think? Do you not recognise the place?' he replies, in Lena mode, 'Recognise! What is there to recognise? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk about scenery! (*Looking wildly about him.*) Look at this muckheap! I've never stirred from it!' (Beckett 1979, p. 61). Both these playwrights have sparse sets and a small number of players, but the famous ending of *Waiting for Godot*

VLADIMIR: Well? Shall we go?

ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go.

They do not move.

(Ibid, p.94)

is not repeated in *Boesman and Lena* where Fugard's Didi and Gogo leave the stage; an important difference. Beckett's characters could be said to be in limbo although, like Boesman and Lena, they do try to find some significance from the apparently insignificant routine of their lives. However, in the case of Fugard's couple, we know they are destined to continue their sorry existence in a real and cruel world, as in the past, but with some hope, unlike Beckett's generally pessimistic view.

His work is complex, provoking numerous interpretations, but to turn away from this viewpoint, the official citation from the Swedish Academy when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969 read: 'Beckett has exposed the misery of our times through new dramatic and literary forms. His muted minor tone holds liberation for the oppressed and comfort for the distressed.' The citation by the Swedish Academy might be guilty of justifying the award with sentiments that owe more to inflated rhetoric than any precise and detailed assessment of the Nobel recipient's body of work, but their words are of value in comparing the two playwrights. It could be said that Fugard also writes in a 'muted minor tone' with strands of hope running through, even if there is no more obvious 'comfort for the distressed' than in Beckett's plays. Jameson refers to the post-Auschwitz desolation often identified in Beckett's work; another parallel with Fugard where his scenarios are replete with extremes of desolation (Jameson 2000, p.62). However, where the affinities between the two playwrights break down is that, as already mentioned, Beckett's desolation is nowhere but Fugard's is so specifically somewhere, both in time and in place, leading to the thought that a possible subject for further Fugardian research might be to compare the more obscure political undertones in Beckett's work with the apparently unambiguous politics found in the South African's dramas.

Fugard describes Samuel Beckett as 'an extraordinary poet of the theatre', an accolade that could well apply to his own work. Fugard has not published any poetry *per se* but it is of value in an appreciation of his dramatic works to consider the poetry within his plays that might allow him to be placed alongside Dennis Brutus or Breyten Breytenbach. Fugard makes a direct use of poetry in a number of his plays, from Piet's love of English verse in *A Lesson from Aloes* to Ozymandias in *My Children! My Africa!* where, instead of Boesman and Lena seeing their poor edifices brought down, Thami significantly declares that his people will be ensuring the collapse of the Ozymandiases in his country before they are eroded simply by time. In a 1978 article, Derek Cohen suggests that in *Boesman and Lena* 'the poetry is the poetry of darkness' (Cohen 1978, p. 83) and the 1993 revival of this play at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg prompted a review from Barry Ronge in the *Sunday Times* of 25 July 1993 that

included the words 'within the pithiness and uneducated speech of these two derelicts he has embedded speeches of pure, rich poetry' (Colleran, 1998, p.140). Lewis Nkosi, often critical of some aspects of Fugard's work, wrote in *Home and Exile* on the subject of *The Blood Knot*: 'In some passages the vigour of the writing - the lyricism, imagery and rhythm - approaches the level of pure poetry' (Nkosi 1983, p.142).

There was, however, no poetry in the policies of the National Party that surprisingly came to power in 1948, only paradox. The government this party dominated was, in due course, to enact such legislation as the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act of 1952, that had nothing to do with an abolition of passes ⁵ and the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 which rather than extending university education, curtailed that available to non-white students. In 1948, South Africa was already deeply divided by race when the rest of the world, appalled at the excesses of National Socialism in Nazi Germany, had begun to discard the white supremacist view. As the West withdrew from Empire and the US Supreme Court found against segregation in public schools in America, Afrikaners were now in power and any earlier fears that miscegenation might lead to racial equality were to be dealt with by legislation. Hendrik Verwoerd, who was the principal architect of the apartheid edifice built on earlier segregation precedents, introduced much of this. Like many Afrikaners he unequivocally asserted that his authority was derived from God and as such he had no qualms about the policies he pursued. In reply to a reporter from a Nationalist newspaper he said, 'I do not have the nagging doubt of ever wondering whether, perhaps, I am wrong' (Bunting 1969, p.148). In *Blood Knot*, Morris and Zachariah's relationship with God provides no such certainty. Their prayer to the Father recognises the long arm of Verwoerd's State:

Furthermore, just some bread for the poor, daily, and please let your Kingdom come as quickly as it can, for Yours is the power and the glory, ours is the fear and the judgement of eyes behind our back for the sins of our birth...

(p.122)

Blood Knot and *Boesman & Lena* poignantly expose the extent to which the State, the 'eyes behind our back', controls the lives of Morris and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena and punishes them for the sins of their birth, determining where they live or do not live, where they work or do not work, and, even more crucially, insidiously influencing the relationship they have to each other. This is the theme of, and inspiration for this chapter that will show how this unseen political control is revealed in the texts as they are interpreted through the prism of historical context.

William Beinart, in his book, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, considered that the apartheid system rested on seven pillars:

...starker definition of races; exclusive white participation and control in central political institutions (and repression of those who challenged this); separate institutions or territories for blacks; spatial segregation in town and countryside; control of African movement to cities; tighter division in the labour market; and segregation of

amenities and facilities of all kinds from universities to park benches.

(Beinart 2001, p.148)

Most of these seven pillars of Afrikaner wisdom impact upon the lives of Morris and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena and this chapter will, firstly for *Blood Knot*, examine how this pressure is manifested in the arena of racism and 'passing for white' and the State's hegemony in the fields of labour and education whilst examining how dreams and games are employed to define Morris and Zachariah and their place in the reality of South Africa. In particular, the extent to which the brothers act as foot soldiers for the apartheid officers and police themselves will be explored. In the case of *Boesman & Lena*, the political issues revealed in the play will be considered under the headings of poverty, homelessness and forced removals together with the consequent effect those factors have on family life. This analysis will also cover the futile quest for a concept of 'freedom' and how the playwright deals with questions of identity.

Blood Knot provides fertile ground for illustrating the sinister effect of the labyrinthine State apparatus on the lives of just two of its insignificant and marginal subjects. The play has flashes of humour but the most important

action on stage shows how, within this Korsten *pondok*, the awesome power of the authorities 'out there' exerts so much influence on the brothers displaying, in Gramscian terms, a basic example of control by both coercion and consent. In *Blood Knot* there are some instances of coercion, when Zachariah is at work in the park for instance, but the more sinister aspect of control over the brothers' lives is to see how there is an element of unwitting acquiescence in the way that eventually they accept their lot and join the ranks of the consenting citizenry. On stage there are no direct instances of a violent intrusion or threatened force by the State, but there is evidence of the workings of Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses and Morris and Zachariah are recognisable in the following:

...the subjects 'work', they 'work by themselves' in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the 'bad subjects' who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. But the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right 'all by themselves', i.e. by ideology (whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses). ... They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs ... Their concrete, material behaviour is simply the inscription in life of the admirable words of the prayer: *'Amen – So be it.'*

(Althusser 1971, p.181)

In the section of Althusser's essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', from which this extract is taken, he suggests that there is an ambiguity in the use of the term 'subject'. Ordinarily, he contends, this means 'a free subjectivity ... responsible for its actions'; or alternatively 'a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his such submission.' Althusser believes that this second definition gives meaning to the ambiguity in that the subject is 'free' in order that he shall 'freely' submit to the demands of the 'Subject' - so that he will perform his subjection 'all by himself' (Ibid, p. 182). Althusser's stress on the subject accepting and participating in their own subjection provides a valuable theoretical base for understanding exactly how oppression works in the case of Morris and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena. The itinerant couple have clearly been the subject on more than one occasion of intervention by one arm or another of the Repressive State Apparatus, as potently represented by the

bulldozer that has that day rendered them homeless once again. Boesman appears to freely obey and even cooperate with the white *baas*; he recognises 'the existing state of affairs' and the Repressive control, represented by the force used to destroy their pondok, is reinforced by the ideology of the oppressor which, unknowingly, Boesman has acceded to. As for Morris and Zachariah, they clearly 'work by themselves', recognizing the *status quo* and saying 'Amen' to that. In the final analysis, Lena is the only 'bad subject'. The State apparatuses, whether repressive or ideological, fail to totally conquer her spirit - she has, in the context of her world and her life, broken free.

In *Drama and the South African State*, Martin Orkin cites the example of the Benthamite panopticon as another image of a system where members learn to be self-regulating, where just the suspicion of surveillance can persuade the watched to police themselves. There is no need for Ethel's brother or any other agent of the white State to appear in person; Morris acts out the role for them exactly in accordance with the prevailing ideology. Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, describes the difference in treatment in dealing with the leper (the exiled) and the plague victims who, '...were caught up in a meticulous tactical partitioning in which individual differentiations were the constricting effects of a power that multiplied, articulated, and sub-divided itself....' (Foucault 1991, p. 198). In South Africa the 'individual differentiations' were of race with:

... the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterised; how he is to be recognised; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.).

(Ibid, p.199)

The binary division of race in all its ramifications is graphically illustrated in *Blood Knot* and *Boesman & Lena*, presenting a detailed picture of how the identities of the brothers and the couple are determined - who they are, how they are to be characterised and where they must be (particularly in the case of

Boesman and Lena). Foucault describes Bentham's Panopticon in the following terms:

They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognise immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions - to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide - it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap.

Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication.⁶

(Ibid, p. 200)

We, the audience become the all-seeing authority that ensures the subject is under 'constant surveillance' - objects of information. The panopticon of apartheid induces in the subject race 'a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (Ibid, p. 201) and Foucault extends this to:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principal of his own subjection.

(Ibid, pp.202/3)

In *Blood Knot*, Morris in particular as 'the principal of his own subjection' plays the role to perfection. The position of Boesman is more intricate. It could be said that he unconsciously acts as an agent of the State by subjugating Lena on its behalf, while applauding its acts of demolition so as to seek to attain a freedom of sorts, but this complex feature of Boesman's character is explored in more detail later.

Foucault's binary division, that in South Africa manifests itself as racism, is quickly introduced in *Blood Knot*. After the initial impression of the banality of

the lives of the brothers we are rapidly brought face to face with the 'them' and 'us' that permeates the play. Referring to Zachariah's employer, Morris says, 'I'm on your side, they're on theirs' (p.56), but the air of resignation displayed by Zachariah reflects the reality of his life and that of similar members of the oppressed under-class - he is not interested in plans for the future. Not that his past has been particularly bright; he only remembers the good times, a narrow world of sex and alcohol. However, it is the introduction of Ethel as the catalyst that leads both brothers to a new understanding of themselves, however harsh. Zachariah begins to recognise for the first time the tragedy of being born black: 'What is there is black as me?' (p. 94). He highlights this by listing the differences between his sort and the white man; the look in their eyes, their walk, their speech and, as the play so dramatically demonstrates, the clothes that play such an important role in establishing identity and one's place in society. On the question of clothes, a crucial prop in *Blood Knot*, observe that Boesman appears on stage wearing a sports-club blazer, symbol of his 'friend' the white man, even though the blazer is described as 'torn'! One critic contends that although this piece of second-hand clothing might have been passed on to a Coloured person, it would not have been so offered to a black man. White school children in South Africa were evidently instructed never to part with distinctive school blazers to black children (Blumberg 1999, p 66).

The white man notices Boesman long enough to tell him to '*Voetsek*' (Bugger off) and '*Vat jou goed en trek*' (Take your things and go) but, as Zachariah poignantly says of the white man, 'That sort doesn't even see me' (p. 116). To the oppressor, Zachariah (any more than Boesman and Lena) does not exist as an individual; as Buntu tells Sizwe, they only see a ghost (p.185). The black or Coloured man is invisible, just like the hero of Ralph Ellison's novel:

I am an invisible man. ... I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me...When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me.

(Ellison 1965, p.7)

Herein lies a fundamental truth about the position of the non-white in South Africa; the all-seeing eyes of the white State are never closed, the oppressed are under constant surveillance, but the individual is ignored and rendered invisible - except when needed as a unit of labour or, like Boesman and Lena, when living in the 'wrong' place. For writer Can Themba, the white man might see him, but in what way?

The whole atmosphere is charged with the whiteman's general disapproval, and where he does not have a law for it, he certainly has a grimace that cows you. This is the burden of the whiteman's crime against my personality that negatives all the brilliance of intellect and the genuine funds of goodwill so many individuals have. The whole bloody ethos asphyxiates me.

(Sanders 2002, p. 96)

The consequences of being invisible provide a further important dimension when the Hegelian dialectic of self-consciousness and recognition is considered by Fanon:

Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognised by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognised by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed.

(Fanon 1986, pp. 216/217)

In South Africa, the oppressor sees little human worth in the likes of Morris and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena, but the supreme evil is that these oppressed people find it difficult to discover any human worth in themselves; as Fanon writes '...the former slave wants to *make himself recognised*.' 'to win the certainty of oneself...' (Ibid, p. 217). By the end of the play, Lena finds some value in this regard, but not the others. Not only are they denied any human worth, they do not have any substantial reality in reference to the white man - except as rubbish. However, continuing the Hegelian concept of self-consciousness and the Master-Slave dialectic, even if the white man only sees the black man as rubbish, the black man cannot be totally invisible - not

there. The oppressor/Master extracts recognition from the native/Slave to establish his own self-consciousness that can only exist if it exists for another but, as discussed with the Doris Lessing quotation already cited, ..the Master refuses to reciprocate this recognition and see a human being so, 'he brings down the whip' and withholds that status. Fanon reinforces this view:

I hope I have shown that here the master differs basically from the master described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work.

(Ibid, p.220)

Any new understanding of any worth in themselves that the brothers gain as a result of Ethel entering their lives was not shared by Kenneth Tynan. When *The Blood Knot* was presented at the New Arts Theatre Club in 1963, his review for *The Observer* said that he welcomed the ringing of the alarm clock as it had woken him from an 'embarrassed sleep'. It would also appear that he was not really awake when writing his critique where he managed to misspell the names of the author and one of the only two actors on stage. Nevertheless, in his scathing review he said that the play simply reflected white guilt and he described Morris and Zachariah as being 'loveable, half-witted clowns, politically ignorant.' At this stage in Fugard's career, this was a severe indictment of a new talent by one of the most influential theatre critics of the day.⁷ However, in the case of the Tynan review, a close reading of *Blood Knot* reveals that it is his evaluation that is half-witted and ignorant, rather than Morris and Zachariah. They are well aware of the socio-political climate in which they live, and although one of the themes explored is the way in which their lives are illuminated by the playing of games, they are certainly not playing the fool. One of the major pieces of racist legislation creating this climate was the Population Registration Act of 1950. Martin Orkin provides a number of quotes from the *Rand Daily Mail* of 1958 relating to this legislation, including one on the 8 March (possibly read by Fugard when living in Johannesburg at that time) of a Supreme Court judgement that found a 22-year-old 'African Houseboy' guilty of a crime by writing a letter to an 18-year-old white girl expressing his love for her (Orkin, 1991, p.83). Zachariah's thought crime is never reported to the

authorities, but it provokes a severe cross-examination by Morris that is far from 'politically ignorant':

- MORRIS Then listen, Zach, because I know it.
- "Dear Ethel, Forgive me, but I was born a dark sort of
 boy who wanted to play with whiteness . . . "
- ZACHARIAH [*rebellng*] No!
- MORRIS What else can you say? Come on. Let's hear it. What
 is there a man can say or pray that will change the colour
 of his skin or blind them to it?
- ZACHARIAH There must be something.
- MORRIS There is nothing ... when it's a question of smiles and
 whispers and thoughts in strange eyes there is only the
 truth and ... then ... [*He pauses*]
- ZACHARIAH And then what?
- MORRIS And then to make a run for it. They don't like these
 games with their whiteness, Zach...

(p.92)

This dialogue represents a major theme for this play, as repeated in the following speech by Morris, namely how the all-enveloping and all-seeing 'they' will participate in the dreams of Zachariah and enter his mind, awake or asleep, and judge him guilty:

What have you thought, Zach! That's the crime. I seem to remember somebody saying: 'I like the thought of this little white girl' And what about your dreams, Zach? They've kept me awake these past few nights. I've heard them mumbling and moaning away in the darkness. They'll hear them quick enough. When they get their hands on a dark-born boy playing with a white idea, you think they don't find out what he's been dreaming at night? They've got ways and means, Zach. Mean ways. Like confinement, in a cell, on bread and water, for days without end. They got time. All they need for evidence is a man's dreams. Not so much his hate. They say they can live with that. It's his dreams that they drag off to judgement....

(p. 92)

In the case of Winston Smith, he was under more or less constant surveillance by the Thought Police through the telescreen that received and transmitted

images, but the case of Morris and Zachariah is even more sinister. The analogy between the extremes of Orwell's Oceania and apartheid South Africa may seem to be far-fetched, but the four Ministries of *Nineteen Eighty-four* have absolute power and if a government can enact legislation entitled 'The Abolition of Passes' that has nothing to do with abolition could it not, in extremes, have a Ministry of Peace that deals with war, a Ministry of Love that controls the Thought Police and a party slogan that includes 'Freedom is Slavery'. In David Edgar's play *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs*, amongst the first words Sachs utters are: '...the man who's locking people up indefinitely, without trial or hearing, the man who passed the Bill to do that, he is called the Minister of Justice' (Edgar 1997, p.3). For Morris and Zachariah, the apartheid Thought Police have transplanted their own telescreens into the minds of the overseen who can be led to believe that, for them, surveillance is always there, as described by Aimé Césaire: 'I am talking of millions of men who have been skilfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement'.⁸

As Morris perceives the situation where their thoughts might be controlled, he is also aware that, in addition to the racial divide on beaches and park benches, differences in colour have been verbally expressed for centuries. In the majority of instances verbal racism is articulated in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor, and yet in the case of most of South Africa's Coloured population this is also their first language. As is explored in Chapter Four, in the process of establishing themselves as a separate people, the early Boer settlers saw the need to form their own language, perhaps their greatest cultural achievement, but while doing so the people of mixed race were absorbed in the maelstrom of language creation out of which came a common tongue - but with no common rights. Half of the country's Afrikaner speakers were socially and politically excluded; a mongrel race no more respected than Lena's dog - the *brak* (mongrel). The history of what became the language of subjection is relevant to the study of these two plays because the 'eyes behind the back' are Afrikaner eyes controlling the lives of the non-privileged Coloured Afrikaner speaker. The dialogue between Morris and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena would, in real life, have been conducted in Afrikaans, but Fugard writes in English for mostly

English-speaking audiences. In South Africa, these audiences would have been able to understand most of the Afrikaans phrases which, in *Boesman & Lena* and *Blood Knot*, add considerable strength and realism to the dialogue; particularly as in most cases they replicate the language of the Master - phrases that represent power, discrimination and oppression. Barney Simon describes Fugard's scripts as 'arbitrary in his use of Afrikaans.... So what he gives you is the sweat of the dialogue, rather than the dialogue - the sweat of the encounter between the people, the feel' (Gray 1982, p.48).

There are varied examples in *Blood Knot* and *Boesman & Lena* of how the use of language reveals the reality of racism. In the Francophone colonies, Fanon, in deeply ironic mode, contended that the Negro 'will be proportionately whiter - that is, he will come closer to being a real human being - in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language' (Fanon 1986, p.18), but in South Africa this does not apply. The irony is that there was no need for the Coloured to learn Afrikaans, this was already their language. Afrikaans was the language used during the forced removal of Boesman and Lena but despite the common tongue, the everyday titles of 'boy' (as strikingly illustrated in "*Master Harold*"....and the boys) and 'baas' continue to establish the colour boundary and underline the lack of respect and dignity. Even Boesman's Afrikaans is peppered with examples of the word *baas*: 'Push it over my *baas*! *Danke baas*!' In *Blood Knot*, at the beginning of Scene Five, where a knock at the door brings to Morris the fear of some real outside intervention, he is uncertain as to terms of address, 'Ethel . . . I mean, Madam . . .' (p.101), but when the play-acting begins, Morris has no difficulty in assuming the white man's role and using the offensive term *swartgat*.⁹ This momentarily shocks Zachariah as his first reaction is to feel all the painful and traumatic experience of apartheid that this word epitomises. Morris also calls his brother the ubiquitous 'John':

MORRIS: But . . . but I thought you were the good sort of boy?

ZACHARIAH: Me?

MORRIS: Weren't you that? The simple, trust-worthy type of John-boy. Weren't you that?

ZACHARIAH: I've changed.

MORRIS: Who gave you the right?

ZACHARIAH: I took it!

MORRIS: That's illegal!...

(p.121)

In South Africa, the term 'boy' as a form of address was universal, whatever the age of the black or Coloured man. Zachariah is angry as he says to Morris 'They call a man a boy' (p. 74) but his anger is somewhat muted as he goes on to say 'Good is good, and fair is fair. I may be a shade of black but I go gently as a man' (p.80). Perhaps, like Dylan Thomas, Zachariah should not 'go gentle' but rage, not against death and old age, but against the iniquitous system that calls him not a man but a 'boy' and denies him any worthwhile identity.

Identity for Coloured people in South Africa has evolved from their history and from the political strictures imposed upon them over time. The prominent Coloured politician, Rev. Allan Hendrickse, gives one view of the position of his race in South Africa:

The term Coloured is not of our own thinking, and if we look at the circumstances of the South African situation then you must ask why. We have no peculiar colour, we have no peculiar language and if other people see these peculiarities they see them not because they see them but because they want other people to see them...I do not want to be labelled Coloured...all I want to be known as is South African.

(February 1991 pp.5/6)

In an essay entitled 'Shame and identity: the case of the coloured in South Africa' (Attridge 1998), Zoë Wicomb contends that voting for the National Party,¹⁰ 'an amnesia with regard to the National Party's atrocities in maintaining apartheid', had its reasons in the very origin of the Coloureds - origins saturated in shame. She suggests that the fact that Coloured identity does not recognise in its folk-history or cultural memory any history of slavery can be blamed on shame - Coloured people denying their roots and origins. In the meditations

entitled *Africa* in Coloured writer Bessie Head's ¹¹ *The Cardinals*, she invokes her identity by a reference to travelling without direction:

Not now, not ever, shall I be complete; and though the road to find you has been desolate with loneliness, still more desolate is the road that leads away from you ... What do I do now that your face intrudes everywhere, and you are yet essentially ashamed of me as the thing of nothing from nowhere? Nothing I am, of no tribe or race, and because of it full of a childish arrogance to defend myself against all of you.

(Head 1993, p. 121)

These plays do not indicate that the characters exhibit much in the way of 'cultural memory' - the brothers remember their childhood and Lena, with some prompting, recalls the catalogue of places she has lived - anymore than they are concerned with identity. Until Morris returns, Zachariah does not engage with this question; he was 'born a dark sort of a boy', accepting his lot as a Coloured working-man getting by with very little future. This vapid acceptance of his fate is interrupted by the introduction of Ethel. When he begins to aspire to 'play with whiteness', Morris, in his boss persona, sheds the skin of the subservient and assumes the role of the white man and, while wearing his clothes, is able to change his identity through tone of voice and choice of word as he attacks his brother and requires him to return to his place in the apartheid-controlled society.

Morris's identity is complex, as revealed in the discussion on 'passing for white', but in the case of Lena, it can be questioned whether she is as concerned with shame as was Bessie Head? As Lena walks onto the stage, her loads may include shame; they certainly include despair as she seeks to determine how she and Boesman had got to the Swartkops River on that particular day. She looks to find some meaning for her sorry existence, but Boesman's response is to belittle and degrade her:

LENA: I want somebody to listen

BOESMAN: To what? That *gebabbel* (babble) of yours. When you *poep* (fart) it makes more sense. You know why? It stinks. Your words are just noise. Nonsense. *Die geraas van 'n vervloekte lewe* (the noise of a cursed life) Look at you! Listen to you! You're asking for a lot, Lena. Must I go mad as well?

(p. 200)

He then inflicts the hardest cut of all - not simply insulting her but calling into question her very existence as he says to her, 'One day you will ask me who you are.' This is the perpetual question for the Coloured of South Africa, 'our sort' as Boesman describes them (p. 207), or as Steve's father in *A Lesson from Aloes* declaims, 'our race is a mistake' (p. 260). On the other hand, both Boesman and Lena recognize the identity of Outa as an inferior. For Boesman, 'He's not brown people, he's black people' (p. 212). Lena has another viewpoint. She dances for Outa but tells him that her dance is not like his, not a war dance, but one that comes to the Coloureds, from their origins as slaves - an origin she appears to accept without the shame Zoë Wicomb refers to above. But is she really that different from Outa? Her dance may not be a war dance but the oppressor does not distinguish as they become, according to Fanon, part of a muscular demonstration that helps to deal with the 'emotional sensitivity of the native'. '....we see the native's emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic' (Fanon 1990, p.44). Fanon's description echoes Hally's plot for his school essay - 'the release of primitive emotions through movement' (p. 34) - but both Sam and Willie, and Lena to an extent, dance for reasons other than a need to exhaust the 'native's emotional sensibility.'

The character in these two plays whose identity is the most problematical is Morris. According to Mel Gussow, from a review in the *New York Times* of 2 February 1977, 'The plays of Athol Fugard make such painful political statements - they prove the validity of art as a social instrument' (Gray 1982, p. 94). In *Blood Knot*, one of these political statements is crucially concerned with the impact of the Population Registration Act of 1950 on racial categorisation,

which is fundamental in understanding Morris, his relationship with his brother and his experience of attempting to 'pass' as a white man. The wording of Section 5 (1) of the act underlines the uncertainty relating to colour in South Africa. A 'white person' is defined as meaning 'a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person'. Morris appears to have been one who has failed this test both to himself and to the outside world. His dilemma is far from unique; at the end of Scene 5, he pleads with Zachariah not to see him as a Judas, but he cannot wipe out this stain - 'be forgiven' - by simply wearing his brother's coat (p.67). To quote Albert Memmi, the first move by the colonised to reject the situation is 'by changing his skin':

The first attempt of the colonized is to change his condition by changing his skin. There is a tempting model very close at hand - the colonizer. The latter suffers from none of his deficiencies, has all rights, enjoys every possession and benefits from every prestige. He is, moreover, the other part of the comparison, the one that crushes the colonized and keeps him in servitude. The first ambition of the colonized is to become equal to that splendid model and to resemble him to the point of disappearing in him.

(Memmi 1990, p.186).

Morris has clearly not succeeded with the disappearing trick; he does not know who or what he is. From the very first conception of the play, as indicated at the beginning of Fugard's *Notebooks*, Morris resists the temptation to use his lightness because it is easier to live without fear and uncertainty (Nb, p. 9), but in the final version of the play, a more complex Morris has emerged. Fugard writes about John Berry, who produced the play in Hampstead in 1963:

The many moments when he said something about Morris and Zachariah that made me realise how much he understood, how total was his understanding - '... those two impoverished, mutilated bastards.' 'Don't you understand' he said to Ian Bannen, who played Morrie.... 'something's missing. They're not complete. Who the hell for that matter is? That's what the play is about, man. They *want something*.'

Something else he said to Ian Bannen about Morrie: 'There's one question present, if unspoken, behind everything this man does in

that room. "What am I?" That question is his life - at all levels. Is he white or is he black? Is he friend or is he enemy? Is he real or is he a dream? And who the fucking hell knows the answers to that lot! Do you, Ian? We are dealing with a search for identity.'

And then John suddenly: 'Christ, man! Do you know what this is - this is what Sartre calls anguish.'

It seemed to me that behind everything John said about Morrie was the recognition of his, Morrie's anguish.

(Nb, p.70/1)

As the incomplete Morrie tries to answer the question, 'What am I?' he, to some extent, regrets his pale skin and yet as he berates his own beginnings 'I wish that old washerwoman had bruised me too at birth' (p.94), he is acknowledging to himself that the white man is his superior. The antithesis of Morris passing for white is seen in the attitude of Zachariah to his blackness. As Morris harshly calls upon his brother to atone for the sin of dreaming that he can have a white woman, Zachariah says, with a cry of despair: 'The whole rotten, stinking lot is all because I'm black! Black days, black ways, black things. They're me. I'm happy. Ha Ha Ha! Can you hear my black happiness? What is there as black as me?' (p.94). In Fugard's *Notebooks* he writes 'Morris, if anything, hates himself. Zachariah hates the world that has decided his blackness must be punished' (p.9). Morris's hatred is the more complicated; he can fume against the petty legislation imposed by the State but he appears to suffer the added burden of ambivalence, using Homi Bhabha's description, a desire to be 'in two places at once' (Childs 1997 p.124). A year after Morris returns to live with his brother after ten years absence, Zachariah asks him why he came back, and in reply Morris says 'I was passing this way' (p.66). We can only conjecture as to how deliberate the author's use of the word 'passing' was, but what is clear is that for twelve months Zachariah seems to have enquired little into what Morris was doing during that time or expressed any curiosity about the society he inhabited, a society where a white taxi-driver was sufficiently fearful of breaking the law that he refused to take, as passengers, a blind white girl being guided by her coloured maid (de Klerk 1975, p.276). However, as the text reveals, Morris spent some part of this decade attempting to 'try for white' and indeed Zachariah eventually acknowledges the fact when in

his imaginary conversation with their mother he tells her that Morris 'came back quite white' (p.108): but evidently not white enough. In Homi Bhabha's words: 'Almost the same; but not quite. Almost the same; but not white'. Morris can be seen as one of Bhabha's mimic men who are compelled to exist in a zone of ambivalence where they represent themselves in a persona that, in the end, they cannot fully achieve.

Morris is even more of a stepchild, to use Sarah Gertrude Millin's description, than his brother or Boesman and Lena: he is 'not quite' part of the real (white) family. During the play-acting at the end of Scene Five, when Morris, wearing the clothes of Mr. Moses' gentleman, calls his brother 'swartgat', Zachariah is startled and says 'I thought I was looking at a different sort of man' (p.106). This prompts Morris to confess that he had tried to be different but was stopped by thoughts of his brother:

But don't you see, Zach? It was me! That different sort of man you saw was me. It's happened, man And I swear, I no longer wanted it. That's why I came back. Because ... because ... I'll tell you the whole truth now ... because I did try it! It didn't seem a sin. If a man was born with a chance at changing why not take it? I thought ... thinking of worms lying warm in their silk, to come out one day with wings and things! Why not a man? If his dreams are soft and keep him warm at night, why not stand up the next morning? Different ... Beautiful! So what was stopping me? You. There was always you. What sort of thing was that to do to your own flesh and blood brother? Anywhere, any place or road, there was always you, Zach. So I came back. I'm no Judas. Gentle Jesus, I'm no Judas.

(pp, 106/7)

We can only conjecture as to how many Coloureds who passed for white suffered a Judas complex and felt they were betraying their race. There must have been many caught up in this contradiction, as so tragically revealed in *Passing*, the classic 1929 novel on this subject by Nella Larsen, one of the few women writers of the Harlem renaissance. In a comment on this work, Sarah Ahmed writes:

Clare is detected as a black woman underneath the assumed white mask and, in terms of the narrative development, this leads to her death.... Her passing, which enables her access to the privilege of

assumed whiteness (she is white because she does not look black), is an event which constitutes not simply the impossibility of racial identity being secured through the visual coding of difference (the black woman who is not seeable as black), but also the demand to designate others into categories of identity beyond the visual (for example, categories of blood or genetics). Who counts as white? Who counts as black? Who counts as male? Who counts as female? Who counts as a black woman? Passing may render these questions a matter of social contest: it may in this sense politicize identity; it may demonstrate that there are no absolute criteria for making such decisions about identity, property and belonging.

(Ahmed 1999, p. 91)

There is a more modern example of identity fiction than Nella Larsen's *Passing* with Jackie Kay's 1998 novel *Trumpet* where, unlike Morris, the central character, who hides his/her gender identity, is constantly in the public gaze as a famous jazz trumpet player. With acceptance and help from his wife, Joss, the trumpeter, is identified by all as a man until his death reveals he is in fact a woman. In the case of Larsen's Clare, and for Morris, their attempted identity change depended on genetics rather than the various devices Joss resorted to, but psychologically they all pose the same question as that raised by John Berry when producing *Blood Knot* - 'What am I'. Joss finds it easier to answer this than the others. He is what he is (a woman posing as a man) by design, however complex the reasons, but Morris and Clare do not have that certainty; one commits suicide and the other returns to his brother.

During his ten-year absence, the thought of Morris disowning his brother clearly took some time to percolate into his conscience - the facts are more likely to be that the anguish he endured (like many others) in trying to imitate all of the nuances of being white was eventually too hard, as it was for the heroine of *Kimberly Train* - 'you have to know the colour within you':

Well, the suit then. Look, Zach, what I'm trying to say is this. The clothes will help, but only help. They don't maketh the white man. It's that white something inside you, that special meaning and manner of whiteness. I know what I'm talking about because ... I'll be honest with you now, Zach ... I've thought about it for a long time.

And the first fruit of my thought, Zach, is that this whiteness of theirs is not just in the skin, otherwise ... well, I mean ... I'd be one of them,

wouldn't I? Because, let me tell you, Zach, I seen them that's darker than me.

(p.103)

As Morris says, you cannot be 'white-washing away a man's facts' (p.91), much like theatre critic Harold Hobson observed (his review in the *Sunday Times* of 24 February 1963), '....the more Morris Pieterse demonstrates his whiteness, the more and more apparent grows his blackness' and, as this occurs, his guilt eases and he becomes more stable like Zachariah, not defeated, but resigned to join the ranks 'of people getting by without futures' (p.122).

Zachariah's initial indifference about Morris's activities during his ten years absence is mirrored in the play text itself by the absence of detail as to what actually happened. He admits to trying for white but protests to Zachariah that trying to be a different sort of man was not a sin and uses the analogy of silk worms that lie dormant and then one day come out as beautiful creatures: or does he truly want us to believe that 'the worm had turned' and he gave up the delights of living life as a white man because of Zachariah? Were those ten years a happy or a sad experience? Whatever, there is sufficient evidence to show that he now prefers the Korsten pondok, even if this is only made tolerable by the ambition of owning a two-man farm, and actually wishes, *with absolute sincerity* (stage instructions p. 94) that he had been born black. If the tie to his brother was not genuinely the reason for his return, the title chosen for this play is stridently ironic, but the text appears to indicate that, at the last resort, it was brotherly love that brought Morris back. What is less clear is Morris's sexuality. There is anguish in his make-up but is there any latent homosexuality involved? Away from Korsten, did Morris ever 'come out' like the silkworm and was he seen, either in the white world or the non-white world, as a 'moffie'?¹² Fugard does not have any concerns about describing prostitute Hester's relations with her clients, Hally catching Sam and Cynthia 'at it' and the tensions that exist in the bedroom of Piet and Gladys are self-evident, but he is silent on the question of Morris's sexuality. This may be an example of Fugard's preferred ambiguity but when Zachariah asks if Morris has ever had a woman, the stage instructions say that Morris pretends he hasn't heard. When this is

repeated, Morris does react with the following words, but Zachariah falls asleep before the matter can be fully debated:

I touched something else once, with my life and these hands just touched it and felt warmth and softness and wanted it like I've never wanted anything in my whole life. Ask me why I didn't take it when I touched it. That's the question.

(p. 73)

We assume that Morris must have at least touched a white woman but, more importantly, what this speech is most concerned with is the possibility of 'passing for white'; but if so, can this state be realistically described as to include 'warmth and softness', particularly as any exposure would have been severely dealt with by the real white man. When the subject of women comes up in the next scene, Zachariah asks 'Wasn't there ever no white woman thereabouts?' (p.81). Morris fails to respond, but his monastic role in that Korsten shack can be questioned. Is he just the housekeeper - why doesn't he go out to work? He was mixed up outside in the white world and now he cannot fit into the black one. It can be accepted that there is a different openness today on the question of homosexuality than in the 1960s when Fugard was writing *Blood Knot*¹³, but compared to Zachariah's no-nonsense attitude towards women and sexuality, Morris is something of an enigma. His brother comments on Morris's shyness - he always undresses in the dark - 'Always well closed up. Like a woman.' (p. 95), and even when he is trying on the white man's suit, he requires Zachariah to close his eyes - much like Piet is not permitted to observe his wife disrobing - and yet Morris luxuriates in enveloping himself in Zachariah's coat when his brother is asleep. It would be perfectly reasonable to accept that Fugard's lack of detail about Morris's ten year absence and the apparent unconcern about his sexuality is deliberate, a silence that the author refuses to elaborate upon. On the other hand, it could be argued that the Afrikaner and liberal strains in Fugard's ideology prevented him from articulating any precise discussion on the question of Morris's sexual persuasion, particularly if not hetero-sexual, or is it that the playwright sidelines this question as being of no import in transmitting to audiences the central message of this play? It could be further argued that this unknown is in fact answered in the text

where, like John and Winston in *The Island*, there is perhaps inevitably a sense of a homo-erotic relationship on view where two men alone are deliberately confined within a small room, be it a pondok, or a prison cell.

These unknowns are no further elucidated when visiting the dreams of Morris and Fugard's other desperate characters in these two plays. Lena dreams of condensed milk, 'Sugar's not enough man. I want some real sweetness' (p.203), while Zachariah dreams of what he might do to Ethel as an alternative to shaking hands (p.96). Morris, with his dreams, tries like Prospero to manage their lives within their Korsten domain but he cannot because control is in the hands of the apartheid State, and Morris has no magic wand:

But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

(W. B. Yeats. *He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*)

Like Yeats's unhappy lover, they are poor and dreams are their only possessions of any value. Bessie Head fled to Botswana because she could not write 'in a land whose laws enacted fear and hatred' - 'a place that crushes dreams'. (Head 1995, p.ix), but for the brothers, we know that the dream of a 'two-man farm' is as remote as the fantasy of a possible relationship between Zachariah and Ethel. These are dreams that cannot be lodged in Styles's strong room, as described in Chapter Five. However, what is not in doubt are the consequences of the two dreams - one, a relationship between Zachariah and Ethel, suicidal, while the other, becoming a landowner, totally illusory:

Here, I want to show you something. You want to know what it is? A map..... of Africa. Now, this is the point, Zach. Look - there ... and there ... and down here ... Do you see it? Blank. Large, blank spaces. Not a town, not a road, not even those thin little red lines. And, notice, they're green. That means grass. I reckon we should be able to get a few acres in one of these blank spaces for next to nothing.

(p.59)

Fanon wrote: 'For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity' (Fanon 1990, p.34), but for the brothers there is little access to dignity, and as to acquiring land, this is a totally unrealisable dream: there are no blank spaces, green or otherwise, thanks to The Native Lands Act of 1913. Apartheid had in effect begun with the conquest by the whites of the land occupied by black Africans. By the end of the 19th Century, the frontier wars were over and the gun had begun to be replaced by the social and political domination over the black and Coloured people that eventually manifested itself as apartheid. Segregation was practised in the diamond fields from more or less the time discovery was made when white workers, many of whom were skilled miners from Britain, sought to protect their rights against black labour. However, segregation throughout South Africa substantially began with The Natives Lands Act of 1913 (further amplified by the Native Trust & Land Act of 1936) which decreed that non-whites could not own or lease land outside the reserves established by this legislation. These reserves covered about 7% of the total land-mass of the country, which was gradually increased to about 13%. The equation was a simple one; approximately 20% of the population enjoyed more than 80% of the land. Solomon Plaatje, one of the founders of the South African Native National Congress, which then became the African National Congress (ANC), wrote one of the most important political works of the early 20th Century in South Africa, *Native Life in South Africa*, a moving account of the impact of the Natives Land Act of 1913. The tone of this work is set by its first sentence: 'Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth' (Plaatje 1987, p.6).

Morris must surely have known this, but the text does not make it clear whether he is deceiving his brother so as to save money or simply to keep him away from Minnie and sex and liquor. Whatever, it is unlikely that Morris would have read Plaatje's book but the Marxist reading of the subtext of Morris's dream is informed by reference to this book, one of the earliest recorded descriptions of capitalists in South Africa using what was supposedly race legislation to line

their pockets. Plaatje tells many stories of Boer farmers who wasted no time, after the passing of the Land Act, to profit from it. One example given refers to a black farming family who were producing a steady income of £150 per annum after paying the white man his 50 per cent share, only to be told that as a result of the new law, the natives' livestock and crops were now owned by the white farmer and the black family could work for him for £2 per month - or leave the property within four days (Plaatje 1987, p.56). Although Morris and his brother, and Boesman and Lena, have never owned any crops or livestock, the incident Plaatje records was the precursor of their fates. As a result of a single piece of legislation, the worker loses his crops and cattle - you cannot own such things if you have no land rights - leading to an instantaneous transition from property owner to serf, with no employment rights either. Perhaps the ultimate irony is that Boesman and Lena have more contact with the land than any of Fugard's other dispossessed characters, they have tramped all over it for decades, but they are the least privileged of any.

Morris's unrealistic territorial ambitions contained no essence of a threat to the all-powerful State, whose hegemony in the field of land ownership is total and inviolable. Or is it? Nadine Gordimer, prior to winning the Nobel Prize, had gained the Booker Prize for *The Conservationist*, a novel mainly located in a rural setting. Gordimer's modernist work is projected through the consciousness of Mehring, the white man who lives in the city but who owns a farm primarily as 'A place to bring a woman.' The principal concern of the novel centres on who is the real owner of the land? Is it Mehring's, or does the dead black man, who is twice buried on the farm, have the proper title? Mehring ponders to himself:

That bit of paper you bought yourself from the deeds office isn't going to be valid for as long as another generation. It'll be worth about as much as those our grandfathers gave the blacks when they took the land from them. The blacks will tear up your bit of paper.

(Gordimer 1978, p.177)

Perhaps the question is answered with the last lines of the book, referring to the dead black man, (mirrored in Lena's Outa): 'They had put him away to rest, at

last; he had come back. He took possession of the land, theirs; one of them' (Ibid, p.267). Stephen Clingman, Gordimer's most authoritative critic, suggests that 'he had come back' is a direct reference to the 1950s rallying call of the African National Congress - 'Afrika! Mayibuye! (Africa! May it come back)' (Clingman 1993, p.141). Not however for Morris; the best that he and Zachariah can aspire to would be farm labourers, never farm owners.

The dreams of the brothers are complemented by games (painful games, as Benedict Nightingale observed in *The Times*, 12 April 1999), where, reiterating the black and white theme, it is not difficult to see the comparison between the lot of the white man and the butterfly that flies free in a beautiful world and Zachariah hesitantly asking his mother whether he has a similar beauty of his own (p.109). They have a romantic nostalgia for the games they played as children that simply highlights the sorry state of their existence as adults:

MORRIS: Making hay, man, come and play, man, while the sun is
 shining. ...which it did.

ZACHARIAH: Hey - what's that...that *nice* thing you say, Morrie?

MORRIS: 'So sweet -

ZACHARIAH: Uh – huh.

MORRIS: '- did pass that summertime
 Of youth and fruit upon the tree
 When laughing boys and pretty girls
 Did hop and skip and all were free.'

(p.87)

How free are they now! When the brothers discover the threat posed by the white Ethel, Morris says to Zachariah 'This is no bloody game, Zach!' (p.97). Indeed it is not - it is dangerously real. In their imaginary motor-car, the brothers 'drive like hell' to leave their world behind them, but there is further meaning in the way Zachariah expresses it, 'And driving to hell and gone was our game' (p.86). Is there no escape from their hellish world? In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon wrote:

The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motorcars which never catch up with me. During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until to six in the morning.

(Fanon 1990, p.40)

As for Morris and Zachariah, they do not dream of overthrowing the oppressor; they indulge in driving at 100 miles per hour in an imaginary escape from reality - and from Ethel:

MORRIS: We played our games, Zach.

ZACHARIAH: And now?

MORRIS: See for yourself, Zach. Here we are later, and now there is Ethel as well and that makes me frightened.

ZACHARIAH: Sounds like another game.

MORRIS: Yes....but not ours this time...

(p.87)

Dreams and games provide them with little real solace in their lives.

Mary Benson, in a review in *The Times* of the 12th of December 1961, wrote that *Blood Knot* provides 'an intimate insight into the barren, poverty-stricken lives of tens of thousands of one's fellow-countrymen' but Fugard's text does not, in any detailed fashion, catalogue the State's responsibility for this poverty. The question can be asked as to whether Fugard, as the liberal, is reluctant to be specific as to the facts of this evil. In the play some of these are undeniable. The living conditions of the brothers is there to be observed across the footlights - the stage instructions inform the set designer that, '*The shack is tidy and swept, but this only enhances the poverty of its furnishings.*' The sparse menus of their evening meals are also revealed, added to the prayer of Morris, 'Our Father', that includes the words, 'Furthermore, just some bread for the poor daily' (p. 122), but on the wider political horizon, how this poverty is imposed by

the white boss is hardly alluded to. However, the absence of detail is clearly more allied to the playwright's low-key dramatic approach than any liberal niceties; the politics of poverty do not need to be specified, they are fully realised in the dialogue and action - and then, not just material poverty, but all the other deprivations the brothers are subjected to. Morris saves from Zachariah's hard-earned pittance for their two-man farm so as to escape from the white capitalist's industrial landscape where 'They've left no room for a man to breathe in this world' (p.60) - but to no avail. At least Zachariah can fantasise about the 'jollification' of his time with Minnie (although Connie may have a different recollection) but 'Golden Moments at fifty cents a bottle' (p.58) are precisely that - a momentary escape from the everyday drudgery. In the case of Boesman and Lena, alcohol is constantly used to anaesthetize them from the real world they inhabit and it is ironic that they collect empty bottles (even if not all of them had contained alcohol) to earn enough to purchase full ones - *Weg wêrald, kom brandewyn* (Go away world, come brandy) (p.213). No doubt this liquor was marketed by the subordinate classes (shebeen owner or Indian shopkeeper) but there is some history of the control of alcohol production by the authorities going back to the situation in the Witwatersrand mining industry where, for nearly two decades from the 1880s, agriculture and the mining industry co-operated (at least initially) over the supply of cheap liquor to black miners.¹⁴ In more contemporary times, some homeland development was financed by profits made from municipal liquor sales to black Africans and Coloureds.

State control in the fields of education is implicit in the texts as we are made painfully aware of Zachariah's illiteracy, and neither is there any evidence that Boesman and Lena are any more learned: they are certainly not in the same league as Sam. The disparity between white education and that of the dispossessed is referred to in Chapter Six, but clearly Zachariah's inability to read was the result of this disparity. Being illiterate, he was even more exploitable by the apartheid system than others of his brethren working in the Port Elizabeth factories, hence his totally undemanding job in the park and the fact that he appreciates his brother's way with words, '...precious things these

days?' (p.80). He is comforted when Morris articulates the degradation that he, Zachariah, suffers - 'insult', 'injury', 'inhumanity', 'prejudice' and 'injustice'. These words act as a purgative for both brothers and it is of course Morris's words which brings Ethel into their lives. Morris's role as letter-writer strengthens the bond between the brothers - as with Cyrano de Bergerac when he tells Christian that the letter to Roxane is ready:

I'll be your other self and you'll be mine;

We will complete each other ...

(Rostand 2000, p.55)

In Lena's case, Boesman's use of words is mocked by her as she says, 'You got some words tonight, Boesman. Freedom. Truth. What's that? ...'(p.241). However, the sharpest mockery is to be seen when contrasting what category of words apply naturally to the characters in these plays, insult, inhumanity etc., with those that cannot be accorded to them, freedom - and truth; even though at the end of the play, Lena does achieve a freedom of sorts and she learns the truth about her relationship with Boesman.

The control of black and Coloured labour was as much a plank in the *raison d'être* for apartheid policies as any racial ideology. Zachariah is one of the many black and Coloured people who live in Port Elizabeth because of the industry there and where the State has imposed a strict order of residential segregation that, for instance, required two-thirds of the half million population of the city to live in areas such as Korsten or New Brighton. This segregation was ridiculously complicated, as was the case in so many other areas of life in apartheid South Africa. The Port Elizabeth Municipal Planning Committee group area proposals for 1955 show specific ethnic spatial segregation for eight different categories; White, Coloured and Malay, Indian, Chinese, Black, Coloured or White, and finally an unzoned area - Asiatic Trading (Christopher, 1994, p.109). Connie bought her blue soap 'from the Chinaman on the corner' (p.63). In the event, separate areas for Malays and Chinese were not set up and these ethnic minorities were accommodated in Coloured areas. Korsten

was one of those areas and Morris and Zachariah lived in this slum because of the State's control of labour:

You should have been here this afternoon, Zach. The wind was blowing again. Coming this way it was, right across the lake. You should have smelt it, man. I'm telling you that water has gone bad. Really rotten! And what about the factories there on the other side? Hey? Lavatories all around us?

(p.60).

Other than the extent to which the text reveals, or is silent, on the question of Morris providing a 'feminine' presence on stage, the world of *Blood Knot* is seemingly an overwhelmingly male one, with any female participation off-stage, and restricted to the periphery of the action. Ethel, 'snow-white Ethel', vividly represents, by written word and photograph, 'the eyes behind' the brothers' backs, while at the other end of the scale Connie is exploited, not only by the State, but by one of her own, Zachariah, who uses her to try and ameliorate the hopelessness of his own sorry life. Fugard skilfully uses the off-stage Ethel as a most unlikely and yet powerful agent of the regime. An eighteen-year-old girl, whose motto is 'rolling stones gather no moss' and with interests extending to 'nature, rock & roll, swimming, and a happy future', hardly appears to constitute a credible voice of authority but, however banal, she is white and as such represents all the power of the malevolent State. This is chillingly exposed in *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*, where Fugard shows the psychologically dangerous impact on an educated Zachariah and a mature Ethel where the relationship is consummated and the full weight of the State's control is applied. However, in *Blood Knot* there are some moments when the spectre of the non-appearing Ethel becomes nearly as real and dangerous as Detective-Sergeant Du Prez, the invading force in *Statements*. She is no less the unseen eye of Bentham's panopticon than Hendrik Verwoerd himself. Nonetheless, although the external State invades and permeates the realm of Morris and Zachariah with the menace represented by Ethel, there are elements of a minor rebellion by the brothers when they fantasise about sex with a white woman, a theme explored in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*:

I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*

Now - and this is a form of recognition that Hegel had not envisaged - who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.

I am a white man.

Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization...

I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness.

When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine.

(Fanon 1986, p.63)

These tensions are revealed in the following speech by Zachariah where Fugard allows some recognition of the Fanon stereotype of black male sexuality 'The white man is convinced that the Negro is a beast...' (Ibid, p.170):

ZACHARIAH: It's because she's white! I like this little white girl! I like the thought of this little white girl. I'm telling you, I like the thought of this little white Ethel better than our plans, or future, or foot salts or any other damn thing in here. It's the best thought I ever had and I am keeping it, and don't try no tricks like trying to get it away from me. Who knows? You might get to liking it too, Morrie.

[*Morris says nothing. Zachariah comes closer.*]

Ja. There's a thought there. What about you, Morrie? You never had it before - that thought? A man like you, specially you, always thinking so many things! A man like you who's been places! You're always telling me about the places you been. Wasn't there ever no white woman thereabouts? I mean... you must have smelt them someplace. That sweet, white smell, they leave it behind, you know. [*Nudging Morris*] Come on, confess. Of course, you did. Hey? I bet you had that thought all the time. I bet you been having it in here. Hey? You should have shared it, Morrie. I'm a man with a taste for thoughts these days.

(p.81)

Later in Fanon's chapter, 'The Man of Color and the White Woman', he quotes from a report to the Interracial Conferences of 1949:

Insofar as truly interracial marriage is concerned, one can legitimately wonder to what extent it may not represent for the colored spouse a kind of subjective consecration to wiping out in himself ¹⁵ and in his own mind the color prejudice from which he has suffered so long..... by choosing partners of another race.... whose chief asset seems to be the assurance that the partner will achieve denaturalisation and (to use a loathsome word) "deracialization" they find access to complete equality with that illustrious race, the master of the world, the ruler of the people of color...

(Ibid 1986, pp. 71/72)

In his fantasy, Zachariah can like 'this little white girl' and view her as a sex object, but in the real world, Ethel is not the means whereby he can shed his unhappy existence as a 'Man of Color' in South Africa and gain equal access to the 'master of the world'.

Ethel does not make any appearance on stage but the threat of her whiteness is just as real as was that of Veronica in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*. In this novel, first published in 1986, a black man is to be executed for what he believes was consensual sex with a white woman (Veronica) that turns into a criminal offence when their love-making is interrupted by other white people. She has no alternative - she has to 'cry rape' to maintain the supremacy of the white race. In Nkosi's words:

This girl, for example, white, pretty, consumed by her own vanity and the need to escape from a life of numbing boredom, will be responsible, some will argue, for the dispatch of one more young African life to perdition. Such a view is quite mistaken. Veronica is responsible, of course, in a way, but only marginally, symbolically, responsible. The bearer of a white skin..... this English girl has simply been an instrument in whom is revealed in its most flagrant form the rot and corruption of a society that has cut itself off entirely from the rest of humanity, from any possibility for human growth.

(Nkosi 1987, p.180)

In addition to Ethel, there is another crucial female presence in the play in the shape of the woman who has given life to Morris and Zachariah. According to one critic, 'In 1961, the common mother could have been seen as South Africa with the black and white brothers tied together in an unbreakable bond, at once sustaining and destructive' (Weales 1978, p.7). At the end of the play Morris

conjugates up an image of his mother to use as a scapegoat to answer for his lot in life. He does not respect her status as mother, but blames her and not the State for his ambivalence and unhappiness, constituting a form of 'divide and rule', whereby the State insidiously diverts attention from its oppression by persuading the oppressed to oppose their own kind - in Foucault's words, 'the principal of his own subjection'.

The eyes behind the backs of the two itinerants are as potent and pertinent to them as for Morris and Zachariah, but in the case of Boesman and Lena these materialise as the headlights of a yellow bulldozer:

Slowly it comes ... slowly ... big yellow *donner* (bastard) with its jawbone on the ground. One bite and there's a hole in the earth! Whiteman on top. I watched him. He had to work, *ou boeta* (old pal). Wasn't easy to tell that thing where to go. He had to work with those knobs!

In reverse ... take aim! ... *maak sy bek oop!*..(open its mouth!).. then horse-power in top gear and smashed to hell. One push and it was flat. All of them. Slum clearance! And what did we do? Stand and look.

(p.227)

At least Morris and Zachariah had some shelter, a basic human right; even the 'birds of the air have nests' but, while Lena envies the birds she looks for at the opening of the play, she dreams not of a two-man farm, but of a 'Real room, with a door and all that.' (p.208).). The main reason for their homelessness is poverty, but the other culprit is the Group Areas Act of 1950 whereby Boesman and Lena are denied any permanent home, due to the spatial segregation imposed by the apartheid State. There had been a degree of residential segregation in urban areas for Africans as far back as 1923. This also affected Coloureds and Indians in some places but the geography of the Coloureds was ambiguous - they had no tribal ancestry such as that used in the case of black people to justify the creation of the reserves. However, that was not allowed to stand in the way of the Government's determination to achieve complete segregation of the races, at least as pragmatically complete as the demand for cheap labour allowed. To take just one instance, in Cape Town during 1966 and 1967, Coloureds were moved from District Six, Simonstown and Kalk Bay

when these areas were declared to be for white residents only. Amongst people forcibly removed were some families whose ancestors had lived there for centuries - since the time of the Dutch East India Company. This widespread dispersal was the subject of an unofficial five volume report in 1983 entitled the *Surplus People Project* - an evocative title - where a group of researchers estimated that to promote homeland development, and for other reasons, around 3.5 million people had been moved between 1960 and 1982, with perhaps a further 2 million threatened with removal in the near future. In May 1984 the Government refuted these figures and said that only 1,971,908 people had been moved and they could not estimate future numbers. These figures need to be viewed from the perspective that the total black and Coloured population of the country in 1980 was 23.5 million, which means that at least 10% of these had felt the direct impact of the Group Areas Act. Black and Coloured property owners in areas now declared 'white' were forced to sell at low prices, but those without title were dealt with under the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act 1951, as amended in 1971, which allowed the demolition of property without warning - a fate suffered more than once by Boesman and Lena.

In addition to the impact of the Group Areas Act, or as an indirect result of this legislation, the pattern of the lives of this couple appear to have been determined by their penury. Fugard's *Notebooks* provide a possible history of their inexorable descent into abject poverty:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Coega to Veeplaas | - the first walk. One night in an empty shed at the brickfields. At Veeplas Boesman got a job at the Zwartkops Salt Works. To begin with rented a small pondok - later built one of their own. Lena's baby born - six months later dead. First miscarriage. <i>Three to five years.</i> |
| Redhouse | - working for Baas Bobbie - farmer. <i>One year.</i> |
| Kleinskool | - Job with Vermaak the butcher. Labourer for building contractor. <i>One year.</i> |
| Bethelsdorp | - Farm labourer. Brickfields. <i>Two years.</i> |

- Missionvale - Salt works. Aloes. Lena's second miscarriage. *One year.*
- Kleinskool - Odd jobs. Theft - six months in jail. Lena did housework for Vermaak. *Two years.*
- Veeplas - Odd jobs. Saltpan. Chinaman. Prickly pears. *Two years.*
- Redhouse - Farm labourer. *Six months.*
- Swartkops - Building labourer. Odd jobs. Bait. *Two years.*
- Korsten - Odd jobs. Empties. Lena's third miscarriage. Boesman in jail again - knife fight. *One to two years.*
- Veeplas and Redhouse - Prickly pears. *Six months.*
- Swartkops - Bait - odd jobs. *Six months.*
- Korsten - Empties. *One year*

(Nb, p.169)

At the beginning of the play, when Boesman is in the ascendancy, he taunts Lena as she tries to recall the sequence of their fruitless wanderings, their pointless existence, criss-crossing the periphery of Port Elizabeth - going round in circles. One of the most evocative words in the play is the first one. As Lena appears on stage '*...reduced to a dumb-animal like submission by the weight of her burden and the long walk behind them..*', she passes Boesman before she realises that he has stopped and intones 'Here?' (p.193). Eighteen years of relentless decline, back into the mud of Swartkops, symbolic of the muddy fate of the dispossessed who have no 'here' on a permanent basis. They are not permitted possessions, except for the junk they carry on their backs¹⁶ and they are most certainly not allowed a freehold or leasehold tenure over any one square foot of the land they traverse; any more than Caliban, 'This thing of darkness', can reclaim the island usurped by Prospero. They are amongst the 'surplus people' and because of their 'darkness', they are, as Boesman describes it, 'whiteman's rubbish':

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

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

(p.231)

This scenario, all too familiar in apartheid South Africa, provides a devastating piece of theatre, saturated with political reality. Fugard's *Notebooks* detailing the inspiration for the play give examples of a number of real-life itinerants that he has met, in particular one Coloured woman who clearly serves as a model for Lena:

The old woman on the road from Cradock...We picked her up about ten miles outside the town - she was carrying all her worldly possessions in a bundle on her head and an old shopping bag. About fifty years old. Cleft palate. A very hot day.

Her story was that she had been chased off a farm after her husband's death about three days previously. She was walking to another farm where she had a friend. Later on she told us that she had nine children but didn't know where they were. She thought a few of them were in P.E...

Finally only this to say: that in that cruel walk under the blazing sun, walking from all of her life that she didn't have on her head, facing the prospect of a bitter Karoo night in a drain-pipe, in this walk there was no defeat - there was pain, and great suffering, but no defeat.

(Nb, pp. 123/124)

His *Notebooks* also reveal doubts Fugard had as to whether his play sufficiently condemned the regime that spawned people like Boesman and Lena. "The 'social' content of *Boesman and Lena*. Nagging doubts that I am opting out on this score, that I am not saying enough. At one level their predicament is an indictment of this society, which makes people 'rubbish'. Is this explicit enough?" (Nb, p.181). Other critics, particularly Robert Kavanagh Mshengu, would share Fugard's view but an informed reading of the play reveals that in *Boesman and Lena*, one of his finest achievements, the political and sociological impact of the Group Areas Act are most effectively and skilfully evoked. This vividly portrayed political scenario is also the background for what is undoubtedly the core of the play, the relationship between two desperate

people whose desperation results from the politics of the country of their birth. As Fugard himself has said 'It has always been desperate people who have fascinated me', but in addition, a major influence was his own marriage:

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

(Personal interview. November 2002)

Rise above her predicament, she certainly does, and as she makes her exit, two or three hours after arriving in a physically and mentally exhausted state at the mud-flats, she does so in a form of triumph that can be expressed as a victory over apartheid. The confused recital by Lena of their repetitive cycle of walking, given at the beginning of the play, represents a series of forced marches as surely imposed upon them as are the orders of Hodoshe requiring John and Winston in *The Island* to undertake their cycle of non-utilitarian labour. Boesman and Lena's Sisyphean wanderings are just as useless and unrewarding. As Fugard wrote in his *Notebooks* 'How many put all of their life that they haven't got in their hearts onto their heads and make that walk' (Nb, p.124).

Most critics' reading of *Boesman and Lena* see little hope for Fugard's wandering couple; they are destined to complete their remaining days to a pattern of a repetitive cycle of walking 'Just crawl around looking for a way out of your life' (p. 244). However, what Lena does have is the inner spirit of the survivor, like the woman on the road to Cradock - 'great pain and suffering, but no defeat'. Lena rebels and liberates herself. The influence of Camus in Fugard's work is well recorded; for instance in the case of Hester, which could equally apply to Lena, Fugard said "Camus helped me understand my Hester....'courageous pessimism' - a world without hope but you've got to have

courage.... you carry on, you live" (Blumberg 1998, p.129). Camus explored the notion of 'the absurd' which he saw as the conflict between a desire for rationality and justice and an indifferent universe. Little wonder Fugard was influenced - most of his characters look for justice in the face of the State's indifference. With further reference to Camus, the first few lines of *The Rebel* provide an accurate picture of Lena's revelation during that one night on the mudflats:

What is a rebel? A man who says no:¹⁷ but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes as soon as he begins to think for himself. A slave who was taken orders all his life, suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command. What does he mean by saying 'no'?

(Camus 1971, p. 19)

As Lena exits the stage side-by-side with Boesman, no longer talking to his back 'the scenery of her world' (p. 97), the hope she carries with her is to be found in the field of human relationships within the art of the possible. 'O my soul, do not aspire to immortal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible' (Camus 1975, Epigraph).

The forces of authority determine Boesman's character but they appear to liberate Lena, who is twice damned, firstly as a woman and then as a Coloured. However, although in reality black and Coloured women were even more discriminated against, the impositions on the men in Fugard's plays can be contrasted with his female portraits; a galaxy of strong women such as Lena and Hester, Milly and Miss Helen:

A sudden and clear realization at this table of how, almost exclusively, 'woman' - a woman - has been the vehicle for what I have tried to say about survival and defiance - Milly, Hester, Lena ... and even Frieda in a way; that, correspondingly, the man has played at best a passive, most times impotent, male. Image occurred to me of the large female spider and shrivelled, almost useless, male - there only for his sexual function. Thus Johnnie, Don, Boesman, Errol - all unable to 'act' significantly - the image of the castrated male culminating of course in Errol Philander's nightmare in *Statements*.

(Nb, p.198)

Boesman hates Lena because he hates himself but, as one critic wrote, he is defined by shame while Lena is defined by pain. However, the humanity she shows towards Outa, and her final recognition of Boesman (a revelation - she sees him in a different light once she has gained the ascendancy - or at least equality) enables her to shrug off her bruises and tiredness and take the bucket from Boesman because it 'Hasn't got a hole in it yet. Might be whiteman's rubbish, but I can still use it' (p. 246). The eighteen years of aimless drift imposed upon Lena can be compared with those of a real-life Afrikaans-speaking oppressed woman, Poppie Nongena, as described in Elsa Joubert's 1987 book *Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena* (*The wanderings of Poppie Nongena*). Joubert had begun her career writing travel books, but in a complete change of genre, her *Poppie Nongena* documents the life of a black Afrikaans-speaking woman in apartheid South Africa. In the Foreword to the English translation (1980), Alan Paton wrote:

This is the sad story of a sad country, and of a humble black woman, who under the burden of South Africa's discriminatory laws, never gives up, never gives in. If the story were sad only, it might remain undistinguished, but the heroic nature of Poppie Nongena, and the great skill of the writer, Elsa Joubert, make of it an epic. No book like it has been written before, and it is likely to retain its unique position in the literature of South Africa.

(Joubert 1987, p.1)

In contrast to Lena, by the end of the play Boesman, like King Lear and Hamlet, is uncertain, confused and misguided. Boesman intones 'Why?! Why?!!!' (p.232) because he cannot understand the relationship between Lena and Outa, while Lear, (the architect of his own misfortune), with the dead Cordelia in his arms, cries 'Howl, Howl, Howl!' On the surface, Boesman is far from being the architect of his own misfortune - the hand of the State is all too evident - but he displays all of Hamlet's uncertainties. As Fugard says in the *Notebooks*, Boesman represents self-hatred and shame that by the end of the play descends into panic and the grotesque. Two stage directions on the last pages of the text describe this: *Barely controlling his panic ... He stands before Lena, a grotesquely overburdened figure*. At the end of the play Lena initially refuses to leave with Boesman, which generates the panic described in the stage

instruction: in a mixture of anger and uncertainty, he determines to leave nothing for her as he attempts to place on his shoulders their sorry possessions. He is consequently 'overburdened' physically, but in addition, Fugard is illustrating symbolically that, with or without Lena, Boesman is an archetypal member of the dispossessed, shouldering all the freight that the apartheid State effortlessly weighs upon him, and all the other black and Coloured people in South Africa.

Just before Outa dies, Boesman, in frustration that Lena prefers the company of Outa to the comfort of *brandewyn*, recalls the tragedy of their stillborn children as he begins to reveal his true pessimism, in contrast to the fake bravado and subservience shown that morning as the white man destroyed their shack:

We're not people any more. Freedom's not for us.

We stood there under the sky.. two crooked *Hotnots*.

So they laughed.

Sies wêreld! (Expression of disgust towards the world)

All there is to say. That's our word. After that our life is dumb. Like your *moer* (Womb). All that came out of it was silence. There should have been noise. You pushed out silence. And Boesman buried it. Took the spade the next morning and pushed our hope back into the dirt. Deep holes! When I filled them up I said it again: *Sies* (Exclamation of disgust).

One day your turn. One day mine. Two more holes somewhere...

(p. 238)

Here again there are echoes of Beckett where Vladimir says, 'Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps' (Beckett 1979, pp. 90/91) or as Fugard wrote in a letter to Norman Ntshinga, who was incarcerated on Robben Island, 'Jump into your coffin and pull down the lid yourself' (Nb, p.149). When Boesman says, 'Freedom's not for us', he is repeating one of the sorry truths that permeate these representations on stage of the lives of the oppressed. Many of them so accept that they are not entitled to any form of free-will that, to quote Paulo Freire, they actually fear freedom:

The "fear of freedom" which afflicts the oppressed, a fear which may equally well lead them to desire the role of oppressor or bind them to the role of the oppressed, should be examined. One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is *prescription*. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, the behaviour of the oppressed is a prescribed behaviour, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor.

(Freire 1996, pp. 28/29)

Most of Fugard's subjugated follow the guidelines of the oppressor.

Freedom, in whatever form, is perversely and ironically a recurrent theme in *Boesman and Lena*. The play begins with a completely empty stage that represents the empty life of this couple under an Afrikaner regime that attempted to justify their authority by the theory of the empty land; they have superior rights because they were there before Boesman and Lena (which of course is untenable - the first Coloureds of South Africa emerged well before the Afrikaners were established as a group in their own right). This vacant stage is a *tabula rasa* where anything is possible, much as Fanon describes at the outset of *The Wretched of the Earth*, where his vision of freedom comes not from setting up a new State, but by the existing structure being changed from the bottom up. He envisages these changes, this decolonisation, being brought about by 'new men, and with a new language and a new humanity' (Fanon 1990, p. 28). If there are to be any changes made, Boesman and Lena are ideally placed to begin the process from the very 'bottom', but as the detritus that represents the bondage of the two itinerants is brought on stage to be used to recreate the facts of their life, it is clear that they are unlikely to be able to effect any change. No one, least of all Boesman, believes that he has acquired any real form of freedom, either from his own nature or from the oppression or indifference of the State. For him this is a complete deception, totally illusory; a very different freedom from that quietly won by Miss Helen in *The Road to Mecca*¹⁸ or very publicly achieved by Nelson Mandela, who entitled his autobiography, *Long Walk To Freedom*. As the play shows, Boesman can no more attain any remnants of independence than Morris can purchase a two-man farm but, by the end of the play, the change in Lena's status brings some

benefit to him; she acquires the strength, the freedom to elect to stay with him. The heart of the play shows how, while Boesman sees his so-called freedom disappear as quickly as the two bottles of wine he consumes, Lena gains her freedom both within herself and in her relationship with Boesman. At the beginning of the play she curses the freedom of the birds but at the end it is she who has found that she has freed herself of the weight of her past life:

What's your big word? Freedom! Tonight it's Freedom for Lena. Whiteman gave you yours this morning, but you lost it. Must I tell you how? When you put all that on your back. There wasn't room for it as well.

[All their belongings are now collected together in a pile.]

You should have thrown it on the bonfire. And me with it. You should have walked away *kaa!* (Naked)

That's what I'm going to be now. *Kaal.* The noise I make now is going to be new. Maybe I'll cry!! ... Or laugh? I want to laugh as well. I feel light. Get ready, Boesman. When you walk I'm going to laugh! At you!

(p. 245)

The freedom that Lena acquires has not changed her material position, but she has decided to be different, to interact differently with her situation and thereby (perhaps) change it. However, what the play clearly shows is how, despite the poverty imposed by outside sources, this abject couple have a relationship equally as strong as the blood knot that binds Morris and Zachariah, a relationship that transcends the reality of their existence and, further, makes the audience care. During that one night on the mudflats, Lena is transformed, and it is this transformation that binds the knot of their relationship even tighter.

The introduction of the old Xhosa man acts as a catalyst that in a most extraordinary way makes the epiphany of Lena believable, even though the only understandable word that he contributes to the dialogue of the play is her name. Lena pleads with Boesman 'Talk to me,' and 'I want somebody to listen.' (pp.199/200), but to no avail, and so when, in a sagacious piece of theatre, Fugard provides her with the silent Outa, her desperation for human contact is conspicuously highlighted. As Fugard sees much of his work as 'bearing witness' on behalf of the oppressed, so Outa bears witness to the sufferings of

Lena's life. The silence that is Outa (and to some extent Boesman, who is described in one of the stage instructions on page 232 as '*..in a withdrawn and violent silence.*') also represents, in the wider context, the silencing of the entire non-white population of South Africa, silenced socially and politically by the equally silent but all-seeing 'eyes behind their backs.' Winston in *The Island*, when representing this non-white population in his role as Antigone, tells Creon that the people of his State see the burying of her brother as an honourable action, and they would say so '*...if fear of you and another law did not force them into silence...*' (p. 226). However, by the end of Fugard's plays it is possible to see that this 'silencing' has been broken. His characters in *Boesman and Lena* may not have been granted the privilege of a fully-unfettered voice but during that night on the mudflats, the new understanding of themselves, particularly in the case of Lena, is in itself some form of articulation; they have symbolically spoken out against the forces that have directed them to the Swartkops River, even if for the time being their lot in life is not essentially changed. However, as the apartheid era came to an end, Fugard comments that the very act of an imposed silence prompts the silenced to urgently speak out:

It is this desperate paradox that a repressive society generates a special creative energy. And one understands why: it's because an oppressive society tries to silence voices, and then those voices come back with an even greater urgency, demanding to be heard.

(Brink 1990, p.78)¹⁹

In *Boesman and Lena*, several minutes elapse before there is any dialogue, an opening silence used evocatively in a number of Fugard's plays. For this play, Fugard has said, 'My whole sense of the play is that it must have a core of silence' (Khan 1971, p.27). In *Blood Knot*, there is an even longer period of quiet. The silence is interrupted by the alarm clock but even when Zachariah arrives, the stage instructions say that '*Their meeting is without words.*' At one extreme, it could be conjectured that this is a deliberate device by Fugard to suggest that, even before we meet these examples of the dispossessed, the State has silenced them. In the case of *The Island* there is no need for conjecture; John and Winston are not allowed to speak while the audience is

provided with a mimed dumb show of useless labour for fifteen minutes, or more in some productions: a vivid dramatic message without words.

In 1992, Dennis Walder published an article in the *New Theatre Quarterly*, 'Resituating Fugard: South African Drama as Witness' that provided a thoughtful and wide-ranging discussion of Fugard's role as a witness on behalf of the silenced. This is one of the areas where Fugard's assumed position as the white liberal is most put to scorn by his critics, but Walder provides a well-argued counterpoint as he does 'resituate' Fugard in this debate. Walder quotes Mexican writer Octavia Paz, 'In a century of false testimonies, a writer becomes a witness to man' (p. 347) and, as this thesis shows, on behalf of the South African dispossessed, Fugard's text enters the witness box as effectively as does that of a Primo Levi or an Elie Wiesel. In his plays, the individual lives 'witnessed' by Fugard are few; there are never more than three characters on his stages, but as quoted in Richard Kearney's book, *On Stories*:

'... the Holocaust was not six million', as Judith Miller writes; 'It was one, plus one, plus one.' And only in 'understanding that civilised people must defend the one, by one, by one ...can the Holocaust, the incomprehensible, be given meaning'.

(Kearney 2002, p. 62)

Fugard's plays consistently defend 'the one': they portray the degraded and pathetic individual as they vividly represent the pathetic masses.

Kearney further comments, in comparing the Holocaust as portrayed in the Spielberg film, *Schindler's List*, and in the documentary *Shoah*:

...the many real-life survivors who bear witness in the eight-and-a-half-hour running time of *Shoah* do so in terms of to-camera testimonies; but it is narrative with a difference. The witnesses speak not for themselves, not in the first person, but for others, for those who have been deprived of a voice. None of the survivors says 'I'; none tells a personal story like those of 'Schindler's Jews'.

(Ibid. p.52)

The lives of Boesman and Lena and the others are not documentaries, they are personal stories and yet powerful testimonies. It is not suggested that the

horrors of the Holocaust are directly comparable to apartheid, but what Fugard does, like the theme of Richard Kearney's work, is to allow this small scattering of desperate people, these Lenas and Zachariahs, to tell the stories that '...gives history back to their lives.' (Ibid. p.28). A paradoxical example is the place of Outa in this campaign of 'bearing witness'. Although bereft of words, he enables Lena to rescue her story: he cannot speak for himself, any more than the Holocaust victims wished to, but in *Boesman and Lena* he acts as a form of witness to the lives of those who, like him, are silenced. At the end, Outa is totally silenced by death, and when Boesman tries to avoid any involvement in the Xhosa man's demise, Fugard gives to Lena the symbolic words, 'Now you want a witness too' (p. 241).

Although Outa has no dialogue, his presence on stage has an even greater impact on the events and strength of the play than does the unseen Ethel or the dead father in *Hello and Goodbye*. He illustrates how anomalous is the position of the Coloured population in South Africa, where they are way down the racist hierarchy, compared with the whites, but consider the black man their inferior. However, more importantly, his very presence acts as the sounding board that brings about Lena's awakening. At least she is face to face with Outa; with Boesman she mostly only sees his back. She acknowledges Outa's difference, but without the embedded prejudice of Boesman as Fugard gives her the word 'apartheid' - the only time it appears in his work: 'Sit close. *Ja! Hotnot* and a *Kaffer* got no time for apartheid on a night like this' (p. 233). Outa also fulfils another most meaningful function in the action; he is Lena's congregation as, in her transformation as a 'Mary', she shares her bread with him. 'Look at this mug, *Outa* ... old mug, hey. Bitter tea, a piece of bread. Bitter and brown. The bread should have bruises. It's my life' (p. 225). 'It is my life' echoes the Sacrament 'through your goodness we have this bread to offer. ... It will become for us the bread of life.' In the *Notebooks* Fugard wrote:

The accident in writing: A powerful example when sorting out my ideas and images for the ending of Act I - Lena at the fire with Outa, sharing her mug of tea and piece of bread - kept hearing her say, 'This Mug...This Bread...My life...' Suddenly, and almost irrelevantly, remembered Lisa the other day reading a little book on the Mass -

and there it was = Lena's Mass....the moment and its ingredients (the fire, the mug of tea, the bread) because sacramental - the whole a celebration of Lena's life.

(Nb, p, 173)

Other than the extent to which 'bearing witness' has a quasi-religious status and this reference to Lena's mass, there is little evidence in Fugard's drama of any Christian faith providing much comfort for the dispossessed who inhabit his stages, no doubt reflecting his own beliefs, or lack of them.²⁰ From the *Notebooks* for 1963:

It is Good Friday. I read the paper, observe the solemn silence in the street outside - but it all means nothing to me. I am an alien to this Christianity. Too much has been written on to the label 'Christian' for me to tie it around my neck....

In any case I still spell god with a small 'g' - and I suppose that settles it.

(Nb, p.77)

Despite this, and since Fugard refers to Good Friday in the *Notebooks*, it is apposite to see if there is evidence of any Christian salvation in his first full-length play, *No-Good Friday*. In this play the Friday referred to is the day pay is received and protection money paid but, although there is a clergyman among the *dramatis personae*, there is little redemption on view in the story of a callous murder and a potential second one, and little acceptance of the T S Eliot line: 'Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good' (Eliot 1977, p.182). As a result of the murder he has committed, Martinus, in Fugard's first post-apartheid work *Playland*, has a strong belief in a biblical heaven and hell, while Piet appears to be a Christian, but any further reference to the faith they espouse is mixed. Morris's nightly reading from the bible has little impact, and his recital of the Lord's Prayer is in fact used to highlight the unseen power of the State, rather than any belief in a Christian salvation. Any religious brotherhood Outa gives to Lena is short-lived. While he is dying and Boesman tells her it was he that broke the precious empty bottles, she again realises how equally empty is her life: 'You want to hurt me again. Why, Boesman? I've come through a day that God can take back. Even if it was my last one. Isn't that enough for you? (p.

235). Near to the end of Lena's monologue of her life recited to Outa, she tells him that Boesman says '...there's no God for us' - described by one critic as 'a world without gods or intrinsic truth of any kind, their cries of despair fall with a thud against an empty universe' (Levy 1973, p. 78). On this issue, young Hally, the atheist with the certainty of youth, aligns himself with Fugard's Coloured characters, even if Sam did choose Jesus as his man of magnitude:

Just when things are going along all right, without fail someone or something will come along and spoil everything. Somebody should write that down as a fundamental law of the Universe. The principle of perpetual disappointment. If there is a God who created this world, he should scrap it and try again.

(p.28)

However, in reality the Christian faith was important for the black and Coloured peoples in apartheid South Africa as, perversely enough, it was largely used by the Afrikaner to justify the very system that appears to have exiled Morris and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena to a Godless world. In Fugard's work, the poor-white Afrikaner is perhaps best represented by Hester Smit in *Hello and Goodbye* who exclaims, 'THERE IS NO GOD! THERE NEVER WAS!' (p.181), but the Afrikaner establishment saw no more place for the non-whites in the Kingdom of God than they did in the socio-political arena. After the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, an action which contributed to the reasons for the Great Trek, the niece of Piet Retief (one of the Great Trek leaders) wrote, in 1843:

The shameful and unjust proceedings with reference to the freedom of our slaves: and yet it is not so much their freedom that drove us to such lengths, (i.e. to trek) as their being placed on an equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God...

(Thompson 1985, p.149)

The Afrikaner's God is on view in Fanon's words:

The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as

we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen

(Fanon 1990, p. 32).

After recording the silent influence of Outa, there are two other sets of characters, off-stage this time, that have impacted on the lives of Morris and Zachariah and Lena (and possibly Boesman) and they are, for the brothers, their father (or fathers) and for Lena, her children. Lena, using Outa as her audience, gives a distressing and yet resigned account of her experience of motherhood:

Yessus, Outa! You're asking things tonight. [*Sharply.*] Why do you want to know?

[*Pause*]

It's a long story.

[*She moves over to him, sits down beside him.*]

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

[*Pause*]

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

[*Murmuring from the old man*]

That's all. That's all.

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

(p. 219)

Such are the joys of motherhood - for six months only - and the tragedy of three miscarriages. This speech graphically illustrates Lena's experience of childbirth, matched by that of other oppressed black and Coloured mothers. The position outside of the homelands may have been less severe, but according to a survey conducted in 1966, almost half the children born in most Reserves were dying before the age of five. The text does not reveal explicitly whether Boesman is as affected as Lena, but he had the job of burying his still-born progeny and he

prefaces the speech already quoted about Lena only pushing out 'silence', with the words 'You think I haven't got secrets in my heart too?' (p.237).

As already pointed out, Fugard's plays are notable for the paucity of characters on stage - and off stage for that matter. Augusto Boal, in his book *Theatre of the Oppressed* asks: 'Where were the people... when Lear divided his kingdom? These are questions which do not interest Shakespeare' (Boal 1995, p.65). The 'people' are similarly not seen on Fugard's stage but, unlike Shakespeare, he is passionately interested in those of them that inhabit the land of the dispossessed, and he delivers this interest through incisive portraits of typical and yet individual inhabitants of that land. This limitation of characters in a society where the 'extended family' is the norm is also significant, as it tends to emphasise their isolation. Fugard does not provide his characters in these plays with any relations except for the brothers' mother and the other unseen and unquoted off-stage presence in the shape of their father (or fathers). It is not clear in the play whether there is a common father - although Morris uses the singular when he says 'What is there for us in ... Father? We never knew him' (p.66) - which is repeated in the pastiche of the Lord's Prayer (p.122) and in Fugard's *Notebooks* he specifically writes, 'It was the same mother! The same father!' (Nb, p.10). On the other hand there is a clue to their paternity from the differing names they were given - Morris more anglicised than the biblical-sounding Zachariah (although more likely named after Zakes Mokae). However, when the play was filmed by the BBC in 1967, (when Fugard was playing Morris), the text was changed to allow Morris to say, 'Different fathers but the same mother, and that's what counts brothers' (Wertheim 2000, p.240). The ultimate degradation, the last victory of the State is achieved as Morris blames his black mother for the condition of his life, and not his possibly white father, who epitomises the white paternalistic State.

The final lines of the play resign the brothers to their fate and their blood. From the *Notebooks*, 'The blood tie linking them has chained them up. They are dead or dying because of it' (Nb, p.10). Morris accepts that they have no future but Zachariah asks if there is any other way, echoing the plaintive cry of Milly in *People Are Living There* 'Is this all we get?' (p.60) and Hally's scepticism when

he says 'But is that the best we can do, Sam...watch six finalists dreaming about the way it should be?' (p.37). Is this all that the brothers can expect? Fugard ponders whether they are any more free than the prisoners on Robben Island:

The loss of Freedom that imprisonment involves. What is 'Freedom'?
 Two men in a cell on the Island
 Two men in New Brighton.
 What is the difference?

(Nb, p.212)

And for Boesman and Lena; "Boesman and Lena facing each other across the scraps and remnants of their life - 'I'll carry my share.' 'This is all we are, all we've got'" (Nb, p.155): or is there some hope? If there is any Christian belief in the hearts of the oppressed featured in this chapter, there are some lines in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* that might be appropriate to seekers after hope who, like Boesman and Lena in particular, try to avoid being 'cast as rubbish to the void':

O yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
 That not one life shall be destroy' d
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,
 When God hath made the pile complete;

The sad reality is that despite the incipient hope in Lena's breast elucidated in this chapter, she and Boesman are unlikely to be treated any differently in the future - they will continue to be 'cast as rubbish to void' - just as Morris and Zachariah will still be controlled by 'the eyes behind their backs' as they tolerate the conditions of their pondok home. In the next chapter, a more affluent dwelling is observed - but hardly any more joyful.

NOTES

¹ After Berry had directed *Blood Knot* in London in 1963, Fugard wrote in the *Notebooks* that Morris's anguish had been recognised by Berry because he was also an 'anguished man'. Fugard conjectured, 'To what extent did John's experience of McCarthyism in Hollywood enable him to understand what a corrupt society does to individuals?' (Nb, p.71). A specific example of the reality of politics coalescing with the fiction on the stage or in the cinema.

² According to Dennis Walder, this means girl-servant - the lowest of the low (Walder 1992, p. 360). From Leonard Thompson's book, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* '...throughout the eighteenth century "Hottentot" was a widely accepted symbol for irredeemable savagery and the very depths of human degradation'; and as late as 1899 the Oxford English Dictionary defined *Hottentot* as, figuratively, a "person of inferior intellect or culture" (Thompson 1985, p.74).

³ The prisoners on Robben Island obtained a copy of *Waiting for Godot*. One of them, PAC activist Kwedi Mkalipi, said: 'Is that tramp trying to show us that we can go on hoping against hope' (Sampson 1999, p. 285).

⁴ Although Oscar Lewenstein, who brought *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* to the Royal Court Theatre, told Fugard that as far as he was concerned, *Waiting for Godot* is set in Ireland (Personal interview. November 2002).

⁵ As so evocatively revealed by Bloke Modisone in Chapter One.

⁶ Although Albie Sachs, referred to in Chapter Five, manages to communicate with fellow prisoners by whistling. When his whistles are answered he says to himself, 'Oh, whistler. You have turned me into we' (Edgar 1997, p. 11).

⁷ Before the opening of *The Blood Knot* in New York in 1964, Fugard wrote, 'I have forced myself to accept the worst. Tynan's legacy is a certain fatalism and growing indifference. The critical asp has had its bite and I've bred anti-bodies' (Nb, p.114). However the off-Broadway production was successful enough to be accorded 'Best Play of the Year' by the *New York Times* and it could be said that the last word was with Fugard who said, at the premiere of his seventeenth full-length play, *The Captains Tiger*, 'Today Tynan is in his grave and *The Blood Knot* isn't' (Walder 2003, p. 4).

⁸ From *Discourse on Colonialism*, quoted by Fanon in the Introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*. (Fanon 1986, p.9).

⁹ Abusive name for black South African, literally, 'black-arse'.

¹⁰ The fact that the Coloured vote in 1994 denied the ANC victory in the Cape.

¹¹ Bessie Head never knew her black father but she believed that her white mother had been branded as insane for having a child by a black man.

¹² In *A Dictionary of South African English*, a 'moffie' is defined as 'Homosexual, sometimes a male transvestite.' A possible origin is from British seaman's slang - 'mophy - a delicate well groomed youth.' (Branford 1980, p.180)

¹³ In his latest play, *Entrances and Exits*, the principal character is homosexual, as was Fugard's cousin Garth, a central figure in the memoir *Cousins*, published in 1994.

¹⁴ The subject of the Junction Avenue Théâtre Company's 1978 play *Randlords and Rotgut*. (Orkin 2001), which was based on the work of social historian, Charles van Onselen.

¹⁵ Presumably there is a different psychological outcome if the 'colored spouse' is a woman.

¹⁶ The stage instructions read:

A Coloured man - Boesman - walks on. Heavily burdened.. On his back an old mattress and a blanket, a blackened paraffin tin, an apple box... these contain a few simple cooking utensils, items of clothing etc etc. With one hand he is dragging a piece of corrugated iron .

After a few seconds a Coloured woman - Lena - appears. She is similarly burdened - no mattress though - and carries her load on her head. As a result she walks with characteristic stiff-necked rigidity. There is a bundle of firewood under one arm.

¹⁷ In *The Road to Mecca*, Fugard's 1985 play, there are the lines: "Rebellion starts, Miss Helen, with just one man or women standing up and saying, 'No. Enough!' Albert Camus. French writer." (Fugard 1998, p. 28)

¹⁸ According to Fugard: 'People talk to me and say that *The Road to Mecca* is one of my relatively less political plays and I say to them "For God's sake". ...At the heart and core of that play is one of the most dangerous political concepts of all time...- the freedom of the individual ...to do and be what she wants to be because that little community ...does everything to stifle that woman' (Personal interview. November 2002).

¹⁹ Fugard considers that theatre has a special role to play in this regard as exemplified in what he wrote in connection with the performance of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* in New Brighton, dealt with in Chapter Five: ' a very special example of one of theatre's major responsibilities in an oppressive society: to try to break the conspiracy of silence that always attends an unjust social system' (Harwood 1984, p. 31).

²⁰ Later Fugard was to write *The Road to Mecca*, which can be considered a quasi-religious play, and he has also written, but not apparently published, a work about Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), a German abbess, a composer and mystic. Extracts from this latter work, *The Abbess*, can be heard on the internet covering a reading of a section of this play that Fugard gave to the University of California and where a strong sympathy with the strength of the Christian faith is very evident.

FOUR

Ancestral Voices

I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.

(E M Forster *Two Cheers for Democracy*)

In *A Lesson from Aloes*, the three voices heard during the play emanate from *Xanadu*, described as 'a small house in Algoa Park', a predominately Afrikaner working class area of Port Elizabeth that is unlikely to contain any of the 'stately pleasure-domes' referred to in Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan*. Even so, it is socially and politically remote from where Morris and Zachariah dwell in the 'non-white location' of Korsten. These voices provide a variety of South African ethnicities not previously encountered in this combination in the dramas already analysed, and it is the ancestral origins of these voices that provide the framework for this important play, even if they are not 'prophesying war'. Whether the ancestry is from Afrikaner or English roots, or of the Coloured variety, South African racism leaves scars on all three. In Chapter Two, the human relationship that is revealed concerns a white boy and a black man. In the next chapter, the *dramatis personae* are principally Coloured people while in Chapter Five, the on-stage individuals are black, but with *A Lesson from Aloes* the characters comprise an Afrikaner with an impeccable pedigree, a representative of the other white South Africa - a product of the English settlement - and a Coloured man with similar antecedents to those of Morris and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena. In *A Lesson from Aloes* where, more so than in any other Fugard play, psychological tensions are all-pervasive, the human relationships on display are once again of the failed variety, as is the cause espoused by Piet and Steve, both in their own worlds and in the political reality beyond *Xanadu*. The flawed intercourse between these three unhappy and desperate people, representing three of the faces of South Africa, is played out against a backdrop of betrayal, both within the political arena and the domestic one, a betrayal that is largely orchestrated by the apartheid State. In

this case the State does not impose its authority at a distance - as 'the eyes behind the back' - but by direct and forceful intervention.

The play is presented in two acting areas, the backyard and the bedroom of the house occupied by the Afrikaner, Piet and his wife Gladys. These two spaces, as becomes apparent as the action unfolds and the character of the husband and wife revealed, can be construed as male and political for the backyard and female and psychological for the bedroom (Munro 1981, p. 476). The time is 1963. Piet gave up farming because of drought and moved to Port Elizabeth where he found work as a bus driver, a job he lost when he became a member of a protest group, where he met a Coloured man, Steve Daniels, a prominent member of that group. Steve is arrested for defying a banning order and Piet is suspected of being the informer that led to Steve's detention. The security police also raided Piet's house and removed the personal diaries of Gladys. She experiences this trauma as a form of rape that is sufficient to require this highly-strung woman to be treated once again at Fort England, a mental hospital in Grahamstown. Fugard was familiar with this experience; his wife has suffered with nervous breakdowns in the past and his grandmother was in the Fort England Mental Home when she died.

In his retirement, Piet has taken to rearing aloes in jam tins in his backyard; as his wife describes it 'Peter's new hobby, now that there's no politics left' (p. 254). There may be no more politics for Piet outside his backyard but the aloe, restricted to tins rather than the open *veld*, can be compared to the majority of South Africans who, although not confined to tins, except when their shanties are constructed of corrugated iron (known generally in Africa as 'tin')¹, are confined by the restrictions of apartheid. When the play begins Piet is trying to identify one of his specimens; there are many types of aloes and Piet intends to consult the best expert:

So... What I'll do is make some notes and go to the library and sit down with Gilbert Westacott Reynolds - *The Aloes of South Africa*. A formidable prospect. Five hundred and sixteen big pages of small print and that is not counting General Smut's foreword

(p. 227)

Each plant has its own individuality, which cannot be said for the citizens of the country where aloes grow - humanity in South Africa is only classified by race and the experts are the successors of General Smuts. Piet works with his aloes while waiting for the evening to arrive when Steve and his family are expected for supper. The first Act emulates Beckett's sense of 'waiting' that powers the subsequent events to such potent effect, even though a number of critics considered it too long and too slow, regardless of the fact that this is not an unfamiliar feature in Fugard's work where a leisurely opening can add strength to the drama yet to come. As a result of the suspicion that Piet betrayed Steve, their former friends have deserted them and this is why the supper party for Steve and family is such an event. However, before they arrive, Piet tells Gladys that Steve is coming to say farewell because he and his family are leaving South Africa for England on a one-way-exit permit. In the event, only Steve arrives for the party, where the question of Piet's guilt is debated at the instigation of Gladys and, as Steve leaves, Gladys tells Piet that she wishes to return to Fort England.

From entries in the *Notebooks*, it seems that this play had the longest gestation of any in Fugard's *oeuvre*, with the first relevant entry being made in 1961. For ten years he made a number of attempts to realise the story, but by 1971 he had concluded this was an abortive project. However, in 1977 the idea returned with the result that the play was quickly completed and first performed at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg on the 30th November 1978. Subsequently, it was staged in Cape Town and Montreal before a limited run at the Yale Repertory Theatre from March 1980. It was then performed ninety-six times on Broadway and received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for the best play of the season. As Frank Rich commented in *The New York Times* of November 18th 1980:

Short of Beckett, it's hard to think of a contemporary playwright who so relentlessly and unsentimentally tracks down humanity in the midst of apocalypse.

In a "Lesson From Aloes", Mr. Fugard summons up the full agony and triumph of people who have lost everything except the gift of staying alive.

The Broadway run is also referred to in a 13 April 1982 review by Christopher Swan that appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*:

Like most of Fugard's plays, it deals with the bitterness and despair that can breed uncontrollably in a country where government policies authorize the human tragedy of racism and domination. But, like the rest of his works, it rides the political issue like an express train into the heart of the human tragedy.

To highlight how important Fugard's *Notebooks* are in understanding how his plays are conceived and constructed, the entries in the case of this particular play are so explicit and relevant as to be worthy of extensive quotation. The character of Piet appears to have been fairly well developed in 1961, but fleshing out Gladys and moving her to the centre of the story seems to have been the spark that ignited the idea into a fully realised dramatic work. These entries are also valuable for their political content.

February 1961.

...Piet B., red-faced, big-handed Afrikaner. 'We must stand together, man. Together. Together we take the world. They want us. Hell, Solly, when I take my bus out Cadles way at five o'clock, I see them. I see them walking with their backs straight, walking home [the bus strike]. It's the people Solly. " ... and they shall inherit the earth."'

His passion was English poetry, and he quoted endlessly, relevantly and with feeling. The words sonorous and precise in his Afrikaans mouth. Byron, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley. 'We come to bury Solly, Not to praise him.' 'Oh, the time when I was young and green in judgment.'

Piet. B. had been born on the farm Riverside in the Alexandria District. Only son - one sister. 'My people were god-fearing. We kneeled at night and our workers kneeled with us and prayed. There was no difference, man. I was brought up to respect and believe in the Christian principles. My friends were the picannins on the farm. Race relations did not exist for me.'

Piet is today a bus driver. He lost most of his money in fighting court cases in the struggle for freedom, in helping Africans, and in an election campaign. He stood as the Coloured Representative, proposed by S. A. C. P. O. ² This parliamentary constituency was at that time the largest in the world - Bredasdorp in the Cape to Harding in Natal and Calvinia in N.W. Cape. Incident that hurt him most was when he addressed the Korsten meeting, 'Broers en susters' and they laughed at him. 'Hell man, that hurt! No mortal sling doth pain as deep as injustice.'

March 1965.

His wife, Gladys – English; well educated by comparison with his J.C certificate (or Standard 6?).³ Writes poetry - nothing published. When their house was searched recently by the Special Branch, they found her poems (love?) and read them all - traumatic effect on her (rape?), leading to nervous breakdown. Mentally disturbed for a number of years - several visits to Fort England mental home in Grahamstown; the last time she had to be taken forcibly after Piet's cajoling, pleading and threats had failed to get her voluntarily into the ambulance.

Contrast: Piet's sober sanity - the feeling he gives that he is indestructible, that you'd have to kill him, that you could never drive him mad. And herself - highly-strung, neurotic at her best, really unbuttoned at the worst - the refinements in sensibilities that go with this instability. She is a qualified shorthand typist but has seldom kept a job for longer than a month because of the recurrent delusion that any new appointment in the office where she is working is a S.B. spy placed to keep an eye on her and Piet.

November 1977.

Suddenly and inexplicably the story of Piet, Gladys and Steve (who like others, suspects Piet of being an informer and who in fact if he is an informer, is his victim) has come back to me. The complex of images and desperation which provide the energy for the piece, are intact. Those early attempts aborted because then I saw Piet at the centre of my story. Now I see that it is Gladys's play. Piet's monolithic goodness, the enormous assault made on it by him having been sent to Coventry by the comrades; the further assault of his having witnessed his wife's breakdown: then the yet further assault on his important friendship with Steve - despite all these assaults - it is not enough to sustain a piece. There are no ambiguities in Piet's experience, none of the dark ambiguities which I think make an energising central image in a play in the sense that Boesman has enormous ambiguities...

Now I see that Gladys has those dark ambiguities - her whole relationship to South Africa. More pertinently and succinctly - Piet and Steve are victims of a system, of a social and political order which they have tried to resist, but they are victims of something man-made, whereas Gladys is God's victim.

(Nb, pp. 23, 122/123 and 229/230)

Even today, Athol Fugard and his wife cannot agree as to whether the real life Piet was a traitor or not. After the suspected betrayal, the Fugards visited the Bezuidenhouts when Piet showed them a fishpond he had built in his backyard.

When Athol expressed some scorn that the fish pond was stocked with artificial fish, Piet responded, 'I don't want to be responsible for any more living things.' a remark that Fugard saw as having its origins in Piet's love for his disturbed wife and his experience as a farmer during drought - and no doubt as a sign of bitterness at accusations of being an informer (Personal interview. November 2002).

As before, this chapter will place the three voices of the play in their political context while revealing the insidious psychological impact of the police state fuelled, in part, by accusations of betrayal.⁴ The fact of betrayal will also be the motif for investigating the failure of liberalism in South Africa and the extent to which a position as a liberal is established in Fugard himself. The piece will conclude with an assessment of how, like the aloes, the characters in this play achieve, or do not achieve, positions as survivors in the politically drought-affected climate of apartheid South Africa

South African racism has impacted on each of the three characters in the play, to which they present three different reactions: firstly, resistance plus some measure of acquiescence by Piet; defeat and surrender for Gladys; and then retreat and exile for Steve. Like the aloe, Piet's ancestry determines that he can withstand the hazards of South Africa. The first Bezuidenhout, a Dutch man, arrived in South Africa in 1695, as did Fugard's forebears; his mother traced their origins on her father's side back to the earliest Dutch settlers, recognised *inter alia* by the playwright when he dedicated *A Lesson from Aloes* to his mother, 'In celebration of Elizabeth Magdalena Potgieter.' The stock from whence Piet Bezuidenhout emerged had its origins in the earliest formation of the Afrikaners, stemming from the men who established the supply station at Cape Town for the Dutch East India Company. These men were not farmers, and for the first few years instead of supplying the vessels en-route to the East or Europe, these same vessels often needed to supplement the local agriculture for the garrison to survive. In an attempt to counteract this, a few of the Company's servants were given freehold smallholdings of about 20 acres, creating the first burghers of South Africa, but in time these farmers began to move from the coastal regions to further inland where they were deeded

leaseholds over land extending to 6000 acres each. For the next hundred years or more the Boers, as they were called, were in conflict, of one sort or another, with the strictures of the Company, the indigenous population and the English administration, the British having taken final control of the Cape in 1806. One recorded conflict concerned a Bezuidenhout. In April 1813, Cornelius Frederik (Freek) Bezuidenhout, who lived on the banks of the Baviaans River, refused to release a Khoikhoi labourer when his work contract expired. This was illegal under the labour regulations that the British had introduced in 1812 and when the labourer complained to the authorities, Bezuidenhout was required to appear in a local court. For a period of two years he stubbornly refused to do this, much like Piet refuses to answer questions about betrayal. Eventually, attempts were made to arrest Freek Bezuidenhout but he resisted the military detachment that came to do this and after a battle lasting several hours, he was shot dead, by a Coloured sergeant (Thompson 1985, pp.109/110).

In 1836 many of the Cape Boers took part in the Great Trek, moving further and further away from British control and influence, taking over the most desirable land in South Africa and in due course establishing the independent states of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In *"Master Harold"... and the boys*, when Sam proposes Abraham Lincoln as a suitable candidate for a man of magnitude, Hally responds: 'I might have guessed as much. Don't get sentimental, Sam. You've never been a slave, you know. And anyway we freed your ancestors here in South Africa long before the Americans' (p.16). This speech prompted a note by Dennis Walder in the latest Oxford University Press edition of the *Port Elizabeth Plays* to the effect that Hally's comment, "refers to the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1833, one result of which was to drive many Afrikaners still further from the Cape Colony in order to retain absolute control over their black and 'Coloured' servants" (p. 249); in other words, Hally, with a supposedly Afrikaner background (in part) and with a youthful racist arrogance, includes himself in the 'we' who freed Sam's forbears, mainly contrary to the facts - a case of historical amnesia or ideological hypocrisy.

From this history emerged the 'first white tribe' of South Africa who, from the end of the 19th Century, developed their own culture and language which was used to firmly establish and maintain, for most of the 20th Century, their position of political supremacy. To achieve these aims they needed to counteract the cultural domination of the British colonial regime and also to elevate the Afrikaans language, which in the 19th Century, was extensively varied between regions and social classes, away from its association with poverty and 'colouredness'. These variations in dialect stemmed from the origins of the language itself. The lowland Dutch of the 17th Century settlers had been mixed with the Malay and Portuguese creole of the imported slaves to which was added some Khoisan speech plus further injections of German and French. However polyglot, these cultural pioneers saw that if they were to establish the Afrikaner as a people apart they needed to have an established and acceptable language, as is illustrated by a quote used by Isabel Hofmeyr in her essay, 'Building a Nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902-1924':

Language unity is the natural outcome of national unity, the necessary pre-condition for a national culture. In a situation where there are a variety of dialects, language unity can only be achieved when one of these dialects becomes hegemonic.

(Hofmeyr 1990, p. 105).

From this beginning, the campaign to elevate the Afrikaans language and to make it respectable was continued, so that by 1925 the constitution of the Union of South Africa was amended so that Afrikaans was substituted for Dutch as one of the two official languages of the country. The national culture that Hofmeyr refers to also needed to be established and advanced - 'In their thrust for power the Afrikaners defined themselves as a cultural entity' (Breytenbach 1986, p.55). The place of culture in the history of the Afrikaner and apartheid was still being recognised in the 1990s. Antjie Krog, who has produced the best account yet of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in her book *Country of My Skull*, wrote: 'What I have in common with them is a culture - and part of that culture over decades hatched the abominations for which they are responsible...In a sense it is not these men but a culture that is asking for

amnesty' (Krog 1999, p. 144). Not that all Afrikaners used the language as an instrument of oppression: there were many Afrikaner writers and poets, André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach prominent amongst them, who used their literature to actively oppose the regime.

Piet's Afrikaner ancestry is fully recognized by his wife. At the climax of the play when Piet is being confronted by Gladys and Steve about betrayal, she compares her husband to members of the Special Branch when she says to Steve: 'He looks like one of them, doesn't he? The same gross certainty in himself! He certainly sounds like them. He speaks English with a dreadful accent' (p. 266). This is a crucial speech within the play, emphasizing the 'otherness' Gladys perceives in her husband.

As the Afrikaners needed to create their own language, Piet, as the non-typical Afrikaner, pursues a contrary course with his frequent quotes from the poetry and literature of his wife's culture. He does this because he loves English verse, it has a richness not to be compared with anything in his culture, and he is sub-consciously trying to bridge the gap that separates him from his wife by adopting her language. Whatever, he appears unable to see the irony of this, particularly when his wife shocks him by swearing and goes on to say: 'I've learned how to use my dirty words. And just as well, because there's no other adequate vocabulary for this country' (p.237/238). In a properly ordered South African world, the Afrikaner would not be quoting English Romantic poetry and the genteel English women would not swear. Gladys does not share this literary interest with her husband, except for the recollection of some lines by Thoreau which she used as the first entry in her diary, after the initial meeting before marriage with Piet. The Thoreau quotation is carefully chosen by Fugard: 'There is a purpose to life, and we will be measured by the extent to which we harness ourselves to it' (p. 234). The awful irony for Gladys is that these first words in the diaries, that figure so prominently in the tragedy of her life, are so stridently inappropriate. There is little purpose in her life and she has apparently not harnessed herself to any of the important purposes in her husband's life. In another context, Piet's quotations from English literary culture might be seen as a form of prayer - a search for a faith in that backyard. The 'lesson' of the title of

the play could be part of a church service - a reading of the lesson - as Piet uses *Romeo and Juliet* when declaring his identity and at the same time borrowing from the Christian marriage service:

'Then deny thy father and refuse thy name.' Hell! I don't know about those Italians, but that's a hard one for an Afrikaner. No. For better or for worse, I will remain positively identified as Petrus Jacobus Bezuidenhout; Species Afrikaner;....

(p. 222)

Naming names is important in this play. At the outset, Piet is trying to identify a species of aloe - determining a name - as it was for Lena, who recites the names of the places where she and Boesman have lived in an attempt to try and establish an identity, not for a plant, but for herself. Even the name of the district where the Bezuidenhouts reside, Algoa Park, can be interpreted as indicating the different cultural and societal ancestry of the husband and wife: Algoa Bay, a wild place where the earliest European visitors landed (the Portuguese in 1487), contrasted with the orderliness of an English Park where, in true colonialist fashion, the wilderness has been civilised. After Gladys and Piet have been discussing their own names, Piet says:

.... What's the first thing we give a child when it's born? A name. Or when strangers meet, what is the first thing they do? Exchange names. According to the Bible, that was the very first thing Adam did in Eden. He named his world. 'And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.' ...

(pp. 227/228)

No doubt Fugard was deliberate in choosing Adams as Gladys's maiden name but the people in his play are not living in any form of Eden. The 'separateness' that is ostensibly apartheid leads inevitably to names being imposed across the borders created by this policy, beyond the familiar 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'. For instance, branding all dissidents as 'communists' was widespread in South Africa, never mind the string of epithets directed at the non-whites from 'kaffer' to 'John boy'. Piet, as farmer Baas Bezuidenhout, recalls how he was unable to articulate - to 'name' - his grief when asked to speak at the graveside of an African baby that had died: 'That

hole with the little homemade coffin at the bottom defeated me' (p. 253). Gladys emphasizes her 'difference' by persisting in referring to her husband and his friend as Peter and Steven and, revealing a subconscious antipathy to her husband's friendship with Steve, she refuses to recall the names of his children. However, at the end of the play when she has more or less purged herself of hate and anguish, she uses the appellation 'Steve'. Sizwe Bansi gives up his name and significantly, at a crucial point in *"Master Harold"... and the boys*, Hally becomes Harold. In *Boesman and Lena*, Boesman's name is an insult to a Coloured man, having connotations of a Bushman of Khoisan descent, while for Piet, the trauma he goes through as a suspected informer results in the arch 'namer of names' meeting Steve and finding it difficult to make conversation: 'as if he was somebody whose name I had forgotten' (p.244). It should also be recognized that, whether there is an informer in their midst or not, what an informer does is name names.

As the play opens, questions about the differences between husband and wife arise, even before a word is spoken, as the image is conveyed of Piet as the positive and Gladys as the negative - Gladys is passive but Piet is a man stripped for action. The stage instruction at the beginning of the play reads as follows:

Piet, seated at a garden table with an aloe in front of him, is studying a small field book on the plants. He is wearing spectacles, short trousers, no shirt and sandals without socks. Gladys, behind sunglasses, sits very still on a garden bench.

One critic compares this opening with that of *Endgame*, where Clov sits motionless, but in his case he is actively looking at Hamm. Piet is not looking at his wife; he uses his spectacles in a constructive way, to pursue his hobby, while Gladys uses her sunglasses as a barrier to retreat behind. Piet is cataloguing his aloes, precisely repeating what is happening in his country where ethnicities are carefully and ruthlessly catalogued. This opening tableau is, in its own way, just as significant as the silence in *Blood Knot* and *Boesman and Lena* and as informative as the single un-stacked chair and table in *"Master Harold"... and the boys*. Piet is superficially the archetypal Boer out-doors man, while Gladys had a mother who: 'was so terrified that I was going to end up with

a brown skin' (p. 223). Gladys represents the English South African white woman who protects herself from the harsh climate by the use of calamine lotion rather than the Voortrekker bonnet of the Afrikaner. Unlike the aloe, the English rose does not thrive in South Africa. The clothes, once again, are important signifiers. Piet and Gladys dress to emphasize their contrasts, Piet the farmer, Gladys, the sensitive English lady - but this contrast is seen in starker, and yet paradoxical terms, when we reach the bedroom and discover that the macho Afrikaner is not allowed to be present when his wife changes her clothes – before entering he has to knock on his own bedroom door. Gladys, born in South Africa, can be seen to be perpetuating the etiquette of the nineteenth century English gentility in the 'English' space that is the bedroom. These insights into the relationship between Piet and Gladys are considerably broadened when the crux of the play is reached. Within the text, the focus of this drama concerns not the suspicion of Piet being a traitor but the elements in his character that will not allow him to confirm or deny the accuracy of this allegation. The climax of the play is in the last scene where Gladys answers on her husband's behalf, Steve leaves and she tells Piet she needs to return to Fort England, but two lines of dialogue and a stage instruction at the end of Act One represent a key moment in the movement to that climax:

GLADYS. It's not true is it?

[Piet stares back at her for a long time before turning away.]

PIET. *[vacantly ... looking at his wristwatch]* They should be here any minute now. I'll... I'll light the candles.

(p. 247)

The differences between the Afrikaner and the English settler, mirrored by Piet and Gladys, have their origins from the beginning of the 19th century. The first substantial number of English settlers arrived in 1820 when they were promised an uninhabited African Eden. However, what they got was a sour-grass coastal plain with no market nearer than Cape Town 500 miles away, and as for uninhabited, the territory had been fought over by the Boers and the Xhosa for years - there were actually five frontier wars before 1820. This is important. The English that arrived were not really farmers. They were conservative and

middle-class, products of the age of mercantile capitalism who had left Britain in the midst of the world's greatest industrial revolution, and these proved to be the characteristics that they took forward into the 20th Century. The Boers had left behind their watered-down Dutch heritage as they trekked to find more space for their large families, while the English settlers had brought England with them, above all the profit motive. Allister Sparks says:

Where the Boer farmer operated on a subsistence basis, producing what he needed and exchanging the surplus for what he could not produce, the English-speaking South African from the moment he found his feet was intent on investment and expansion, and regarded the land as a capital asset rather than just a natural resource to sustain the necessities of life.

(Sparks 1990, p. 64)

This situation was perpetuated into the 20th Century where the English-speakers continued to dominate the commercial world, even though after the election success of 1948, the National Party pursued an aggressive policy towards closing the economic gap and ensured that virtually all of the employment opportunities in State enterprises, such as the railways and the towering edifice that was established to administer the bureaucracy of the apartheid system, were reserved for Afrikaners. In 1946, the average income of the Afrikaner was 47 per cent of that of the English-speaking white South African, but by 1976 it was 71 per cent (Thompson 1990, p.188). However, many Afrikaners had already left farming as agriculture became organised along more capitalist lines - though in Piet's case, the text tells us that he left the farm because of drought - resulting in the creation amongst Afrikaners of what became known as 'poor-whites', as perhaps best epitomized in the shape of Milly in *People Are Living There* and Hester and Johnnie Smit in *Hello and Goodbye*.

Presumably the bus service Piet worked for was State or Local Authority owned, but it was while driving a bus that Piet experienced his transformation, an epiphany, much like the change that miraculously converted Lena's life:

It had nothing to do with me. Politics!...[*He smiles*] until I drove my empty bus through that crowd walking to work. Hell, Gladys, it was a

sight! Men, women, even schoolchildren, walking and laughing and full of defiance. Bitter and hard as I was inside, I felt emotions. At first I tried to ignore them. I said to myself the people were being stupid. Why make an issue of a penny? That's all the fares had increased by. But they didn't think that. They carried on walking and waving at me and my empty bus. Steve had a position on the corner of Standford and Kempston roads. I'd seen this man standing there handing out pamphlets or addressing a little crowd. Then one morning the police moved in and arrested him. I was parked at a bus stop across the road when it happened. Into the van he went and I thought that was the end of it. Not a damn. Next day he was back again. The comrades had bailed him out. That's when I thought: To hell with it. I want to hear what this little bugger is saying. And anyway my bus was empty as usual. So I stopped and got out. I got a little nervous with all of them watching me as I walked over. I was the only white there. When I got to them I said I just wanted to listen. The next thing I knew is they were cheering and laughing and slapping me on the back and making a place for me in the front row. [*He pauses.*] I don't know how to describe it, Gladys... the effect that had on me. It was like rain after a long drought. Being welcomed by those people was the most moving thing that has ever happened to me.

(pp. 241/242)

As a result of this incident, Piet resigned his job as a bus driver and a week later he was handing out pamphlets with Steve. However, the protest was eventually lost as the passengers agreed to pay the extra penny. There is a long history of transport boycotts in South Africa. In Johannesburg between 1940 and 1945 many passengers boycotted bus services due to rising costs, and in 1957, bus fares on certain routes in Johannesburg and Pretoria were boycotted because of an increase of a penny in the fare. This spread to other Townships and the boycott lasted for more than three months. It is estimated that 50,000 people walked to and from work every day, in some cases a distance of 18 miles; low wages meant that they simply could not afford the increase. The government's reaction to this was to see the boycott as a challenge and to attempt to smash it by force. Thousands of black and Coloured people in the affected areas were arrested but the boycotters kept their nerve, winning support from commerce and industry, so, in this instance, and contrary to the finale provided by the pessimistic Fugard, the government eventually gave in and restored the fare to the original rate (Bunting 1969, p. 207).

This description of Piet's role in this play, that includes insights into his character and antecedents, is followed by the second voice that is Gladys. The content of Gladys's diaries that the Special Branch found interesting enough to justify confiscation is not disclosed except for one revealing entry in the first set of diaries which was: 'My mother died today. I haven't cried yet, and I don't think I'm going to' (p. 235), echoing the famous opening lines of Camus' *The Outsider*: 'Mother died today. Or maybe it was yesterday, I don't know.' However, these diaries, a crucial prop in Fugard's play, have two manifestations, the first being the ones removed by the Special Branch and the second set, where Gladys says she records: 'the exciting life I've been living' (p. 231), that are entirely and significantly blank. Gladys herself is also portrayed in two separate and yet similar versions, one of them being the antithesis of Piet, where from childhood she has found South Africa alien, and the second is the Gladys who has been psychologically abused by the Special Branch when they metaphorically invaded her body by the reading and confiscation of her diaries. These binaries can also be seen in Gladys's role in the play; firstly as a subject used to show how an intrusion by the State can have just as much impact on the mind as on the body, and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, in the part she plays in the debate about betrayal. In the latter case, she becomes the grit in the oyster that provides us with the pearl of Piet's innocence. Piet and Steve are relatively easy to read, they are both 'good men', but Gladys is complex; in some ways she is the interloper in this Xanadu. The aloes are alien to her, they all look alike as do most of these non-white South Africans that she meets; to quote William Golding: '... he spoke the great Caucasian sentence. "They all look the same to me"' (Golding 1979, p. 67). However, the aloes do frighten her, as do 'alien' races. Her sensitivity, crossed with a disturbed mind, describes them as all thorns, bitterness and violence, a view she has about most of the population of South Africa:

GLADYS. We've already had droughts, prickly pears and despair. I suppose we'll be into politics next and the black man's misery. I'm not exaggerating, Peter. That is what a conversation with you has become - a catalogue of South African disasters. And you never stop! You seem to have a perverse need to dwell on what is cruel and ugly about this country. Is there nothing gentle in your world?

PIET. Is it really as bad as that?

GLADYS. Yes, it is. And don't make me feel guilty for saying it. [*She gestures at the aloes.*] Look at them! Is that what you hope for? To be like one of them? That's not the only possibility in life, you know. If that's what your expectations have shrunk to, it's your business, but God has not planted me in a jam tin. He might have cursed you Afrikaners, but not the whole human race. I want to live my life, not just survive it. I know I'm in this backyard with them, but that is not going happen to me.

PIET. I ... [*He makes a helpless gesture*] ... What can I say? I'm sorry you don't like them.

GLADYS. Don't like them! It's worse than that, Peter. [*He looks at her.*] I'm going to be very honest with you. They frighten me. Yes, thorns and bitterness? I'm afraid there's more than that to them. They're turgid with violence, like everything else in this country. And they're trying to pass it on to me.

(p. 230)

The aloes are out to get her, but as she describes Piet's topics of conversation, it can be questioned on this evidence whether he is any more positive than Gladys, even if she is materially and mentally just as desolate in her backyard as Lena is in hers. As Boesman says: 'By the time you shut up we just a *vlechterbroek* (torn trousers) and his *meid* in the backyard of the world' (p. 230).

Gladys doesn't believe, outside of her world, that the majority of South Africans are suffering: 'I never thought things were as bad as you made out' (p. 245), but at the climax of the exchange with Steve about whether Piet is a traitor, she intensifies these views with the following speech, which encapsulates the nightmare her life has become:

I accept, Steven, that I am just a white face on the outskirts of your terrible life, but I'm in the middle of mine and yours is just a brown face on the outskirts of that. Do you understand what I'm saying? I've

got my own story. I don't need yours. I've discovered hell for myself. It might be hard for you to accept, Steven, but you are not the only one who has been hurt. Politics and black skins don't make the only victims in this country.

(p. 267)

This speech reinforces one of the crucial messages presented by this play, namely that the cancer of apartheid spreads everywhere, and it can, and does, blight the lives of other South Africans besides those generally seen as the dispossessed. This is one reason why Fugard's drama in his country is in a class by itself, never mind worldwide. Although he is an apostle bearing witness on behalf of the oppressed, he is not dealing with myopic agit-prop theatre that believes that the South African tragedy is only reserved for the black and Coloured people. Like Outa and Ethel, Gladys is a catalyst in this play, but unlike these more minor characters, she is not on the periphery of the action, she is both catalyst and victim - and the provider of Fugard's 'dark ambiguities'.

The third voice of the trio belongs to Steve, a member of the race that his father defines as 'a mistake'. He is the friend for whom Piet, like E.M. Forster, has betrayed his country, his Afrikaner roots. However, the other comrades suspect Piet and Steve is unsure. This doubt explains the comic and yet moving play-acting that opens Act Two; an interlude to hide Steve's embarrassment and a subtext on the role of the informer. During interrogation, Steve himself became an informer, and so, if he suspects Piet of the same transgression, is he looking for some form of sympathetic atonement from his friend and fellow sinner? The camaraderie between the two is shown by their pleasure in sharing a bottle of their country's wine - in contrast to Gladys who prefers sherry, an English drink. By the time that Gladys joins them, the mood becomes more serious. Steve talks about his regret at leaving, and the trauma of packing up to go into exile from the land of his birth, even if, politically, his own birthright is denied him: 'It's a life lying around on that lounge floor like a pile of rubbish. That's what I'm trying to squeeze into a few old suitcases' (p. 257).

South African history has many examples of dissidents who have gone into exile with unhappy results, some of the most tragic examples being the refugees from *Drum* magazine in Sophiatown:

Inside South Africa, the 1960s were inclement times for literature, especially literature that sought to remain obliquely political. Much of the decade's richest writing - including autobiographies of the exiled Sophiatown set - was penned abroad. In 1966, South African literature became, in effect, white by decree. A new statute banned the past and any future work of 46 writers, almost all of them black. Ironically, the regime issued the ban under the Suppression of Communism Act, although most of the authors had been determinedly liberal. The names Modisane, Themba, Nakasa, Nkosi, Matshikiza and Mphahlele all appeared on the list. Not content with the material bulldozing of Sophia, Verwoerd had summoned his censors for a second blitzing in an effort to raze the place from record and memory.

Nakasa threw himself from a New York skyscraper; Arthur Nortje apparently killed himself in Oxford; Themba committed what amounted to alcoholic suicide in Swaziland. Modisane and the others lived on, doubly burdened by the isolation of exile and the knowledge that their books could be neither owned nor read inside South Africa. Nor, indeed, could anything the authors said be quoted. "What is the use," one of them asked, "if the people you write about don't read what you're writing?" Very few of the Sophiatown diaspora could find the energy to produce thereafter.

(Nixon 1994, p.38)

For his part, Fugard has dealt with the possible fate of one exile in his post-apartheid play, *Sorrows and Rejoicings*. In this instance, the impact of exile is shown affecting Dawid, an Afrikaner poet and dissident, but in his case, more poet than activist. Marta, the mistress he has left behind in South Africa, is sensitive to his aspirations as a poet. However, when he decides that because of his protest involvement and the subsequent banning order he can no longer create poetry while still in South Africa, Marta instinctively knows that exile is the wrong decision. She complains: 'it was all that politics that got him into trouble - he was meant to be a poet not a politician' (Fugard 2002, p. 22) to which Dawid's wife, Allison, who realises the full tragedy of her husband's life, replies: 'in this country you cannot separate the two'. Steve is a very experienced bricklayer and mason⁵, so perhaps he should have taken Marta's advice and stuck to his trade, but in Steve's case the imperatives are different;

he does not enjoy the privileges of the white Afrikaner, even if that Afrikaner is also subject to a banning order. However, instead of suffering the consequences of his banning order, Dawid takes the one-way exit permit, abandoning Marta and his daughter, only to find that in exile his muse leaves him. Dawid's tragedy appears to be mid-way between the case of Fugard himself, who refused the one-way exit permit, and that of Breyten Breytenbach, who defied the system, returned from exile and was jailed for alleged terrorism: 'a traumatic event for the Afrikaner power base - their Shakespeare had gone as far as to try and launch a guerrilla army' (Allister Sparks. Personal interview. October 2000). Fugard set out his reasons for staying in South Africa in a 1963 *Notebook* entry:

It was put to me that I should think of leaving. ... How could I? South Africa is starving to death from a lack of love. This country is in the grip of its worst drought - and that drought is in the human heart. We all live here loving and hating. To leave means that the hating would win - and South Africa needs to be loved now, when it is at its ugliest, more than at any other time. By staying I might be able to do this.

(Nb, p. 83)

Gladys believes that she has 'discovered hell' for herself, but her experience of the power of the apartheid State apparatus has, on the surface, been benign compared with Steve's, where we are given two graphic examples - the savage impact of the Group Areas Act and of the interrogation technique of the Special Branch. Steve's father, with the Afrikaner-sounding name of Willem Gerhardus Daniels, is a skilled fisherman. The family lived near the sea at Fairview but this area was designated for whites only and the family were removed:

STEVE. They kicked us out, Gladys. Separate Group Areas. Fairview was declared white and that was the end of us....

But that finished Willem Gerhardus. He hadn't just lost his house and his savings, they also took away the sea. I mean ... how the hell do you get from Salt Lake to Maitland on a bicycle?! He tried the river a few times, but that wasn't for him.

I'll never forget one day in the backyard there at Salt Lake. I had started to get a bit conscious about things, and I was going on about our rights and what have you. He just listened. When I was finished he shook his head and said: 'Ons geslag is verkeerd.' Hell, that made me angry! And I told him we have only ourselves to blame if we let them walk over us. He just shook his head and repeated himself: 'Ons geslag is verkeerd'

Sorry, Gladys. That means...how would you say it nice in English, Piet?

PIET Our generation...our race is a mistake.

(pp. 259/260)

A triumphant victory for the apartheid ideology: Steve's father and his people are, to quote Freire⁶, 'convinced of their intrinsic inferiority' as, in 1973, the pessimistic Fugard thought applied to all South Africans:

For the moment I can't see past the appalling wreckage of human lives that our society is creating. A dumb and despairing rage at what we are doing.

'We, all of us, *are* a mistake.'

(Nb, 206)

The injurious impact of the Group Areas Act is then followed by a description of what finally forced Steve into exile. The loss of the house and the sea finished Steve's father but it was the loss of Steve's manhood on the 5th floor of police headquarters that delivered the *coup de grace*. At the beginning of Donald Woods' book *Biko*, there is a section entitled 'In Memoriam' that begins with this grim statement:

The following South Africans are known to have died in detention in the hands of the Nationalist government's Security Police. All were imprisoned without trial, charge, prosecution or evidence. All were

denied legal representation and access to friends or relatives. The causes of death alleged by the Security Police are given in brackets.

(Woods 1979, p. 9)

There then follow forty-four names (and one 'Unnamed person') with the causes of death ranging from 'suicide by hanging' and 'slipped in the shower' to 'fell seven floors during interrogation'. Steve Biko, who is included in the list, is said to have died as a result of 'injuries sustained in a scuffle'.⁷ Steve Daniels could have been one of these:

I was scared Piet. I knew where I was going. Anyway, up there on the fifth floor the questions really started. And Steve Daniels replied: 'I've got nothing to say.' [*He laughs again.*] You want to know how they made me change my mind? There's a room up there on the fifth floor... they call it the waiting room. All it's got is a chair by an open window. Every time I said that... 'Nothing to say!'....and I kept it up for a long time, Piet!... they put me in there and left me alone. Every half hour or so a couple of them would stick their heads in, look at me... and laugh. I got no bruises to show you. That's all they ever did to me. Just laugh. But they kept it up. One night back in my cell, after another day of that, I knew that if they put me in there once more... I'd jump. And I wasn't thinking of escape from five floors up. Ja! They had laughed at my manhood and every reason I had for diving out of that window. When they came to fetch me the next morning I was crying like a baby. And they comforted me like I was one. When they started their questions again, I wiped my eyes and answered.... for the first time. I told them everything. Every bloody thing I knew. And if they'd wanted it, I would have told them things I didn't know. But wait...the really *big* laugh is still coming. When I had finished and signed my statement, they patted me on the back and said: 'Well done, Daniels! But now tell us something we don't know.'

(pp. 265/266)⁸

In between the recital of these two examples of apartheid's evils, Gladys, with great prescience remarks: 'Oh dear, is the party over? (p. 262). Steve is left in no doubt that, as a result of the power of the State apparatus, he must agree with Gladys that 'the party is over'.

In *The Meaning of Treason*, Rebecca West says: 'Loyalty is, in essence, a beautiful contract' (West 1949, p.vi) and this accurately describes Piet's friendship with Steve - they have a beautiful contract - which makes the suspicion that Steve has been betrayed by Piet even more poignant and

wounding. Piet's meeting with Steve on the streets of Port Elizabeth came as a revelation in his life, but when the germ of suspicion enters the bloodstream, it becomes insidious - everyone can be suspected. When Gladys says that before she went away, presumably an earlier visit to Fort England, there was talk amongst their group of an informer, she asks Piet if she is not right that this was how Steve was discovered breaking his banning order:

PIET I said you were right, my dear.

GLADYS Have you never worked out who it was?

PIET No.

GLADYS. Did you try?

PIET Oh yes. I spent a lot of time doing that while you were away.

GLADYS. And?

PIET I stopped myself.

GLADYS. Why?

PIET. I discovered that if I tried hard enough I could find a good reason for suspecting everyone. I wouldn't have had any friends left if I carried on.

(pp. 245/246)

However, by the end of the play Piet can no longer stop himself thinking about this mystery as Gladys, acting as *agent provocateur*, tells Steve that Piet is guilty, which results in a confrontation where he has to answer the direct question - but does not. Although it is difficult to see why Piet, if he is innocent, is reluctant to say so to Steve, Fugard's interpretation⁹ is that Piet cannot answer such a question from the person, other than his wife, whom he loves the most. Steve has been responsible for the conversion that transforms his life, and because of the bond that has grown up between them, it seems that he can only remain silent; he cannot deny or confirm which, if somewhat inexplicable, does lead to a fascinating piece of theatre. However, Gladys then stops playing her game and tells Steve the truth:

STEVE. Please, Gladys! What's going on? Are you playing games?

GLADYS. You wouldn't be doubting him if you were. I doubt everything now. But not him. When you come to think of it, it's almost stupid. He's lost a farm, his friends...you!...the great purpose in his life, and he's going to lose a lot more before it's all over, but his faith in himself refuses to be shaken. Of course he didn't do it! What's happened to you, Steven? He isn't an informer. It must have been one of your other trusted comrades. Go back to Mavis and start all over again, because it wasn't him.

(p.267)

We believe in Piet, but according to Athol Fugard, many people cannot deal with Piet's silence and as the audience leaves the theatre, doubts begin to fester, just what the apartheid system wants - doubts, distrust, betrayal, divide and rule. The result of an informer in any group is to weaken the unity of that group. Once the seed is sown the State does not have to tend this garden of sorrows, the comrades, like Morris and Zachariah, are doing the authorities' job for them and policing themselves, as is frighteningly revealed by Joseph Lelyveld in his book *Move Your Shadow*:

While visiting Port Elizabeth for the Poqo trial, I met two blacks at the seaside cottage of the playwright Athol Fugard. Because he vouched for me to them, and them to me, we were able to speak with more than normal candor. How was it, I asked, that black security policemen and the state witnesses in political trials were never assaulted in the black townships? "To do something like that," one of the men said, "you would want at least two men, wouldn't you?" Pausing to indicate that my question was hypothetical and not intended as incitement, I gestured toward the only other person in the room, the man's best friend. "How do I know," came the mumbled reply, "that he is not an *impimpi* (an informer)?" No one who was not in jail or house arrest under what was called a banning order could ever be immune from that suspicion. So pervasive was it then that the authorities could compromise stalwart black nationalists by seeming to ignore them.

(Lelyveld 1985 p. 9/10)

Fugard recalls similar experiences with the Serpent Players, firstly in 1966 when one of the group, completely unexpectedly, tried to photograph them whereupon they all scattered, and then in 1970:

Whole of Serpent Players session devoted to discussing informers (impimpi). Impossible to believe, but the Group suddenly find X. very suspect. Evidence from New Brighton suggests he is closely involved with Special Branch. Even seems his sudden reappearance about five weeks ago, and non-appearance the past two Monday nights, has got something to do with latest refusal by authorities to return my passport.

(Nb, pp. 144 and 184/185)

Whether these experiences influenced the improvisations that resulted in *The Island* is not revealed, but when John, in the role of Creon, is about to sentence Antigone, he declaims that as she is clearly guilty there is no need to call the state witnesses and in any case: 'is it in the best interests of the State to disclose their identity.' (p. 227) - in other words, these witnesses are probably 'informers'.

The act of betrayal in society has a long history, with Judas as the paradigm figure. *My Children! My Africa!* is based on the murder in the Eastern Cape of a schoolteacher by youths who believed him to be a police collaborator and it was also an informer that led the police to the farm in Rivonia where Nelson Mandela and his colleagues were arrested.¹⁰ Michel Foucault provides a cerebral description of the State control of the mechanisms of discipline, as he calls it, and the role of the informer in this control. In England, private religious groups in the 18th century carried out the functions of social discipline, but in France this was taken over by the police apparatus under a form of Royal absolutism exercising, to use Foucault's words, an invisible 'omnipresent surveillance,' paralleling the instruments of apartheid, particularly as exemplified by the 'eyes behind our backs' for the likes of Morris and Zachariah:

....this power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible. It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert, a long hierarchized network which, according to Le Maire, comprised for Paris the forty-eight *commissaires*, the twenty *inspecteurs*, then the 'observers', who were paid regularly, the '*basses mouches*', or secret agents, who were paid by the day, then

the informers, paid according to the job done, and finally the prostitutes.

(Foucault 1991, p. 214)

Apartheid is in itself a betrayal of the majority of South Africa's population, but there are other betrayals on view in this play - Piet of his Afrikaner roots - and for Gladys, who feels that society and Piet have betrayed her. She has not been allowed to hide behind her sunglasses but she does not blame the State for this betrayal - she accuses Piet. If he had not joined the comrades, the Special Branch would not have invaded her territory and her mind and she might not have finished up in Fort England, where, as she bitterly quotes: 'They've burned my brain as brown as yours, Steven' (p. 268). After she has had the violent confrontation with Steve over Piet's guilt or innocence, she berates Piet:

GLADYS [*turning on him with equal violence*] I don't need you! I don't need you to protect me any more! You never did anyway. When they took away my diaries you did nothing. When the others took away my false teeth and held me down and blew my mind to pieces, you weren't even there! I called for you, Peter, but you weren't there.

(p. 267)

For most of the apartheid era, the failure of the liberal opposition constituted a further betrayal, and nowhere in Fugard's work is the dilemma of liberalism in South Africa more potently displayed than in *A Lesson from Aloes*. The liberal tradition was brought to South Africa by Gladys's forbears during the 19th century when there was generally a firm intention to gradually incorporate blacks into the politics of the country. Valuable background to the English liberalism that was exported to South Africa is provided by Saul Dubow in his essay, 'Race, civilisation and culture: the elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years' (Dubow 1990). He describes how utilitarianism and the *laissez faire* view of the economy had provided the classic Victorian ideals of the equality of man and the belief that continued progress was inevitable. However, these ideals came under pressure with the economic downturn in the 1880s, and one result of this change was the increasing interest in the biology of racial science and the study of eugenics, leading to the formation of Francis

Galton's eugenics movement. Galton's involvement in eugenics had some connections with Southern Africa in that he had conducted experiments in South West Africa (now Namibia) in 1850-51. Ideas of eugenics were reinforced by the concern in England about the poor physical condition of working class recruits that served in the Boer War. Another South African connection was Lancelot Hogben, who criticised the science of eugenics during his tenure as Professor of Zoology at the University of Cape Town between 1927 and 1930. He ridiculed the bigotry of his academic colleagues in the following quotation from his 1939 book, *Dangerous Thoughts*. Although no doubt somewhat embroidered, this dialogue is revealing as to apparent attitudes, in a supposedly liberal South African academy, years before the Afrikaner came to power:

'Almost any South Africa graduate: If you have to live in this country as long as I have, you would know that a native can't be taught to read or write.

'Myself: Have you ever visited Fort Hare Missionary College?

'Almost any SAG: Don't talk to me about missionaries.

'Myself: Well, I have. I have seen a class of pure blood Bantu students from the Cis-kei working out differential equations.

'Almost any SAG: What would you do if a black man raped your sister.'

(Hogben 1939, p.47/46)

In 1850 the Cape had enjoyed two centuries of cultural contact between the Dutch and English settlers, the indigenous Khoisan and the recently freed slaves. The contact with the Bantu-speaking peoples was more recent but even so, it was from this time that the Cape began to don the cloak of liberalism, as symbolised in the Governor, Sir George Grey: '...the supposedly benign mixer of different cultural traditions so that each could profit from the strengths and support the weaknesses of the other in a great exercise in co-prosperity...' (Davenport 1989, p.118). However, to quote further from Davenport, perhaps a better example of the Cape liberal was to be found in William Porter: "The Intellectual liberalism of the Cape was better manifested in the outlook of William Porter, an Irish Presbyterian who linked his 'New Light' theology with the rule of law, and strove as attorney general from 1839 to 1872

to administer justice without favour to either white master or coloured underdog. He also worked for a colour-blind political system" (Ibid, pp. 119/120). Stanley Trapido makes the point that liberalism in the Cape was initially about extending the suffrage, to the Afrikaner and the African alike, and that it flourished because there was a common class base which liberal financiers, administrators, missionaries and others all shared. However, this became somewhat diluted as capitalism came more into prominence in the 1870s with the advent of the mining industry (Trapido 1990). Under the constitution granted by Queen Victoria to the Cape in 1853, all men over 21 years of age had the right to vote, with no colour bar, but subject to a property qualification. However, over the next 50 years this franchise was gradually withdrawn from black and Coloured voters and by the time of the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the erosion of the Cape liberal tradition was beginning to show itself.

Whatever their differences, both in colour and attitude - one being the stoic and the other accepting exile as inevitable - and though they both appear to generally adopt a left-wing stance, Steve and Piet are liberals drawn in the image of Fugard himself, emphasising, as they do, the value of the individual and removed from any policy of violence.¹¹ Although the collective action involved in the bus boycott appears to demonstrate a genuine left wing belief, signs of their incipient liberalism are to be observed in the following extract from Piet's long speech on the boycott:

The really important thing was that those two weeks of boycott had raised the political consciousness of the people. They had acted politically, some of them maybe for the first time in their lives. My first lesson from Steve, and the most important one. An evil system isn't a natural disaster. There's nothing you can do to stop a drought, but bad laws and social injustice are man-made and can be unmade by man. It's as simple as that. We can make this a better world to live in.

(p. 242)

References by Dennis Walder and Michael Billington on Fugard the liberal are relevant:

But it is a failure of his class, his race, too: he is caught by the dilemma of his own position, a white liberal striving to proclaim the dignity of the human creature, but unable to anticipate how that dignity may be created, or participate in the moment which may create it.

(Walder 1984, p. 94)

But in the end it seems to me not quite enough for the white liberal dramatist to offer his contemporaries his pity, his compassion, his despair. What surely is needed, in the context of South Africa, is an affirmation of the fact that the country's tragedy is man-made and therefore capable of change: in short, some political gesture. The trouble with Mr Fugard's play¹² is that, while deploring the status quo, it also unwittingly helps to reinforce it.

(Billington 1971 p.49)

Fugard has never been a member of a political party, but if Sam is seen as a natural intellectual, Fugard is clearly a natural liberal, and as such was just as aware, as others more politically involved, of the failure of the liberals in the political arena. By 1982 he is reported as saying: 'Paranoia is a potent factor in white South African psychology. It is a psychology of fear. And the white liberal has become a joke. Eventually, he will be caught in a cross fire between Afrikaner nationalism and black South Africa' (Gussow 1982, p.79), and in 1974, he described himself as a 'classic example of the guilt-ridden impotent white liberal of South Africa' (Gray 1982, p. 11). In the OUP volume *Township Plays*, Walder says: 'The near-total hegemony of the white minority created by apartheid has meant that white liberals and other dissidents such as Fugard participate in the structures of domination which they attack...' (p.xi). This might be difficult to refute. Fugard cannot wholly abdicate his white liberal skin, but if he is inevitably participating in 'the structures of domination', his pen shows how he abominates what these structures have done to those with non-white skins.

The representative of 'black South Africa' in the cross fire Fugard refers to was principally the ANC. This party had been formed in 1912 and until Sharpeville in 1960, their policy had been to cooperate with the whites towards gaining equality with them for the black middle-class that they initially represented. This was then to be followed eventually by equality for the remainder of the non-white population. In a lecture entitled 'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest'

given by Nadine Gordimer at the University of Natal in 1971 she refers, in Fanonesque terms, to the shame of the 'mass submission' of the ANC to the banning imposed by the National Government and of the eventual failure of the liberals:

.... the declared aim was not a black country but a non-racial one.

But the banning of their political organizations made statutory criminals of their leaders, and the shame of their mass submission, however little choice they have had in the matter, has eaten into their self-respect.

In the end, the shameful situation of blacks creates a shame of being black. Not to be white is to be taken over by the Hegelian condition of 'existing for others'. One can say of Africans, Indians and Coloureds as Jean-Paul Sartre did of the victims of anti-semitism, that they feel they have allowed themselves to become poisoned by other people's opinion of them.

Concurrent with the disappearance of black political identity came the dispersion and ultimate failure of the liberal ideal in South Africa. That centuries-long creation of a tiny minority of whites is today reviled by Africans in harsher terms than they use for Nationalists.

Nevertheless, the genuine liberals, many of whom would prefer to be called radical in view of the sort of context into which the term 'liberal' has fallen - the real liberals honestly did want to abolish white supremacy; some of their number formed the Liberal Party¹³, the only white-inspired political group, outside the banned Communist Party, that stood for one-man one-vote; they had no colour feeling and they did struggle to work *with* Africans and other coloured people rather than lead them.

The sin for which retribution is now falling on their heads from all sides was the sin of failure.

(Gordimer 1988, pp. 99/100)

Margaret Munro applies these sentiments to *A Lesson from Aloes*:

The liberal white may risk a great deal in pursuing his ideals, but his vision is not capable of withstanding the escalating repressive measures of the dominant society. Always, the more radical of the disenfranchised majority see the liberal as a vote-splitter, an obscurer of the realities, a red-herring. Steve says:

We were like a bunch of boy scouts playing at politics. Those boer-boys play the game rough. It's going to need men who don't care about the rules to sort them out. That was never us. (Aloes, Act 2)

We can see this in another way as a betrayal based on racial divisions: an awareness in the South African liberal that he is not just standing still (implied by the symbolic aloes of the title, dormant in drought, always ready to flower in the right conditions) but is, in fact, regressing daily through the loss of opportunities for interracial brotherhood.

(Munro 1981, p. 474)

During the 1960s the liberals, to some extent, became spokesmen for the black cause, but as Allister Sparks explained, this could not remain the case:

Black politics, in effect, went into recess throughout the 1960s. With the major black parties outlawed, it fell to white liberal organisations to articulate black grievances and keep the politics of protest alive. Blacks joined some of these organizations, until another law called the Improper Interference Act prohibited that too. There were some whites who spoke out bravely: Helen Suzman, the Progressive party's lone parliamentary representative; the writer Alan Paton who was the leader of the Liberal party; several white newspaper editors; and the National Union of South African Students... It was the high point of white liberalism and of white surrogate spokesmanship for the suffering blacks, and it is now obvious that sooner or later there had to be a reaction against it.

(Sparks 1991, p.259)

In 1968 the reaction referred to manifested itself in the arrival of the Black Consciousness Movement.

The failure of the ANC and the liberals to provide any opposition to the policies of the National Government gave birth to the Black Consciousness Movement and Steve Biko's involvement in that movement. No longer were the oppressed prepared to believe that their lot could only be alleviated by cooperation with the oppressor and in particular, as illustrated in what follows, they were sceptical about the value of any cooperation with the liberals. Steve Biko borrowed from Fanon (in name if not wholly in substance), when he wrote, in the August and September 1970 issues of the newsletter of the South African Students' Organisation, under the *nom de plume* Frank Talk and entitling his piece *Black Souls in White Skins?*:

We are concerned with that curious bunch of non-conformists who explain their participation in negative terms: that bunch of do-gooders

that goes under all sorts of names - liberals, leftists etc. These are the people who argue that they are not responsible for white racism and the country's 'inhumanity to the black man'. These are the people who claim that they too feel the oppression just as acutely as the blacks and therefore should be jointly involved in the black man's struggle for a place under the sun. In short, these are the people who say that they have black souls wrapped up in white skins.

(Biko 1988, p.34)

If the liberal, both in South Africa and in Fugard's plays was doomed, are there any survivors in this play, liberals or otherwise? According to Dennis Walder what we are left with at the end of the play is: 'hopeless passivity and retreat.' (Walder 1984, p. 118) but this view can be questioned. Steve retreats and, after the crucial role Gladys performs within the play, she returns to a state of passivity, but like so many of Fugard's sad and unhappy characters, there is some hope in the portrayal of Piet. Gladys does not think there will be many survivors, particularly if the end of the world is nigh,¹⁴ but she believes Piet will be one of them. Early in the play she tells her husband (with some irony on the question of how many survivors there will be):

If I haven't got the radio on or a car isn't passing in the street, it's hard sometimes to believe there is a world out there full of other people. Just you and me. That's all that's left. The streets are empty and I imagine you wandering around looking for another survivor. If you ever find one, Peter, you must bring him home.

(p. 232)

The play inclines us to believe that as Piet sits '*in the back yard..with the unidentified aloe*' (the last stage instruction of the play), he is not totally defeated. James Fenton believes the message of the play contains some reason to be optimistic:

Mr. Fugard's great strength in this work derives from an intimate knowledge of defeat and the consequences of defeat. At least it seems to me that those who really know what defeat is are in a better position to lead their companions to victory.

At one stage the Afrikaner hero makes a plain distinction between a natural disaster, like drought, and a man made catastrophe, like the political system in South Africa. Nothing can be done about the first. Everything can, and must, be done about the second. The optimistic

credo is plainly set forth, and then tested against the experience of the three characters.

(Fenton 1980, p.40)

The gloom that invades all three characters in the play mirrors the mood of the country in 1963 and 1978 but, despite this, the ultimate message appears to be that even away from the veld, Piet will survive, like his aloes. He will withstand the worst elements that the apartheid authorities can subject him to, including, as by-products, a drought of friends or a stable wife:

PIET *[looking around at his collection]*. This is not fair to them. An aloe isn't seen to its best advantage in a jam tin in a little backyard. They need space. The open veld with purple mountains in the distance....

That veld is a hard world. They and the thorn trees were just about the only things still alive in it when I finally packed up the old truck and left the farm. Four years of drought, but they were flowering once again. I'm ashamed to say it, but I resented them for that. It's a small soul that resents a flower, but I suppose mine was when I drove away and saw them there in the veld, surviving where I had failed.

GLADYS. Is that the price of survival in this country? Thorns and bitterness.

PIET. For the aloe it is. Maybe there's some sort of lesson for us there.

(pp. 228/229)

The clear conclusion by the end of the play is that if the aloe is a metaphor for something that survives, whatever South Africa subjects it to, then it only goes to show that people are not aloes. The oppressed, unlike aloes, do not all have the same characteristics; Gladys may be spiky and bitter and Piet thornless but capable of survival, but in Fugard's plays, his dispossessed deal with the drought in their lives in a variety of different ways; they do not all have the same botanical roots. On the other hand even if Piet does survive, Fugard envisaged a bleak future for him as far back as 1966:

At last. An image which defines a human predicament and Piet. Thinking back to the drought, he cries out, 'I am frightened of being

useless!' The logos behind his humanity, his politics. He escaped the horror of his impatience on the parched, dying land, by a life of action among men. And then the second drought - and again alone - just himself, empty handed, useless. Piet face to face with himself - the absurdity of himself, *alone*.

'A man's scenery is other men'

(Nb, p. 140)

Steve may survive, even though many who went into exile did not live happily ever after, but Piet sits with only his unidentified aloe as scenery, with not another man in sight. As for Gladys, she was damned whatever happened; not suited to the climate, meteorological or political. She is unable to combat the psychosis that apartheid created in many South Africans, but in the recesses of her mind, she may find some form of rest and comfort from thoughts of *Sunset in Somerset*, the picture she so admires at Fort England; even though it is hung in the room where patients wait their turn for electric shock treatment. As Fugard has failed to provide for her a way out of the quagmire of apartheid, she retreats to Fort England to escape the political reality. In this play, her fate constitutes South Africa's ultimate betrayal as we consider whether, in this context, Fort England can be compared to Robben Island. In Gladys's refuge she is in no doubt treated relatively kindly, unlike John and Winston - criminalised because of their response to apartheid - but, as discussed in this chapter and in Chapter Seven, Gladys appears to have less chance of surviving than those dispossessed that are sent to the Island - or confined to a Korsten pondok.

NOTES

¹ Dialogue from *Woza Albert*, written by Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema and Barney Simon, and first performed in 1981. Outside of Fugard, this work was arguably South Africa's most successful anti-apartheid play :

MBONGENI:	...Where do we stay?
PERCY:	In a tin!
MBONGENI:	In a tin! Like sardine fish!
PERCY:	In a tin, Morena.
MBONGENI:	Where do the bricks go to!? The bricks go to make a big house, six rooms, for two people.

(Mtwa 1983, p. 49)

² South African Coloured People's Organisation.

³ According to Mary Benson's notes 'Junior Certificate, Standard 6 - (usually) third and first years of high school.'

⁴ An early title for the play was *The Informer*.

⁵ Fugard allows Steve to say that on one occasion he laid two thousand four hundred bricks in one day. Wonder where he got his facts - the industry norm in the UK today is more likely to be around one thousand maximum.

⁶ From *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, already quoted in Chapter Two: 'For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority...'

⁷ Maishe Maponya's forceful play of 1984, *Gangsters*, is said to be based on this incident.

⁸ To underline the long gestation of this play, Fugard had virtually written this scene, according to the *Notebooks* (p.154) in 1967, eleven years before the play was brought to the stage.

⁹ As discussed at a personal interview in November 2002.

¹⁰ An agent of the Bureau of State Security, one Gerard Ludi, who had been infiltrated into *Umkhonto Sizwe*, the armed wing of the ANC.

¹¹ In the interview with Andrew Foley that opened Chapter Two of this thesis, Fugard said: "Oh the label 'liberal', is one with which I'm very happy. In political and philosophical terms, the values of liberalism are the cornerstone values of my life, the values I believe in: education, a certain concept of freedom, a certain concept of society, an emphasis on the individual above group identities. Yes, I'm absolutely happy with the label 'liberal'".

¹² *Boesman and Lena*.

¹³ Formed in 1953 and disbanded in 1968 when political activities between different ethnicities were banned.

¹⁴ One of the few visitors Gladys receives is a representative of the Watchtower Society, who has a date worked out for the end of the world: 'It's not far off, either' (p. 232).

FIVE

Antigone and the Book of Life

They said: Book of life! Your friend! You'll never get lost!

They told us lies.

That bloody book....! People, do you know? No! Wherever you go... it's that bloody book. You go to school, it goes too. Go to work, it goes too. Go to church and pray and sing lovely hymns, it sits there with you. Go to hospital to die, it lies there too!

(Sizwe Bansi is Dead)

Sam and Willie, as long-term employees of Hally's mother, would have had full authority to stay and work in Port Elizabeth, but in the case of Boesman and Lena it is most unlikely that they had pass books that authorised them to live or work anywhere. Zachariah, working for the local authority, would no doubt be legitimate in this regard, but it does raise the thought that Morris might well have used his whitish skin to avoid the need to carry any valid reference book, which could be one reason why he does not stray too far from the pondok. However, in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, the need for the dispossessed to possess a legal pass book is the central issue addressed in the play. In British West Africa, both before and after the countries of that region became independent, nearly all domestic servants had their 'book' which comprised a batch of usually bedraggled references from previous employers. Clearly this book conferred a very different status to that of the South African one, but in contrast to the many tragedies connected to the latter, the West African version often provided elements of humour with such typical phrases included in apparently glowing testimonials as, 'James has discharged his duties to his complete satisfaction' or, 'Herbert is an exceptional pastry cook, he is very light fingered'. However, there was no humour in the book required by law to be carried at all times by non-whites in South Africa.¹ The 'book', introduced under various pass laws, was a concrete symbol of the all-pervading control exercised over the majority of South Africans in the name of apartheid. This chapter is also concerned with *The Island* - Robben Island - where some of the many pass law transgressors were incarcerated.

Fugard's work invariably has a recognisable source, whether an introspection from his past or his own critical observation of other people, events or history. However, his plays' origins are not harvested from the wide and varied field that Shakespeare used; Fugard's backgrounds are more limited in their geography and humanity. Within the plays contained in this thesis, the geography is the dark side of the South African landscape and the people are generally the society's outcasts, often in a familial relationship. *My Children! My Africa!* comes directly from the political history of the time while "*Master Harold*"... *and the boys* and *A Lesson from Aloes* are from the playwright's youth experiences or adult acquaintances. It is not revealed whether the inspiration for *Blood Knot* came from the newspaper report about a 22 year-old African house-boy found guilty by writing a love-letter to an 18 year-old white girl, but *Boesman and Lena* is, according to the *Notebooks*, firmly grounded in the woman Fugard gave a lift to on the way to Cradock. However, the plays in this chapter are no less the product of personal history, whether Fugard's own or other people's, with which he became familiar. In this instance, however, there is a different first step: not the long gestation of the story of Piet and Gladys or the more instantaneous reaction to the boycotts and unrest of the 1980s that built the 'wonderful Mr M'. In the case of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* the defining moment was a knock on the door that gave birth to the Serpent Players.

In Fugard's words:

I was back in Port Elizabeth writing a new one, *Hello and Goodbye*, when there was a knock on the door and into our lives trooped five men and women from the township. They had read about my success with *Blood Knot* and had come to ask me to help them to start a drama group. With some reluctance, because I resented anything that would interfere with my concentration on the new play, I agreed and Serpent Players was born.

(p.vi)

The first visitor was Norman Ntshinga, husband of Mabel Magada, a blues singer. His was the old, old request. Would I do a play for them? I say 'request', actually it is hunger. A desperate hunger for meaningful activity - to do something that would make the hell of their daily existence meaningful. He is coming again with a few friends

and we will try to start a local branch of Union Artists.²

(Nb, p. 81)

The group began with a version of Machiavelli's *La mandragola*, and it was during this time that the Special Branch visited them when all present had their names taken. These officers read the play and took away Fugard's notes, although what they made of this early 16th Century Florentine social comedy, described in *The Cambridge Guide to the Theatre* as 'a deep, cunning and admonitory political allegory' is not recorded, but this did not deter them from further visits during the life of the group. The Serpent Players were allowed to use the old snake pit at the Port Elizabeth museum that had been taken over by Rhodes University, hence the name. Over the next two years they produced versions of *Woyzeck*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Antigone* but politics continued to intervene. Welcome Duru, who was to play Azdak in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, was arrested days before the first performance and Fugard had to step in and take over. After that, three more members were arrested, including Norman Ntshinga, who was scheduled to play Haemon in *Antigone*. As Fugard was banned from New Brighton, where most of the players lived, this play was rehearsed in a kindergarten on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth (Benson 1990, p.195). However they continued their activities and began to work on improvisations concerned directly with issues in the townships. Examples were *Friday's Bread on Monday*, *The Last Bus* and *Sell-Out*, but the most important of these improvisations came about after Fugard attended the trial of Norman Ntshinga, where he gave evidence on behalf of the accused.

Fugard took with him Norman's wife, Mabel, who was recognised at the court by an old man from New Brighton who had just been sentenced. This man gave his coat, his only possession, to Mabel and asked her to take it home and give it to his wife. With this incident as inspiration, the play *The Coat* was born and first produced at a public reading in November 1966. As an indication of the strength of the 'Group' ethos, the cast performing *The Coat* were identified by the names of characters they had played in former Serpent Players productions such as Lavrenti (*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*) and Haemon (*Antigone*). However, at

one stage Fugard wanted to get away from the cast simply telling the audience the story - the debate should be widened to conjecture whether the wife might sell the coat. From the *Notebooks*: "It will certainly create more of Brecht's 'ease' and a chance to talk and think about it. The audience will participate" (Nb, p.137), as Brecht would no doubt have endorsed. The Brechtian method of speaking directly of, and to the lives, of urban blacks appeared to suit the Serpent Players who were providing fare totally different from the normal Township melodramas of the likes of Gibson Kente. Fugard's view is eloquently given in the *Notebooks*:

To Sheila: 'The continuum of first-degree experience. What can I say, or write about today that could have even a hundredth part of the consequence of that coat going back. Even the greatest art communicates only second-degree experience. That coat is first degree, it is life itself. That man's family will take it back, smell him again, remember him again, it will be worn by a son or, tonight, will keep one of the small children warm in her blanket on the floor - move into her dreams, put her father back into her life. That coat withers me and my words.'

(Nb, p. 125)

The play, if it can be so described, is published in the Oxford University Press edition of Fugard's plays under the heading *Township Plays* and was revived in 1990 at the University of Witwatersrand Theatre, Johannesburg directed by playwright Maishe Maponya. Perhaps in other hands, the incident of 'the coat' might have led to an improvisation about a court scene, but when this suggestion was put to Fugard he replied that there would have been insufficient ambiguity - not his genre (Personal communication. January 2004).

John Kani, who played Haemon in *The Coat* (and *Antigone*), introduced the group to a friend of his, Winston Ntshona, and this resulted in the birth of a remarkable theatrical partnership. John Kani was born in Port Elizabeth and Winston Ntshona came from King William's Town in the Eastern Cape. After Ntshona left school in New Brighton, he worked as a factory janitor and then as a laboratory assistant. Kani was also a janitor at the Ford Motor Company and then moved to the assembly floor. They first performed together at the Space Theatre in Cape Town in a version of Camus' *The Just*, which was retitled *The*

Terrorists and which used township names and Xhosa songs. After this they both decided to give up their jobs and become full-time actors in a country where, for black men, this was a profession not recognised by the authorities; the only way this could be circumvented was for them to be registered as Fugard's driver and gardener, even though he did not own a car. This was a crucial moment in South African theatrical history, and within months the two workshop productions, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, became a reality.

Sizwe Bansi is Dead was first performed at the Space Theatre on 8th October 1972. It ran for about 1 hour 45 minutes with the first 45 minutes taken up by a monologue delivered by Styles, a photographer, played by John Kani. This begins with Styles recalling a visit by Henry Ford the Second to the Ford factory where Styles worked before setting up as a photographer. The monologue is brought to an end when Sizwe Bansi, now calling himself Robert Zwelinzima, enters Styles' studio asking for a picture to be taken that he can send to his wife. After some exchanges between Styles and Robert, the photograph is taken with the camera flash freezing the action to reveal the illiterate Robert in the spotlight as he dictates, to the audience, a letter he will send to his wife with the photograph. This dictation leads into the remaining action of the play, beginning at Buntu's house in New Brighton. Buntu, also played by John Kani, is about to receive Sizwe Bansi who has come to stay with him, even though this visitor does not have the necessary permit to remain in Port Elizabeth, meaning that he should return to his home in King William's Town. He does not want to do this, so Buntu takes him out for a night of drinking. On their way home they stumble on a dead man and, after much agonising, Sizwe agrees to change his identity and take the dead man's pass book that is in order; it contains a work-seeker's permit.³ The dead man is Robert Zwelinzima.

The Island, the second workshop collaboration is, within the political context, a natural bedfellow to *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, as it shows the ultimate fate of those who rebel against the pass laws and other apartheid strictures. It was first performed at the Space Theatre, on 2 July 1973. The play portrays life on Robben Island for two prisoners, John and Winston, and begins with a long, wordless period of useless labour, a theatre of the absurd, where they dig sand

and then each struggles with his loaded wheelbarrow to fill the hole created by the other man's digging - even more Sisyphean than Boesman and Lena's wanderings.⁴ As mentioned, this mime is often extended to over fifteen minutes, or longer. Fugard has said that it is possible to portray what is happening in five minutes at the most but if drawn out the 'audience begins to experience the madness, the lunacy, the insidious nature of a pointless experience that just goes on and on until the audience wants to scream' (Personal interview. November 2002). Peter Brook is uncomfortable with political theatre but *The Island* so impressed him that in 1999 he staged a revival at his Paris theatre, *Bouffes du Nord*. He also had some comments to make on the famous opening sequence:

Not a word spoken, nothing on the stage, for 40 minutes - just two men [shifting sand] with imaginary wheelbarrows, in an imaginary space. Gradually the audience went through a whole cycle. First amazement, then the beginnings of irritation - 'We're an audience, we've come for something, what's going on here?' - then impatience.

And then suddenly the whole audience was transformed by a deep feeling of shame for having dared to think to themselves, 'Come on, get on with it.'

When one saw the reality of their sweat, the reality of the weight of the imaginary objects they were lifting, the audience dropped any expectation of the play 'starting'. They realised this was the play, and waited, with respect and absolute involvement, for whatever was coming next.

(Brook 2000, p. 1)

Back in their rudimentary cell, the tired workers discuss a performance of *Antigone* which they are to present to the warders and fellow prisoners. Before this occurs, John is told that his sentence has been reduced on appeal so that he will be released in three months time while Winston still has seven years to go. The last scene is the performance of *Antigone* with John playing Creon and Winston Antigone.

Most Western critics applauded *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* with some fervour - as indicated in the following:

Those of us who thought that *Boesman and Lena* was about rather more than refuse disposal in an industrial society may take encouragement from *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, which makes it eloquently clear that in South Africa the refuse is human, the methods of disposal callous, and society greatly to be blamed.

(Benedict Nightingale, *New Statesman*. 28 September 1973)

A stirring moral message is one thing: a good play is another. And in its strange way "Sizwe Bansi is Dead" is an astonishingly good play. From its satirically sly opening - with its corrosive remarks on the Ford factory in Port Elizabeth - to its slashing climax, where, echoing Shylock, Buntu and Sizwe insist on their human dignity, the play has a style, manner and grace of its own.

(Clive Barnes, *The New York Times*. 14 November 1974)

Stanley Kauffmann, writing in the *New Republic* of 21st December 1974, was less enthusiastic.

The two actors are in themselves more significant than the plays they are in. As for Fugard, I've known no one in my lifetime who has worked with greater passion in the theater, but apparently his very passion can misguide him. I presume to think it has done so here. He is a director of strengths, but he is a writer of much greater strengths. He has opted in these past few years to work with actors in "devising" plays: he had his reasons - passionate, I'm sure - for doing this, but the result is wasteful of his best talents.

... I hope Fugard, a writer, will write. In these plays devised with actors he has slipped into theatricalisms like none I can recall in his other work. These new works, compared with *Boesman and Lena*, are somewhat superficial because they are artistically insecure and essentially didactic, and are thus only about the troubles of South African blacks.

Kauffmann continues his review by acknowledging the risk of using the word 'only' - which he stands by as a result of a re-reading of *Boesman and Lena* - but if we agree with him, this might be excused by accepting that as a collaborative effort, Fugard has partially abandoned his status as a white man to be subsumed into a role as a co-creator with his black colleagues, who are *only* concerned with the travails of black people. However, Kauffmann may not have been aware of the extent to which Fugard's skills as a writer were developed in the arena of collaboration with the actors and others, an example being *No-Good Friday*, his first full-length play that was conceived in the heady

atmosphere of Sophiatown in the 1950s. His university friend, Benjamin Pogrand, had introduced Fugard to Sophiatown where he met some of the black *Drum* writers, including Lewis Nkosi and Nat Nakasa, who were keen to form some sort of theatre company as an outlet for new playwriting. It was also at that time that Fugard met Zakes Mokae who was then working as a musician but was interested in the theatre. Mokae's comments, as related by Russell Vandenbroucke, provide a valuable commentary on how this play was formed:

Since Athol was going to direct the thing, it made sense that he also write it, though he had to do so as we went along. If he had said "Listen fellows, I'll go off and write the play and see you again in four weeks," our momentum would have stopped, the group would have dissolved, and he might never have seen any of us again.

There was a lot of exchange between Athol and the actors, but basically he was our pen man. If something didn't work, we'd throw it out and come up with something else. You had the stuff written, you had an idea, and if it didn't work you changed it around....

(Vandenbroucke 1986, p.28/29)

Fugard's work is essentially outside the scope of David Coplan's informative book, *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, but the author does comment that 'Fugard addressed black experience but not black audiences.' However, relevant to the genesis of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, are Coplan's remarks relating to *No-Good Friday*:

Fugard's success with the cast was due in part to his innovative composing and directing methods. Drawing on African tradition, he developed scripts through actors' extemporaneous performing, or by giving them skeletal scenes to work up through their own improvisational treatment.

(Coplan 1985, p. 206)

As referred to in Chapter One, if Coplan's 'Drawing on African tradition' refers to earlier, or even contemporary black theatre, then its influence on Fugard appears to have been limited. However, with *No-Good Friday* he has acknowledged the cooperative element even though with this play he is credited with sole authorship. However, with the more commercially successful 1970s collaborative dramas, the ownership of these works becomes a rather more

important issue. Are Fugard, Kani and Ntshona equal contributors to this enterprise and, if so, to what extent can they be considered 'Fugard plays'?

Sizwe Bansi is Dead and *The Island* are published as being 'devised' by Fugard, Kani and Ntshona and in the introduction to the latest Oxford University Press edition, Dennis Walder makes the point that the rights and royalties are shared. In the Introduction to *Statements*, an earlier volume that included these plays, Fugard wrote that they 'did not jettison the writer' but that the starting point was at least an image which, in the case of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, was a photograph of a man with a cigarette in one hand and a pipe in the other. This collaborative enterprise had a booking to open at the Space Theatre on 8 October 1970 and yet, five weeks before that date, it had still not been agreed what improvisation would be presented. During the first rehearsal, after Fugard had fully committed himself to involvement with Kani and Ntshona, he tried to formulate a play by having them imagine the lounge of a local hotel with three or four tables crowded with self-satisfied white students, whom John and Winston were to wait upon. Eventually Fugard had the two actors envisage only one table and one chair as a symbol of white hegemony, as was repeated ten years later in "*Master Harold*"...and the boys. From this experiment, plus the photograph and the memories of John and Winston, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* was born.

As for *The Island*, this was principally based on notes and ideas that Fugard had accumulated over many years, and if *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* began with a single table and chair, *The Island's* first prop was a large blanket that Fugard spread on the ground outside his house and then called upon John and Winston to explore this space. The blanket was then folded several times until there was just enough room for them to stand on it, creating conditions of extreme confinement. Two weeks later they were on stage with *The Island* in Cape Town and since then the play has been performed all over the world. In recent years there have been at least two revivals in London with the original cast, thirty years older and somewhat heavier. Fugard recounts that Mannie Manim, one of the founders of the Market Theatre, has rather unkindly referred to recent productions as '*Sumo Island*' (Personal interview. November 2002).

Since the first productions of these two plays, there have been some differences of view as to the respective contributions of the three practitioners involved. However, for the purpose of this analysis, it is contended that whatever credit belongs to Kani and Ntshona, these works contribute a valuable addition to the canon of Fugard political plays; his own words are well in evidence. During a revival of *The Island* at the Market Theatre, Mark Gevisser wrote in a review for the *South African Mail and Guardian* (26 May 1995), 'despite the many temptations, neither Kani nor Ntshona steals the show and both allow the lyricism of Fugard - unmistakeable even in his "workshopped" scripts - to shine through.' However, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* differs from nearly all of Fugard's plays in that in this one, human relationships are not central - Styles has a practitioner/client affiliation with the visitors to his studio and a subservient/rebellious role at the Ford factory while Buntu and Sizwe have only just met. This is deliberate: we are not given an inquiry into the strength of the blood knot between brothers, nor insights into an unlikely love affair between a pair of society's outcasts, no - in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* the political dimension is paramount. To some extent an entry in the *Notebooks* of 1977 shows that Fugard had a similar view: 'I've always rated *Sizwe* fairly low, a play which walked the tightrope between poetry and propaganda. Maybe I'm wrong' (Nb, p. 226).

Richard Hornby, in an article in *The Hudson Review*, described Fugard as 'the best political dramatist writing in English today' (Hornby 1990, p.123) and although the *Christian Science Monitor* said that *A Lesson from Aloes* 'rides the political issue like an express train into the heart of the human tragedy', it is the two collaborative dramas now being considered, and *My Children! My Africa!*, that most overtly support Hornby's view. This political emphasis was in evidence in realistic terms when *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* was performed before a mixed audience at the Space Theatre. At the end of the play John Kani went around the audience to inspect passes, even of those members who were not required to carry them, which, in true Brechtian fashion, brought the message on stage across the footlights, into the auditorium to expose the harsh reality of the South Africa outside the theatre. The play text we have for *Sizwe Bansi is*

Dead specifically invites the audience to participate when Buntu appears on stage exiting from Sky's place he 'discovers' the people in the theatre and reports directly to them on the good time they have enjoyed. Similarly, when Sizwe tears off his clothes, he asks a lady in the audience how many children her man has made for her. However, when played to an all-black assembly, there was a different example of 'art imitating life' - a perfect example of the melding of politics and culture - as described by Fugard in Ronald Harwood's *A Night at the Theatre*. Here he gives a material example of political theatre with an account of how in September 1974,⁵ two years after the play was first conceived, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* was given its first public performance in a black township. The venue was St Stephen's Hall in New Brighton, a plain brick building and one of only two usable halls in an area with a population of 250,000. Until then, performances in South Africa of this play had been restricted to private occasions before an invited audience, prompting Fugard to conjecture how different this experience was likely to be:

It is one thing to try to educate a comfortable white audience into what the deeply-hated reference book means to a black man and something else to confront, and in a sense challenge, an angry black audience with those same realities

(Harwood 1984, p. 26/27).

It certainly was different. Fugard wrote:

I have never yet known an audience that did not respond to the first half-hour of the play as if it wasn't getting its money's-worth of laughter. New Brighton was more than just 'no exception'. They knew in a way that no previous audience had known the finer nuances of what John was talking about and could recognize and celebrate every local reference. Listening to them, however, I couldn't also help feeling that something more than just a response to a brilliant comedy performance was involved. What Brecht says of crying and lamentation in his *Messingkauf Dialogues* applies equally to the gale of laughter that was sweeping through St Stephen's Hall that night. It was the sound of '...a vast liberation'. To take still further liberties with 'poor B. B.': New Brighton was mixing laughter into an account of the blows it had received. It was making something out of the utterly devastating.

(Ibid, p. 30)

During the description of the Ford Factory incident in Styles' opening monologue, a member of the audience came to the front and raised John Kani's arm, like a boxing referee, and declared that he had knocked out Henry Ford Junior. When the more serious second half of the play began, before Sizwe decided to surrender his identity and take the dead man's reference book, the audience began a vigorous debate on what Sizwe should have done, with the heated discussion dividing the Hall between those who advocated caution and others who exhorted Sizwe to take the pass with cries of 'To hell with it. Go ahead and try. They haven't caught me yet' (Ibid, p.31). As a result the action on stage had to be suspended. This provoked Fugard to comment:

As I stood at the back of the hall listening to it all I realised I was watching a very special example of one of theatre's major responsibilities in an oppressive society: to try to break the conspiracy of silence that always attends an unjust social system. And most significant of all: that conspiracy was no longer being assaulted just by the actors.

A performance on stage had provoked a political event in the auditorium and there was no doubt in our minds as to which was the most significant.

(Ibid, p. 31/32)

No doubt Brecht would have been similarly provoked, likewise Jerzy Grotowski who would have seen this performance as a primary example of 'Poor Theatre'. This Polish theatrical practitioner was a significant influence for Fugard and nowhere is this more evident than in these two workshop plays. Fugard has repeated more than once that for him the gospel of the theatre is that propounded by Grotowski, who contended that, unlike the theatre of the academic that requires an actor and a written text, or the intellectual theatre that is similar but requires the script to promote intellectual arguments, all that poor theatre, true theatre, requires is an actor and an audience. According to Grotowski, the aim should be to 'abolish the distance between the actor and audience, by eliminating the stage, removing all frontiers (Grotowski 1991, p.41), as exemplified by the memorable performance of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* at New Brighton, where the actor and the audience began to coalesce as one and the same. For a more intimate example, in some productions Kani has invited a

member of the audience to come up on the stage to view at close range some of the photographs that Styles used as props.

Sizwe Bansi is Dead is a prime example of 'Poor Theatre' that would still constitute a striking instance of political drama without the opening monologue but, without the humorous and effective device of Styles' preface, world theatre would have been denied a character that stands shoulder to shoulder with some of Shakespeare's wisest fools. Fugard describes this monologue as 'an actor unaccompanied by orchestra, improvising on a theme' (Benson 1997, p. 81). Styles's soliloquy ends as the character named 'Man' enters the studio which leads to a splendid piece of dramatic technique, a flashback of almost cinematic proportions that, with the freezing of the action as the photographer's flash is activated, brings Sizwe Bansi, in the persona of Robert Zwelinzima, on stage.

Styles appears in two costumes, the exploited Ford worker and the photographer. As he moves from paid employment as the factory worker to enter the private sector, some critics have suggested that he becomes a proto-capitalist who is exploiting his own people while providing them with pictorial evidence of their dreams, but for a profit.⁶ Styles is one of Fugard's most charismatic characters who, although firmly rooted in the black working class, is more enterprising than most and seems to have absorbed some socialist philosophy. He leaves the factory because he is, 'Selling most of his time on this earth to another man', and, following the theme of emasculation, already discussed, '... if I could stand on my own two feet and not be somebody else's tool, I'd have some respect for myself. I'd be a man' (p. 156). A closer examination of Fugard's text, and a knowledge of the political history surrounding class formation at this time, provides one of the few arenas in his plays to explore how, by the 1980s, race discrimination had been partially subsumed into a class struggle.⁷ The establishment of the homelands, however poverty-stricken they were, had led to the creation of a class of black landowners who prospered as they were granted access to credit, marketing boards and irrigation schemes. Therefore, despite the overall distaste by the black population for the homelands policy, as articulated so vehemently by Sizwe, these bantustan bourgeoisie had a vested interest in the perpetuation of

this policy. In the urban areas, due to the growth in the economy, there was a considerable expansion in the number of black and Coloured workers resulting in a similar class of petit-bourgeoisie evolving who, although opposed to white domination, did not necessarily see their future within the ANC, who were, ostensibly, the party of the working class. Fanon saw the limitations of these so-called bourgeoisie in the post-colonial context where he considered that these aspirants needed to repudiate this role in the field of capitalism, however limited, so as to 'make itself the willing slave of that revolutionary capital which is the people' (Fanon 1990, p.120). Fanon's argument is that the new middle-class that emerged from the oppressed might aspire to a bourgeois status, but in reality they did not replicate the class of those they are supposedly replacing; they are not financiers or industrial magnates - they have no economic power - exactly the case for Styles in his so-called capitalist role.

There is another reason why this play is particularly appropriate for an examination of work, class and race; it is skilfully constructed so that not only are we given Styles in his two roles, but he is then recreated as Buntu who, although as enterprising as Styles, is of the second-generation (at least) black/urban working-class who, like Sizwe Bansi, is only too glad to be allowed to work - provided the racist authorities will allow:

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 trouble I had to get this two-roomed house... born in this area.

(p. 174)

However, if Styles is to be seen as any form of capitalist, he is one with a heart, fully conscious of the sufferings of his customers. He wants to remember the 'simple people... who never get statues erected to them...' (p. 159), or those:

....who would be forgotten, and their dreams with them, if it wasn't for Styles. That's what I do, friends. 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 ...

(p. 159)

One man is anxious to be photographed with the Standard Six Certificate he has earned after seven years part-time study. In another case, twenty-seven people pose for the 'Family Card'. Even though the 'Family Card' led to more sales, Styles the capitalist recalls the grandfather who dies before the photograph is developed with words that display a compassion that would appear to effectively counter the view that he is exploiting his own:

His grey hair was a sign of wisdom. His face weather-beaten and lined with experience. Looking at it was like paging the volume of his history, written by himself: He was a living symbol of Life, of all it means and does to a man. I adored him. He sat there - half smiling, half serious - as if he had already seen the end of his road.

(p. 161)

Reinforcing Styles place in the non-capitalist world, he then provides a variation of the Marxist view that the worker owns nothing except their ability to work, their labour power, when he says:

We own nothing except ourselves. This world and its laws, allows us nothing, except ourselves. There is nothing we can leave behind when we die, except the memory of ourselves.

(p. 163)

In this context these memories are the photographs that remain after death - also seen to represent the dreams of the photographed. Capitalism thrives by selling dreams to the proletariat - unrealistic illusions that a new washing powder will improve your lot in life - but the dream world that Styles is involved in is more honest than that. He may not be reflecting Fanon's view '...that the native never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler' (Fanon 1990, p. 41), but in recording 'the memory of ourselves', he gives some solace to the subjects of his camera. Although Morris and Zachariah equally own nothing except themselves, Morris is concerned that even their dreams might be mortgaged, but in Styles' studio he is determined to protect this precious commodity - he has set up a 'strong room of dreams'. He does not ask stupid questions of his sitters: 'Start asking stupid questions and you destroy that dream' (p. 160), and when Sizwe first walks into the studio, Styles, in an

aside to the audience, describes him as 'A Dream' - with a capital D. It could be argued that Styles' strong room has a modern equivalent in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Negotiating the past The making of memory in South Africa*, published in 1998, sets out to look into 'the ways in which memory is being negotiated in South Africa'. In the Introduction the editors suggest that 'the records of the hearings of the TRC are the repository of South African memory (Nuttall 1998, p.1).

Styles' limited private enterprise is contrasted with the world of capitalism, represented by the Ford motor plant, when he is reading aloud from the local newspaper at the opening of the play. One item refers to talks about an expansion at that plant, 'The talk ended in the bloody newspaper. Never in the pay packet' (p. 150). The visit of Mr Henry Ford the Second to the factory where Styles worked provides an amusing interlude and an opportunity for further comment on exploitation when he acts as interpreter for Mr Baas Bradley: 'Gentleman, old Bradley says this Ford is a big bastard. He owns everything in this building which means you as well' (p.153). Mr Ford is described as a grandmother baas who will be 'wearing a mask of smiles', reminding us that Sizwe Bansi wears a mask himself as the play moves on to its defining message, projecting the contest between identity and survival. Morris abandoned the possibility of a change of identity when 'trying for white', his survival depended on the 'blood knot', while Lena, who at the beginning of the play struggles to find out who she is, survives by establishing her identity in relationship to Boesman. Piet and Isabel survive with their identities fairly intact but the only way Sizwe Bansi can survive is to surrender his identity.

For the oppressed, such a surrender may be of little import as they have no worthwhile identity to give up but, despite the vicissitudes experienced by the evidently "worthless" people seen in Fugard's work, he consistently displays an acute regard for their value - he rebels against the dominant South African ideology that sees most of his characters as rubbish. In the case of Sizwe, the authorities would deal severely with the forgery that enabled him to assume another man's identity, but looked at *en-masse*, it would not enter the minds of the oppressors that they needed to accord any identity to Fugard's men and

women. Like Zachariah, Sizwe is invisible. Buntu confirms this when he explains to Sizwe what would happen if he went to the Labour Bureau: 'White man.... takes the book, looks at it - doesn't look at you! - goes to the big machine and feeds in your number ...'(p. 172). However he can use this non-recognition to his own advantage - even if he needs to 'live as another man's ghost'. Pragmatic Buntu tells Sizwe that with his identity intact he is only a ghost but Sizwe is still reluctant, until silenced by Buntu's grip on reality:

No? 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 Bansi ... isn't that a ghost? Or when his little child calls you 'Boy' ...you a man, circumcised, with a wife and four children isn't that a ghost? Stop fooling yourself. All I'm saying is be a real ghost, if that is what they want, what they've turned us into. Spook them into hell, man!

(p. 185)

In Nadine Gordimer's 1979 novella *Something Out There*, white suburbs of Johannesburg are haunted by the spectre of a something unknown 'out there', which turns out, in all probability, to be a baboon, but which acts as a metaphor for the menace of the black man in the changing times in South Africa:

Since no one actually saw whoever or whatever was watching them - timid or threatening? - rumour began to go round that it was what they called - not in their own language with its rich vocabulary recognising the supernatural, but adopting the childish Afrikaans word - a spook.⁸

(Gordimer 1994 p. 55)

This menace is not seen properly by anyone, resulting in that which has been ignored and has been invisible for so long becoming a possible reality. Buntu's advice is working.

Sizwe Bansi lived in Ciskei where life was hard. In Sky's shebeen he is asked what he thinks of Ciskeian independence to which he replies:

I must tell you, friend ... when a car passes or the wind blows up the dust, Ciskeian Independence makes you cough. I'm telling you,

friend... put a man in a pondok and call that Independence? My good friend let me tell you.... Ciskeian Independence is shit!

(p. 178).⁹

As a result of the harsh conditions in his homeland, Sizwe needs to find work in Port Elizabeth to feed his family but street-wise Buntu, who Styles describes as, 'Always helping people. If that man was white they'd call him a liberal' (p. 165), explains to Sizwe, in agonising detail, that he does not have the right stamp in his passbook to enable him to stay and work. Sizwe suggests he might find a job as a garden-boy to which Buntu replies:

I'll tell you what the little white ladies say: 'Domestic vacancies. I want a garden-boy with good manners and a wide knowledge of the seasons and flowers. Book in order.' Yours in order? Anyway what the hell do you know about seasons and flowers?

(p. 172).

In other words, as far as Port Elizabeth is concerned, Sizwe does not exist; he has already lost his identity. However, the tragedy of the play, the whole thrust of what Fugard and his collaborators are presenting to the audience, is that it is one thing to accept the inevitability that the authorities do not recognise your existence, it is another thing for the individual to see no alternative but to give up his singularity and step into the shoes of a dead man and take over his identity. Compared with the ambiguity of identity faced by the Coloureds in South Africa, debated in Chapter Three, the identity of the black man and woman is more precise. Most of them have a recognizable tribal ancestry which in many ways renders their loss of identity even more painful than for Morris. When a way out of Sizwe's predicament presents itself, and by surrendering his identity he can work in Port Elizabeth and feed his family, he is faced with an agonising decision: bread or dignity? For a black man in apartheid South Africa, it is an unequal contest.

The impact this contest has on the pride and dreams of the unfortunate is presented with graphic realism - as evidenced by the reaction of the New Brighton audience described above. 'Shit on our names and on our pride', says

Buntu. He will give up everything that distinguishes him as a man in exchange for a piece of bread and a blanket, but even with such abjection, the book is still in control: 'That passbook of his will talk'... in 'good English too' (p. 180). As Morris prayed for God's 'Kingdom to come as quickly as it can', Buntu warns that his people may not be as fortunate as Abou Ben Adhem: 'Be careful lest when the big day comes and the pages of the big book are turned, it is found that your name is missing' (p. 188). The book of life - or of hell?

Verbal racism and questions of identity are not the only themes in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* that are a repeat of those encountered in other Fugard works. As before, clothes are important. The incongruity of a man with a pipe in one hand and a cigarette in the other is heightened by the too-large obviously new 'Sales House' suit, a prop in the change of identity (as in *Blood Knot*) but no defence against white autocracy - no defender of the black man's pride. Buntu recalls an item of his father's clothing:

It's like my father's hat. Special hat, man! Carefully wrapped in plastic on top of the wardrobe in his room. God help the child who so much as touches it! Sunday it goes on his head, and a man, full of dignity, a man I respect, walks down the street. White man stops him. 'Come here, kaffir!' What does he do?

[*Buntu whips the imaginary hat off his head and crumples it in his hands as he adopts a fawning, servile pose in front of the white man*]

'What is it it, Baas?'

If that is what you call pride, then shit on it! Take mine and give me food for my children.¹⁰

(pp. 190/1)

Costume is important as a reflection of the society Fugard's characters inhabit. Boesman has his blazer and Mr M his conservative suit, but on the Island John and Winston, like all of the prisoners, wear identical shorts and shirts that take away any semblance of individuality - they are not men, they are numbers (if that even). They have surrendered their identity as surely as Sizwe Bansi and the indignity of their costume is exacerbated as they are required to drop these shorts for inspection. In *The Island A History of Robben Island 1488 to 1990* edited by Harriet Deacon, the details of this routine examination are described:

Firstly, a daily feature of prison life was the *tauza*, which officials claimed was meant to prevent prisoners smuggling objects on or in the body.

In the *tauza*, the prisoner had to strip and once naked, jump around to dislodge any concealed object. He would end the 'dance' by bending over naked to expose his rectum to the warders.

(Deacon 1996, p.102)

However the themes on display in these two plays might be repeated in one form or another in other Fugard dramas, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is more overtly, if not stridently, political. The absence of a deliberate emphasis on personal relationships leaves the anti-apartheid message fully exposed, just like Sizwe who, in his anguish, removes all of his clothes and appeals to the audience:¹¹

What's happening in this world, good people? Who cares for who in this world? Who wants who?

Who wants me, friend? What's wrong with me? I'm a man. I've got eyes to see. I've got ears to listen when people talk. I've got a head to think good things. What's wrong with me?

(p. 182)

Basically, however good his thoughts, what is wrong with Sizwe is that he is black.

In *The Island*, after the remarkable opening mime,¹² the two prisoners are returned to their cell where they tend each other's wounds and then, as they have done every night of their incarceration, the two men play games of imagination to pass the time, much like Didi and Gogo. Last night Winston had described a film they had both seen and so tonight, John imagines a telephone call to Scott, the undertaker, where they also talk to an old friend Sky; places and characters taken directly from *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. This becomes a mini play-within-a-play, (in the next scene, when they are rehearsing *Antigone*, John uses the phrase 'this is theatre') and serves as a hors d'oeuvre to the larger in-house theatrical event yet to come. John, like Styles, improvises his own script that has 'Winston squirming with excitement', but, unlike *Antigone* when Winston exits in triumph, this piece of theatre descends into anti-climax as they are brought back to reality when John recalls their experience that day of

digging sand at the beach - a beach that was similar to the one he and his family visited with their 'buckets and spades' before being imprisoned.¹³ This piece of apparently innocent amusement, invented by John and Winston to bring some sense of sanity into their insane world, provides a subtle overture to the events that crystallise the circulatory structure of *The Island* wherein a play is presented in a theatre about a play being presented in a prison but where the audiences for both plays are the same.

Playwrights commonly use the device of a 'play within a play', perhaps most famously in *Hamlet*¹⁴ where the Prince decides: 'The play's the thing Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.' (II.2 602) It is unlikely that the conscience of the kings of the apartheid State is caught by the use of this device in *The Island* but, mainly thanks to the opening mime, what Fugard and his co-authors have so strikingly achieved in this short dramatic work, is to demonstrate how the theatre becomes the prison itself as the prison becomes a theatre.¹⁵ To prove this statement let us catalogue the experience of the audience as the play begins. As described in the quote from Peter Brook, the playgoers settle into their comfortable seats in the stalls to be entertained, but what is on the stage? Nothing more than two identically and drably dressed black men engaged in wordless activity, conducted at breakneck speed, so that in a short space time, as the actors are covered in sweat, the audience are steeped firstly in impatience, then irritation and bewilderment followed, we hope, by the understanding that this repetitive dumb show *is* the play and that they, the spectators, are on the island and witnessing these labours. As described above, when John and Winston are back in the cell, they turn that confined space into an acting area as they dramatise for themselves what is to be seen and experienced outside of their confine. This gives them some comfort - it is part of their survival tactic - but then, as the play develops, the two prisoners turn the whole of the prison into a theatre for the staging of their version of *Antigone* and, most crucially, they insinuate the audience in the theatre into the audience of guards and other prisoners that witness this show. The stage instruction at the beginning of Scene Four says that John '*addresses the audience*', both the real and the imaginary, as he begins, 'Captain Prinsloo, Hodoshe, Warders' and

then pauses before adding, '.... and Gentlemen!', the latter group to include his fellow prisoners, and you in the stalls. At the end of the play, the following stage instruction is given: *Tearing off his wig and confronting the audience as Winston, not Antigone*. Winston says to them, the audience in the theatre proper:

God of our Fathers! My land! My home!

Time waits no longer. I go now to my living death, because I
honoured those things to which honour belongs.

(p. 227)

but despite Winston's stirring words, we, the audience, are quickly taken back into the reality of the prison as the two men are, in mime, once more handcuffed together and returned to their imprisoned state, accompanied by a 'Greek' chorus of wailing sirens. The audience however is not imprisoned, but if the production they have seen has been true to the play's intent, they exit with some guilt and an understanding of the prison experience of which, for one and a half hours, they have been part. Reverting to *Hamlet*:

I have heard

That guilty creatures sitting at a play

Have by the very cunning of the scene

Been struck so to the soul that presently

They have proclaimed their malefactions.

(II.2 587)

The measure of guilt felt by the audience may depend on the extent to which they are fully cognisant with 'how and why' John and Winston came to be on Robben Island. Before the transportation to the prison, there would have been the arrest and trial, all completed according to the established apartheid legalities. The National Government, in an attempt to deal with internal disorder had, by stages, allowed the police to detain suspects without charging them, even in solitary confinement, for 12 days (1962), 180 days (1965) and by 1976, for an unlimited period without recourse to any other judicial authority. Once incarcerated in prison, the Prisons Act of 1959 made the unauthorised reporting

of conditions in prisons an offence. As Fugard wrote, "Sentenced to so many 'years' of nothing.... You are no more" (Nb, p.212), although history will reveal that Mandela and some of his fellow prisoners were destined to be very far from being 'no more'. Old Harry of the stone quarry, yet to be introduced, may not survive incarceration, but many did to become the rulers of tomorrow.

After sentence there was the horror of the journey to Robben Island, as described by Welcome Duro, who was to have played Azdak in the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*:

They travel down from P.E. to Cape Town in large vans. The prisoners are chained together in two's by their *outer* legs as they stand side-by-side - in other words they have almost got to skip when they want to move. Inside the truck there's a bucket for urinating and another of drinking-water. Two over-night stops in which they are locked in police cells at George and Swellendam. The chains are only taken off as they board the tug for the Island. In other words, when you want to urinate or shit during those three days, the other man goes with you.

(Nb, p.145)

As John and Winston recall how they came to Robben Island together, John asks Winston to remember the words that he said when they reached the jetty. "Heavy words, Winston. You looked back at the mountains.... 'Farewell Africa! I've never forgotten them. That was three years ago" (p. 215). From Robben Island one of the most beautiful cities in the world can be seen, so that day-by-day the prisoners can make the contrast between Cape Town and their habitat, much like those incarcerated in Alcatraz, where the towers of San Francisco are in view. However, on release, American ex-prisoners could stay in that city, but not the South Africans; they would likely be endorsed out to return to their hometown district, as would have been the case for Sizwe Bansi.

The relationship we observe in *The Island* is as close as that of Morris and Zachariah and so, in addition to a treatise on prison cruelty, we are presented with a major subtext that defines the 'brotherhood' of John and Winston. The diabolical task inflicted on them by the warder 'Hodoshe',¹⁶ the unending filling of holes in the sand dug by the other, so weighs upon the prisoners that at the

end of the day they confess that they hate each other, but this dialogue is followed by a pertinent stage instruction: *John puts a hand on Winston's shoulder. The brotherhood is intact...*(p. 198). However, following a familiar theme in Greek tragedy, this friendship is subjected to the severest of tests by an external authority, namely the news of John's early release. This is devastating for Winston, but it creates an equally devastating act of theatre. The anguish exhibited as Winston enacts the scenario of his cell companion's release to the delights of New Brighton, is aggravated as he concludes this recital by referring to old Harry who is serving life and who, in the quarry, has forgotten who he is. He has turned into the stone that he chisels and hammers day-by-day, just as Camus describes Sisyphus: 'A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself'. However, in the case of Sisyphus, who scorns the gods, he is aware of his wretched condition, but old Harry no longer recalls the gods of apartheid and is oblivious to what has been done to him (Camus 1975, p.108). Nevertheless, Fugard rescues the scene of Winston's anguish from total despair with an injection of hope - 'massively compassionate' - with a masterly stage direction that epitomises the Brutus poem, 'but somehow tenderness survives'. This direction enthuses the actor to portray what is written, but for the text reader, the hard work is already done:

John has sunk to the floor, helpless in the face of the other man's torment and pain. Winston almost seems to bend under the weight of the life stretching ahead of him on the Island. For a few seconds he lives in silence with his reality, then slowly straightens up. He turns and looks at John. When he speaks again, it is the voice of a man who has come to terms with his fate, massively compassionate.

(p. 221)

As referred to above, Fugard in his *Notebooks* wrote of the prisoners of Robben Island as people who 'are no more', but the humanity displayed by Winston at this agonising moment can only prompt the remark - 'how can you say of Winston that he is "no more"'?

This hope is reflected in Camus. After the sentence quoted above, Sisyphus has an hour of breathing space as he descends the hill: 'At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lairs of

the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock' (Camus 1975, p.109). This highlights the underlying significance of *The Island* - the prisoners - as represented by John and Winston, are stronger than the rock that is the fortress of Robben Island, thanks to the brotherhood between them. They are shackled together, metaphorically and in fact, as surely as the blood knot that brought Morris back to the pondok in Korsten and his brother, but despite the gesture of independence in their staging of *Antigone*, the play ends with them shackled together again as at the beginning of the play; brothers in an absurd world but with a difference - some hope.

Fugard's interest in Greek drama had an early beginning when, in the mid-1950s, he had a minor role in André Huguenet's production of *Oedipus Rex*.¹⁷ This early exposure to classical drama manifested itself in the Serpent Players' production of *Antigone*, and his own works, *Orestes* (1971) and *Dimetos* (1975) but, more importantly, with 'the play within the play' in *The Island*. No doubt the production of *Antigone* ¹⁸ that was staged by the prisoners at Robben Island in real life would have needed to faithfully follow Sophocles, but in Fugard's hands, the version we are given is directly relevant to 20th Century South Africa.¹⁹ With splendid irony, the performance begins with Creon (John) addressing the prison authorities in the audience and calling upon them to see him, not as a King, but as their servant who measures the success of the state, over which he presides, by 'the fatness and happiness of its people' (p. 224). Antigone is found guilty because she has broken the law, which Creon insists is to 'protect you', but in South Africa the law only protects the privileged minority, the fat and the happy, and certainly not the prisoners of Robben Island. Winston, as Antigone, could easily represent a figure of ridicule, wearing false breasts, a wig made of rope and a prison blanket as a skirt, but as the play reaches its climax, she stands tall in classical mode, like Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia trial, and articulates her indignation at the oppression of the State. He/she counters the image of the all-powerful law of the State by reference to laws that are made by God, but these are no protection and she is found guilty and sent to the Island, described by Winston, '...to my grave, my everlasting prison, condemned alive to solitary death' (p.227).

Albie Sachs, a white South African Jewish lawyer and now a Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, was a leading member of the ANC. He was imprisoned in the early 1960s and lost the sight of one eye and his right arm in a car bombing in 1988, instigated by the South African security forces. His imprisonment provided the inspiration for another prison play that although of a very different structure to *The Island*, is equally effective in displaying the cruel and evil face of apartheid. *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs* was written by British playwright David Edgar and first presented in 1978. In the introduction to the volume including this work, Edgar writes that his play is a social-realist piece and not agit-prop. This is achieved by a repetition of short scenes of Sachs in prison in low-key and unemotional language. The essence is to show how relentless is the insidious effect of being kept in solitary confinement, as Edgar demonstrates by involving the audience in the experience:

But as I think of it, I am aware, increasingly, the real problem is to show just what it's like, in isolation, the disintegration, and the horror of it all, to people who are not alone, because they are together, watching, as an audience, my play.

And then, I think.

Perhaps the best thing is, not in the play, but in the audience, for them to see, for me to come out, to the audience, and say, my day is sitting staring at a wall, now I am going to make you sit and stare, you mustn't talk, or read your programmes, look at other people. For two minutes, you must sit and stare.

And then, perhaps, they'd know.

Just what it's like.

(Edgar 1997, p.48/49)

In *The Island*, John and Winston derive fortitude from the fact that there are two of them. They can provide comfort for each other, however badly treated, but with *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs*, the prisoner, who is never charged but detained under a succession of 90 days orders, is not ill-treated - but he is alone; his pain is just as real as that seen on Robben Island, just as debilitating and despairing. As Sachs says, '... part of the idea, of course, is quite precisely not to let you feel a human being' (Ibid, p.58). This is repeated in *A Lesson from*

Aloes where Steve is psychologically tortured like Sachs, leading both of them into exile.

Questions of survival in these two collaborative plays are dealt with in the last chapter but, as already mentioned, these two works are amongst the most politically explicit of the plays chosen for this research, and they preface the concluding analytical study of *My Children! My Africa!* where the political content is also clear for all to see.

NOTES

¹ As a result of the 1952 campaign against passes, the Government enacted The Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act 1952 that re-named pass books as reference books. On the other hand, for white South Africans, the identity document initiated in 1971 and containing details of driving and gun licences etc. was known as the 'Book of Life' (Branford 1980, p.36).

² A black theatre organisation in Johannesburg.

³ Work-seeker – an evocative title. In Nigeria during the 1960s and 1970s (and no doubt currently applicable) the 'profession' of 'job applicant' was widely recognized.

⁴ As Camus wrote of the suffering of Sisyphus, '...there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labour (Camus 1975, p. 107).

⁵ In Harwood's book, Fugard writes that this was the first public performance in a black township but the Dennis Walder edited OUP edition of *Township Plays* of the year 2000 and the John Read Bibliography refer to a performance on the 23 August 1973 at St. Stephen's Hall. This appears to show that Fugard was inaccurate with September 1974 but in an article in the *New Theatre Quarterly* of November 1992, Walder refers to a first performance in New Brighton on the 23 August 1974. However it is not the date that is important, it is the reaction that this performance engendered, whenever it was.

⁶ In particular, Marxist critic Hilary Seymour (Seymour 1980). She suggests that because Styles takes photographs for pass books he is capitalising on the very existence of apartheid which she expands into a general critique on the liberal inadequacies in the play – arguments that, for this reader, fail to convince.

⁷ Even in the year 2005, where the Government is pursuing a vigorous 'Black empowerment' programme and, on the surface, racism is still a constant subject for discussion in society, there is still a view that the divisions in South Africa today are substantially about class and not colour.

⁸ The word 'spook' comes from the Dutch but according to *A Dictionary of South African English*, it seems to have originated in South Africa (Branford 1980, p. 274).

⁹ These remarks were applied to the Transkei during a production of the play there in October 1976 and this led to the detention of John Kani and Winston Ntshona. They spent two weeks in solitary confinement, only being released and deported after protests were made around the world.

¹⁰ According to Brian Astbury, during performances at The Space Theatre the crumpling of the hat was represented on stage by the actor squeezing an orange. (Personal interview. February 2001)

¹¹ The relationship here is not between the actors representing Fugard's characters seen on the stage but the black actor in person and the ticket holders in the auditorium.

¹² In a pretty way with words, a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 11 February 2000 is headed, 'Doing mime'.

¹³ A devastating piece of irony to contrast the pain and degradation attached to the Robben Island sand with that used to fill the children's' buckets.

¹⁴ These references would have been familiar to some of the inmates of the island because, according to Anthony Sampson, 'If the Robben Islanders had a common culture it was not the Bible or the Koran, but Shakespeare' (Sampson 1999, p.233).

¹⁵ An acute discussion on this is provided in a 1987 article by Albert Wertheim (Wertheim 1987, pp.245/252).

¹⁶ The play was first entitled *Die Hodoshe Span*. Hodoshe means 'carrion fly' and was used as a nickname for the chief warder on Robben Island.

¹⁷ It was this experience that was the inspiration for Fugard's newest (2004) play, *Entrances and Exits*. The two characters in this are 'Playwright' (Fugard as a young man) and Huguenet, often referred to as the Afrikaner Laurence Olivier, who laments his failure to use the theatre to liberate his people from the 'shackles that the verkramppte (ultra-conservative) dominees and politicians were forging around our minds and souls' (Unpublished script, p.26). This mantle was then assumed by Fugard who, rather more successfully, used his theatre to try and break the bonds that bound up the South African dispossessed. Huguenet was only concerned with a 'liberating' theatre for Afrikaners. In an interview published on the web by 'Tonight' (Western Cape) on 25 May 2004, Fugard said: 'Looking back, I realise that André's vision of theatre was ultimately too limited. It did not encompass all South Africans. The only way forward, then as now, is by inclusion; by having a vision that truly embraces our multicultural identity. A theatre for the Afrikaner was really not enough. It was not what South Africa needed then and not what it needs now.'

¹⁸ Where Mandela played Creon. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela wrote: 'It was Antigone who symbolised our struggle; she was, in her own way, a freedom fighter, for she defied the law on the ground that it was unjust' (Mandela 1999, p.541).

¹⁹ *Antigone* has been adapted to many other political scenarios. In 2003 a version by Conall Morrison was set in the Middle East and it was used by Brecht to protest against Nazism, but the most famous 20th Century version was Jean Anouilh's well-known allegory, which was performed in Vichy France during the German occupation. There is a Turkish version published in 1973 where Haemon is championing the cause of exploited cobalt-miners, and at a festival in Durban, sponsored by the Theatre Council of Natal, a South African adaptation of Anouilh's *Antigone* was presented under the title *Antigone in '71*.

SIX

Between me and my country

Nevertheless, in this concert, one Ideological State apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music: it is so silent! This is the School.

(Louis Althusser *Lenin and Philosophy*.)

The lessons offered in *"Master Harold"...and the boys* and *A Lesson from Aloes* are presented in domestic arenas but with the next play, *My Children! My Africa!*, we observe education in an actual classroom, the venue for Louis Althusser's concert. In his concept, the dominant role played by education is achieved by taking children from every class at infant-school age and then, during the subsequent years when they are at their most vulnerable, the State apparatus 'drums into' these children 'a certain amount of "know-how" wrapped in the ruling ideology...' (Althusser 1971, p.155). However, in undeveloped countries, all classes are not provided with education: the universality of Althusser's system does not apply to their world. Despite this, parents in Africa strive to ensure some level of education for their children, as is illustrated by the following item of fancy. The school of yesterday, before the age of the biro, presents an image of serried ranks of scarred desks each with its own pot of ink. According to the commercial agent involved in the importation of Quink ink into Nigeria during the 1960s and 1970s, more ink was used in that country than in England, where clearly the quantum of education provided was many times more than in Nigeria. The explanation for this anomaly was evidently that many Nigerian mothers believed that a spoonful of ink given to each child with breakfast, advanced their learning capacity, hence this extraordinary market. However frivolous, this story is an exotic indicator of the value African parents placed on securing some education for their children, on whatever terms.

In South Africa it was primarily ethnicity that determined the availability and quality of education. There is discrimination within education, to a greater or lesser extent, within all societies, and even within the racial dimension, South Africa is not the only example. In the 20th Century there has been segregated

education in some States in the USA, and in the 19th century there is the example of the oft-reproduced 'Minute on Indian Education' by Thomas Babington Macaulay (Ashcroft 1997, p.428/430). This acknowledged that the British could not educate everyone in India, any more than they did on home soil, and therefore only a small minority of Indians would be afforded the privilege, but only to be trained to act as interpreters between the mass of the population and the colonial rulers. These colonial rulers used education to perpetuate dominance and it can be shown that even in colonies now independent, education: 'is perhaps the most insidious and in some ways the most cryptic of colonialist survivals.... (Ibid, p. 425), as was the case in South Africa, where discrimination in the field of education had a long history.

For Africans and Coloureds, until the advent of the National Government in 1948, education had generally been in the hands of Christian missionaries; according to the 1951 Census, 51 per cent of Africans and 91 per cent of Coloureds were Christian. In 1928, forty-eight different missionary organisations employed 1700 white teachers, doctors etc, with 30,000 African clergy, lay preachers and teachers, and by 1935 there were over 300,000 African pupils. However, nearly all teachers in the majority of mission schools were Africans who were themselves not particularly well educated and they were teaching a syllabus prepared to suit the education of white children. In particular, the view of South African history was that of the white man.

However, the majority of African children during the apartheid era were concerned with finding any reasonable form of education, whatever the bias. In 1946, the government was spending twenty times more per head on the education of white children compared with black. As the policy of the new National Government crystallised, Verwoerd was reluctant to leave the education of black children in the hands of the missions who, in any case, could not cope with the rising demand from a larger African population. In addition, as the economy expanded, there was more demand for black workers who were at least semi-educated and literate so, by the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the central government took over all public African education. In 1960 this was extended to Coloured and Asian children. This education was expanded but

tightly controlled and still strictly segregated; by 1979, 3.5 million black children were at school but even with this expansion, expenditure for whites was still ten times more per capita than for the black child. The object of the Bantu Education system was to stifle ambition and ensure that the only training available was for entry to an unskilled or labouring class. When introducing the act in 1953, Dr Verwoerd's blunt message included these words:

I just want to remind the Honourable Members of Parliament that if the native in South Africa is being taught to expect that he will lead his adult life under the policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake. The native must not be subject to a school system which draws him away from his own community, and misleads him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze.

(Goddard 1992, p. 35)

The disparity in education, and the results of this policy, are fully evident in *My Children! My Africa!*, where, unlike the opening silences of *Blood Knot* and *Boesman and Lena* or the passivity when we first view the Bezuidenhout's backyard, this play opens to noise: 'Everybody is speaking at the same time' (p.155). This is appropriate as the classroom at the Zolile High School, the main setting for this play, has become a chamber where a vigorous debate on gender politics is in progress. Isabel, captain of the visiting team from the whites-only Camdeboo Girls High School is opposing the motion: '*That in view of the essential physical and psychological differences between men and women, there should be correspondingly different educational syllabuses for the two sexes.*' Her opposite number, captain of the Zolile team is Thami, the prize pupil and favourite of the third character on stage, the schoolmaster referred to as Mr M. All of the school voting audience is comprised of black pupils, but much to Mr M's delight, Isabel wins the day. This leads to Mr M entering her and Thami into an inter-school literary competition, but before the date for this is reached, Zolile High School is subjected to a student boycott. Mr M does not support this action and so, to try and bring this to an end, he gives the police the names of the political action committee that he believes is organising the unrest. As a result, and despite the best efforts of Thami to save him, Mr M is murdered

by the mob, Isabel is left with a mixture of bewildered despair and hope, while Thami leaves the country to join 'the movement'.

The play was first performed on 27th June 1989 at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg but it is set in 1984, inspired by an actual incident in the Eastern Cape where a school teacher, who was thought to be an informer, was killed, necklaced by a burning car tyre. The first Cape Town run began at the Baxter Theatre on 4 October and later that year it was presented in New York and in 1990 at the National Theatre in London. On both overseas occasions Fugard's daughter Lisa played Isabel. Fugard's plays continue to be produced all over the world at regular intervals, particularly in the United States, and at such venues as Wiltshire in the UK and Vienna, Austria, where *My Children! My Africa!* was offered during April 2002 and March 2003 respectively.

This play did not require the long gestation that Fugard encountered when writing *A Lesson from Aloes* - it was not a case of creating a story from characters he had met in the past. A review in *The Eastern Province Herald* by Kin Bentley on the London debut of Lisa Fugard, provides one source for this play:

Fugard said the play was largely inspired by his daughter. "I think to a large extent it came from watching Lisa dealing with the problems of growing up in South Africa - the question of white guilt, the accident of a different colour skin and the whole dilemma of the country....".

However, what is more likely to have been the main inspiration for this drama was the realization, in the late 1980s, that the end of apartheid might be in sight and that he should be 'Scripting Apartheid's Demise',¹ with the need to record that this demise might be accompanied by further acts of violence. In the Foreword to the selection of plays including *My Children! My Africa!*, used for this chapter, Fugard wrote: '*My Children! My Africa!* was written out of the darkest decade in my country's history. It was a time when the prophecies of a bloodbath seemed to be coming true, when to have any hope in the future seemed the height of idiocy' (p.vii) or, in the words of Mr M: 'Yes! The clocks are ticking, my friends. History has got a strict timetable. If we're not careful we might be remembered as the country where everybody arrived too late' (p. 184).

Politics are in the fabric of all Fugard's principal works, but nowhere is the weave as dense as in *My Children! My Africa!* This play represents a turning point in his writing, as he directly contributes to the campaign to try and avert South Africa from arriving 'too late'. Ian Steadman, in a 1989 newspaper article, describes this moment as follows:

It has been fashionable in recent years to distinguish between cultural work which domesticates (showing how people should cope with things as they are) and cultural work which liberates (showing people how things can and should be changed). Much of Fugard's previous work has been (somewhat unfairly) pigeonholed in the former category. With this play he takes his audience forcefully into a symbolic debate which is not merely liberal but liberating.

(Steadman 1989, p.22)²

Steadman suggests that for Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!* was a departure from the past, and it is clear that this play provided a more noticeably stronger 'liberating' voice than in any of his previous works, but the cultural debate with audiences on the subject of the evils of apartheid is there in earlier dramas, even if the discussion is less heated than in this play. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* prompted the audience at St Stephen's Hall in New Brighton to become engaged in a debate more real than symbolic and the audience reaction, when Hally spits into Sam's face, was a concrete example of articulating what they thought should be done - even if in most cases this amounted to a call for violence to be met with violence. In all of Fugard's apartheid plays there are elements of a liberating force and most of the characters are aware of what should be changed, even if powerless to do anything about it. Lena and Isabel find some form of release but this force may not prevail for Hally and Gladys. Nevertheless, Steadman's point is well made and pertinent to the more didactic Fugard at work in this play.

The recent political history, prompting Fugard to be 'scripting apartheid's demise', was principally concerned with the last blows in a conflict that had been going on, in one form or another, for decades. Unlike other freedom struggles elsewhere in the world, in South Africa's case never has a more powerful modern industrialised state been overthrown from within, or at least

mostly from within - a case of self-emancipation. External pressures and economic sanctions clearly had a major impact, the calling in of the Chase Manhattan loan in 1985 being one instance, but in the main the apartheid regime was finally defeated by non-violent action within the country, action in which culture played its part. Gramsci considered that compared with a 'War of Manoeuvre' (a coercive frontal attack), the 'War of Position' (the gradual undermining of civil society which he allied, in part, with his concept of a 'Passive Revolution'), usually plays the decisive role.

From a purely political viewpoint, it can now be seen with hindsight that non-violent action, a passive revolution, was the only internal option that had any real chance of success. There was little possibility that urban terrorism would have succeeded and indeed, the sabotage that did take place, particularly in the 1960s, was aimed at targets to create most publicity rather than to kill white people - although the bomb planted by John Harris at the Johannesburg railway station in 1964 did kill civilians.³ Black townships were well sealed off from the rest of the country; they were not integrated within the oppressor's locations nor was there a maze of alleyways suitable for guerrilla warfare as in Algiers or some of the Balkan urbanisations, but of more relevance is the fact that militarily the two opponents were totally mismatched. The South African National Government had the most powerful security force on the continent of Africa. By the early 1980s, there were 180,000 men fully operational with a reserve force of half a million troops from the all-embracing conscription requirement for white South African males and this impressive display of manpower was backed up by a considerable armoury of military equipment; 875 aeroplanes, 200 helicopters, 260 tanks, 1,300 armoured cars, etc., etc. In addition to this military muscle, and as this thesis details, the regime had for many decades set up a rigorous system of control in the form of apartheid. Opponents of this military force were rigidly constrained by the Pass system, direction of labour, and other instruments of petty apartheid, while the National Government's State Security Service had grown into one of the most efficient (and brutal) in the world. All of this meant that, by the 1980s, South Africa could be said to have become defined as a National Security State (Alden, 1998. p.6), employing the experiences of counter-revolutionary activity in South America, colonial Malaya,

South Vietnam, etc. They were also able to observe activities on their own doorstep in Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia, the latter being used to some extent as a training ground for the South African Defence Force - the arena for Anthony Akerman's powerful play *Somewhere on the Border* and the scene of the nightmare that haunts Gideon in Fugard's first post-apartheid play, *Playland*.

Against this military muscle it is not surprising that the armed resistance, despite the support of the Soviet Union, was so ineffectual - described by Joseph Lelyveld as: 'one of the world's least successful "liberation movements"' (Zunes 1999. p.145). The most effective elements within the campaign of non-violent action were strikes and boycotts. The two-day general strike in 1974 appears to have terrified the Government as it brought the nation to a virtual standstill: 800,000 people refused to go to work and 400,000 students boycotted classes. Rent boycotts were also extremely effective: by September 1986 it was estimated that 60% of the black population was not paying rent. Allied to these strikes, boycotts and demonstrations was the growth of active community institutions within the Townships which gave moral and practical support to the black inhabitants, including the creation of culture clubs and the publication and distribution of local newsletters and pamphlets. In the countryside, protests such as those against cattle-dipping brought women together, creating an indomitable force, as Lauretta Ngcobo's novel *And They Didn't Die* so graphically describes. These strikes and other demonstrations, labelled by the National Government as 'unrest', were hidden, as far as possible, from the white population by the strict imposition of censorship in newspapers and other media. Generally the black people knew what was happening - they were part of it - but white South Africans were mostly left in ignorance. The government attempted to impose a blanket of silence over the whole affair, which in many cases meant that the literature of the time, where there was only a limited censorship, was the only source of information available to the white population. André Brink expresses it well:

....a volcanic explosion of creativity in the country. Painters, sculptors, photographers, poets, dramatists, fiction writers, singers, dancers, all of them were drawn into a massive cultural movement

that mobilised the masses into resistance by writing the history of their time in the form of fiction.

(Brink, 1996. p.138)

Recognising this background, Fugard has structured and styled *My Children! My Africa!* in a very different way to his earlier apartheid plays in an attempt to enhance the more polemical nature of this work as he wrote his version of 'the history of their time'. In the other plays, with the exception of Styles' monologue, the characters reveal themselves through the medium of the play's dialogue, but in *My Children! My Africa!* the background and thought processes of the *dramatis personae* are mainly explicated through a series of self-revelations projected directly at the audience; what Fugard refers to as 'confidences' rather than soliloquies. Some critics suggest that most of Fugard's considerable theatrical art is devoted to the monologues to the detriment of the rest of the play, and Gerald Weales considered that this work (and *Playland*, first performed in 1992) 'seem less substantial, less complex than earlier ones' (Weales 1993, p.513). To some extent this criticism is justified. Certainly this work does not have the subtlety of *A Lesson from Aloes* nor the careful sequential passage to a climax that is seen in "*Master Harold*" ...and the boys, but the structure Fugard has adopted suits this more didactic work, resulting in one of his most powerful plays that reveals a deep concern for the tragedy involved in the provision of education for the oppressed and for the events of the 1980s that saw an escalation of 'black-on-black' violence.

The first monologue in Act One, which is Isabel's, gives a detailed portrait of her background, of her view of the location and her reactions to the first visit to the Zolile High School. Scene Four gives Mr M the same opportunity to speak at the audience and tell something of his life and aspirations. By Scene Six it is Thami's turn. Act Two continues the sequence of monologues, the first of which places Mr M directly into the conflict on the streets outside his classroom and in Scene Three he has a long speech confessing to being an informer. This continues with further reminiscences about his past, stressing the importance of his epiphany at the Wapadsburg Pass leading to his despair at the famine in

Ethiopia. The play ends with Isabel at the Wapadsburg Pass revealing how the events since the classroom debate have changed her life and her future.

As one of his most explicitly political plays, Fugard decided that unlike '*Master Harold*'... *and the boys*, *My Children! My Africa!* must first be shown in his own country - hence his words (that appeared in the *Time* magazine of 10th July, 1989) 'This one is between me and my country.' To quote Stephen Gray:

Nevertheless, Fugard the man of provocative stances meant it: South African audiences should have this play first ... and for sound, practical reasons. Apart from the fact that *My Children! My Africa!* will not play quite the same way out of here, Fugard knows there is a hard, tough core in the South African skull that loves a hefty moral pummelling, and that night after night guilt-ridden, unrepentant masses will stream in to their community cockpit for something they are not getting in the world outside. And like any good Calvinist preacher, Fugard knows just how to dole out the punishment accurately. He also knows that South Africans are no longer impressed by their plays appearing at the National or on Broadway first.

(Gray 1990, p. 25)

Further, according to Gray, the 1989 audience at the Market Theatre was predominantly black, drawn by:

both promise and threat: Tired of the ambiguous pussyfooting of much western stage fare, yet disillusioned by the witless and facile agit-prop of much South African committed theatre, audiences were now very ready for a mammoth work that steered between the two, using the strengths of both, leaving nothing out.

(Ibid, 1990, p. 26).

Although the play was created in the late eighties, the context of the work reflects events during the school boycotts of 1984. Mary Benson wrote:

Athol forged *My Children! My Africa!* from within the cauldron of the violence in the Eastern Cape. 'Despite its huge success at the Market', he said in a letter, 'I still wake up in the middle of the night and lie in the dark agonizing as to whether I gave Mr M, Thami and Isabel the life they deserve.'

At the core of the story was the bitter conflict between black youths with their enraged demand for LIBERATION BEFORE EDUCATION and a black schoolmaster who warned them to 'Be careful!' He

symbolised Athol's passionately held credo: 'Don't scorn words. They are sacred! Magical!'

(Benson 1997. p. 134)

Two of Fugard's other apartheid plays are more directly concerned with lessons and teaching than *My Children! My Africa!* The philosophy of Paulo Freire is clearly evident in the learning process revealed in *Master Harold!... and the boys* and in the other play involved with learning, where the word 'Lesson' is part of the title, all of the characters learn something; Piet Bezuidenhout, for instance, is painfully instructed in the art of survival. Nevertheless, black schools and black school children were scenes of considerable political importance in the anti-apartheid struggle, particularly in the 1980s. With Sam and Hally 'there was a hell of a lot of teaching going on', but this is not the case in *My Children! My Africa!* The knowledge that is being disseminated in Classroom Number One at Zolile High School is principally concerned with the self-education course each of the three characters embarks upon, so that, rather than a seat of learning, this classroom becomes the arena for debating, not the equality of the sexes, but the efficacy of the word versus the gun. It also represents a battleground where each of the three protagonists is fighting their own separate and yet complementary wars, searching to understand what is happening to each of them as the play moves on to its tragic and yet quietly optimistic ending. All of their battles concern the political realities of the time: Isabel's to try and understand, Thami's to rebel, and for Mr M to reconcile his passionate and romantic liberal character with what is going on outside of his classroom. In addition to a scene of conflict, Fugard sees these three examples of self-revelation as journeys. In an interview with Marcia Blumberg he says: '....there are three very different journeys involved...no one of these journeys is more important than the other and I wanted them to be treated with equal value' (Blumberg 1993, pp. 244/5). In the event he was not successful in this regard because, as is revealed in the analysis that follows, the paradoxical and complex Mr M is considerably more important in the construct of this play than Thami and Isabel.

These personal crusades are conducted both in, and away from the classroom on stage. During the extensive monologues other locales are in evidence: Mr M's room, Isabel's white world, and for Thami, his other 'school':

We don't need Zolile classrooms any more. We now know what they really are - traps which have been carefully set to catch our minds, our souls. No, good people. We have woken up at last. We have found another school.... the streets, the little rooms, the funeral parlours of the location...

(p. 208)

Whatever the fate of the characters on stage, whether they are engaged in journeys or wars, in this play, more than with any of his others, Fugard is occupied in presenting a learning process directly to the audience. The crucial monologues are delivered across the footlights, the stage directions say Isabel '*speaks*' and Mr M '*talks*' and - stage directions again - there is a '*Wild round of applause from the audience*' when Thami stands to make his closing remarks during the debate. Isabel, on the other hand, receives '*polite applause*'. Personal memories of play performances are vague on this point; in some productions pre-recorded applause must have been used but Fugard clearly intends that where possible, Mr M should organise the audience so that they do respond and enter into the action. According to Stephen Gray:

Votes are taken. The audience is forced to take sides too, for Fugard uses the Market Theatre ushers - strapping youths in shorts too short and striped ties stopping at the sternum - as unruly hecklers, Thami's classmates. Their interjections from all corners heat up the battle to violent pitch.

What is this but every South African's nightmare? Being caught up in the crossfire of your own most basic choices.

(Gray 1990, p. 28)

Another view on audience reaction when the play premiered at the Market Theatre is given in an essay by Nicholas Visser:

Standing ovations are customarily directed towards playwrights and are usually reserved for opening nights. Subsequent standing ovations, if there are any, are typically directed towards the actors. Neither convention accounts for the impassioned standing ovations

that nightly accompanied the first South African runs of *My Children! My Africa!* In a curious way these ovations were directed toward the audience itself: those applauding so enthusiastically were responding to what they saw to be an affirmation of their own social and political positions and values, which had come under increasing pressure through all the 1980s.

He goes on to say, in a somewhat superficial jibe, that after this opening, reviews of the play were generally very favourable and that the:

... playwright, the audience, and the reviewers all seemed to share in a ritual celebration of their own intrepid righteousness. In short, the play made them feel good about themselves.

(Visser 1993, p. 486)

These comments need to be carefully interpreted. If Stephen Gray is correct and most of the audience for the first production at the Market Theatre were black, Visser's view is rather negated, although it is no doubt perceptive as applying to the white liberals in the theatre. With a majority black audience, the result of the debate, where Thami is defeated, has further ramifications if it is hypothesised that it is this audience that has provided the voters. Mr M says to Thami: 'But the fact that you didn't succeed is what makes me really happy. I am very proud of our audience. In my humble opinion they are the real winners this afternoon' (p.160). Nicholas Visser did not believe that the first Market Theatre audience were genuinely engaged in any debate with the playwright, symbolically or otherwise, but Fugard's objectives were to provide three examples of self-revelation, three characters discovering themselves on stage, reflecting both the influence of Brecht and that the audience was in fact a Brechtian one, acknowledging *My Children! My Africa!* as a 'Learning Play'. In an introductory note to *The Measures Taken and other Lehrstücke*, Brecht wrote:

Briefly the aristotelian play is essentially static; its task is to show the world as it is. The learning play (*Lehrstück*) is essentially dynamic; its task is to show the world as it changes (and also how it may be changed).

(Brecht 2001)

Precisely the point made by Ian Steadman in 1989. The world is changing for all three of Fugard's characters, but the extent to which they can and do influence these changes is seriously limited.

After this scrutiny of the audience, it is time to move to an in-depth view of the principal players, starting with Isabel. It is difficult to see, in Freire's terms, how a teacher/student, student/teacher relationship can be established when the teaching arena is seen as a battleground; as already emphasised, the political reality has so invaded Zolile High School that no really worthwhile teaching is going on, even though the three people on stage are learning lessons. The ones that Thami is subjected to are hard ones, and for Mr M they are tragic, but it could be said that it is Isabel who learns most during her personal crusade. Although she is from a sheltered white liberal background, early on in the play she demonstrates that she is aware of the racial inequality in South Africa when she uses this point as the clinching argument during the inter-school debate, but the true early sense of 'who she is' is provided by the monologue that comprises the whole of Scene Two. Once again, as in *A Lesson from Aloes*, there is some concern with names and nomenclature. Zolile High School is in what most everyone calls 'the location' but this does have a name, an evocative and calculated choice, Brakwater; not a particularly 'sweet' spot! As far as the white people are concerned, they would like to 'relocate' the location, 'moving it to where it can't be seen' (p.169). Fanon pictures this well:

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settler's town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage-cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about.

... the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other,....

(Fanon 1990, p.30)

However, Isabel may be destined to bridge the divide between Fanon's white town and the native village. For her, the location is on the 'edge of her life', not something she has thought about. Now, however, her involvement with Thami and Mr M is going to require her to think about it, and the battle to extend her horizons beyond the restrictions imposed by her white liberal background is about to begin; Brakwater and its people are no longer on the edge of her life. When she visits the Zolile High School, she starts to realise that not everywhere is as 'safe' as her own environment:

When I stood up in front of those black matric. pupils in Number One Classroom it was a very different story. I wasn't at home or in my dad's shop or in my school or any of the other safe places in my life. I was in Brakwater! It was *their* school. It was *their* world. I was the outsider and I was being asked to prove myself. Standing there in front of them like that I felt... exposed! ...in a way that has never happened to me before.

She continues:

You see I finally worked out what happened to me in the classroom. I discovered a new world! I've always thought about the location as just a sort of embarrassing back yard to our neat and proper little white world, where our maids and our gardeners and our delivery boys went at the end of the day. But it's not. It's a whole world of its own with its own life that has nothing to do with us.

But it is also a little.... what's the word? disconcerting! You see, it means that what I thought was out there for me.... No, it's worse than that! It's what I was made to believe was out there for me.... the ideas, the chances, the people... 'specially the people!.... all of that is only a small fraction of what it could be.

(pp. 172/3)

This is an important speech that reveals Isabel as a thoughtful exception to the hidebound individuals in her world. As the action progresses, the changes in Isabel are manifested in the respect she has for Mr M; after his death she refers to him as: '...one of the most beautiful human beings I have ever known and his death is the ugliest thing I have ever known' (p.230), but more important is her relationship with Thami. Despite being of the same age, Isabel is not an Ethel. At eighteen, the phantom figure in *Blood Knot* becomes engaged to Stoffel, who works at Boetie's garage and plays in her brother's team - at fullback. Isabel is

still at school with no hint in the play of any boy-friends - except Thami. There is however a more major difference between these two girls. Ethel, as far as can be ascertained, is an Afrikaner of the 1960s, a time when their hegemony appeared politically unassailable. Isabel is an intelligent third generation English schoolgirl of middle-class stock, reaching adolescence in the 1980s when the ascendancy of the white battalions in South Africa was no longer so assured, and it is these facts that add such poignancy to her association with Thami. However, there is no obvious inference in the play about the powder keg that could be exploded if their association was to become other than between friends.

As already discussed in *Blood Knot*, sexual relationships between black men and white women formed one of apartheid's most sacred shibboleths. In an article 'Athol Fugard and the Liberal Dilemma', Derek Cohen raises this subject:

Not once, even in the fulsome soliloquies, is the sexual relationship between them brought up. Isabel could as well be a boy as a girl. So single-mindedly does Fugard direct his drama to its crashing finale, that he omits what is truly the most explosive and devastating and obvious issue which the relationship includes by definition.

(Cohen 1991, p. 13)

Frank Rich, in *The New York Times*, suggests that in this regard Fugard is acting as a chaperone: 'afraid to leave the two kids alone in a room, for fear they might get out of his tight control' (Rich 1989). Cohen contends that the use of the word 'fucking' by Isabel when describing the country she lives in is an indication of 'a kind of sexual awareness' (Ibid, p. 14), but that this awareness is not revealed in the play; the erotic potential of an adolescent boy and girl is simply ignored. However, this is not the only reading. Isabel bears no resemblance to the feckless Veronica in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*, but clearly a strong friendship develops between Thami and Isabel, and there are hints that, in other circumstances, this friendship could have blossomed into something more intimate. During the debate Thami plays the part of the macho black man, but once Mr M leaves the two of them on their own, his true character begins to be revealed. The stage instruction reads: 'they are both a little self-conscious' (p. 161) but by the end of this meeting: 'they both want to

prolong the conversation' (p. 169). When Mr M suggest to Isabel that she team up with Thami in the literary competition: '*Her eyes brighten with anticipation*' (p. 176) and '*Her joy is enormous*' (p. 177). Are these stage instructions an indication of being 'just good friends?' When Isabel asks Thami to meet her family he says: 'Me. Why? Are they starting to get nervous.' (p. 199). The picture given of Isabel's parents, the small town chemist and the nervous mother, makes it unlikely that they envisage their daughter in a sexual relationship with this unknown black boy, but this remark shows that Thami clearly knows what is at stake. In addition, Isabel herself recognises a possible problem when she tells Mr M: 'being eighteen years old today is a pretty complicated business as far as we're concerned' (p. 187). To learn how to be a good loser (at hockey), bachelor Mr M advises marriage, but if the underlying sexual tension in the relationship between Isabel and Thami is not clear, it must be fairly certain that the idea of marriage between his two protégées never for a moment enters into the thinking of the conservative Mr M. Perhaps overall not a very convincing case - it is to be hoped that both the youngsters are bright enough to avoid reaching the tragic stage of the lovers in *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*, but if one of the crucial and optimistic themes of the play is that normal intercourse between black and white is possible in a future South Africa, then it seems reasonable to have attempted to determine whether there is any sexual chemistry at work that might have coloured the eventual fates of Isabel and Thami.

Ultimately Isabel achieves the understanding she battles for. Her liberal stance may be naive but her new experiences have made false the Saturday chats with her father's assistant, Samuel, and her final promise to the memory of Mr M can be seen as truly genuine, reflecting what she has understood about his sacrifice and the problems that Thami has faced all his life:

I am going to make Anela Myalatya a promise. You gave me a little lecture once about wasted lives.... how much of it you'd seen, how much you hated it, how much you didn't want that to happen to Thami and me. I sort of understood what you meant at the time. Now, I most certainly do. Your death has seen to that. My promise to you is that I am going to try as hard as I can, in every way that I can, to see that it doesn't happen to me. I am going to try my best to make my

life useful in the way yours was. I want you to be proud of me. After all, I am one of your children, you know.... The future is still ours, Mr M.

(p. 237/8)

Compared with Isabel, Thami's schooling is very different. Her privileged background means that she is more than one step ahead of Thami as they seek to achieve their aspirations but, in addition, because of the inequality of resources directed at black education, Thami needs to work harder, imbibe more ink than Isabel to realise his ambitions. During his early years he had an insatiable appetite for learning, but that has changed because, according to Thami, the classroom has been invaded by politics. As Thami explains to Isabel: 'I've told you before: sitting in a classroom doesn't mean the same thing to me that it does to you. That classroom is a political reality in my life ... it's a part of the whole political system we're up against...' (p.202). At a later stage in the play when he is debating different concepts of freedom, Thami says: 'There is no comparison between that and the total denial of our freedom by the white government. They have been forcing on us an inferior education to keep us permanently suppressed' (p. 215).

The history of black and Coloured education amply justifies Thami's contention, and this background needs to be appreciated when considering the character of Thami as presented in the play. The interaction between the three individuals on stage does not have the psychological intensity of *A Lesson from Aloes* or the elements of humour in "*Master Harold*".... and *the boys*. Frank Rich, writing in the *New York Times*, considers that this script is under-written when the characters on stage speak to each other, but he applauds Thami's speech, that comprises the whole of Act One Scene Six, as the most ambitious piece of writing in the play that, just like Styles' monologue, could almost be performed in isolation from the rest of the play (Rich 1989, p.19). Thami's monologue is in stark contrast with the somewhat muted portrait that is presented when he is a member of the ensemble. He makes a good show of leading the debate for his school, but this is really not an important issue for him and he can afford to be light-hearted and flippant. His concerns are with the plight of the black people in his country, not about the equality or otherwise of the sexes. However, he does

bring the banal exchange of literary quotes with Isabel back to reality when they are discussing 'Ozymandias'. The early socialist is revealed in Thami when he recalls a picture in a book of Bible stories showing the building of the pyramids by thousands of slaves.⁴ Isabel light-heartedly asks if Thami is attempting 'to stir up a little unrest in the time of the Pharaohs' to which he replies, 'Don't joke about it, Miss Dyson. There are quite a few Ozymandiases in this country waiting to be toppled. And you'll see it happen. We won't leave it to time to bring them down' (p. 196). This exchange with Isabel finally erupts into anger as a prelude to his monologue: 'Don't tell me what I need, Isabel! And stop telling me what to do! You don't know what my life is about, so keep your advice to yourself' (p. 203).

Thami epitomises the hunger of so many African parents for education for their children as revealed in his initial appetite for learning; not for him Shakespeare's 'whining schoolboy' 'creeping like a snail unwillingly to school'. As a child he was standing at the school gates before the caretaker arrived but by the time he reaches high school, this enthusiastic flame has been extinguished:

That little world of the classroom where I used to be happy... that little room of wonderful promises where I used to feel so safe has become a place I don't trust any more. Now I sit at my desk like an animal that has smelt danger, heard something moving in the bushes and knows it must be very careful.

(p.206)

There is another character in this play who only appears through the medium of Thami and he is Mr Dawid Grobbelaar, the Inspector of Bantu Schools in the Cape Midlands Region, who visits the school every year for a 'pep-talk'. Thami recalls the last one: 'We have educated you because we want you to become major shareholders of this wonderful Republic of ours. In fact we want *all* the peoples of South Africa to share in that future...' (p. 207). Thami's response to this is to meditate:

I look around me in the location at the men and women who went out into that 'wonderful future' before me. What do I see? Happy and contented shareholders in this exciting enterprise called the Republic of South Africa? No. 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 madam.

(p. 207)

All of which leads to a final political response and the resort to militancy.

The characters of Isabel and Thami are relatively uncomplicated, but this cannot be said for Mr M, one of the playwright's favourite creations. Due to an apparently emotional involvement with the beliefs and ethos of the schoolmaster, Fugard has provided us with a deeply contradictory individual, part saint, part fool. There is ambivalence on display in the portraits of Hally and Morris and Boesman, but with Mr M, what appears to be a splendid tragic hero turns out to be Fugard's prime example of paradox. Contradiction in literature's leading men and women is not an unusual device. To take one example, a new introduction by James Wood⁵ to Graham Greene's *Heart of the Matter* refers to a review at the time of publication by George Orwell that includes: 'Scobie is incredible because the two halves of him do not fit together' - any more than they do with Mr M. Wood then looks at the contradictions he sees in Scobie (the leading figure in the novel who eventually kills himself), 'more acutely'. Although the precision, in logic and theology, of Wood's conclusion can be questioned, he suggests that if Scobie can allow 'human love' to rob him of the love of God 'for all eternity', then he was never a very passionate Christian; but if he is not the latter, why then his Christian passion? In Scobie's case, these contradictions arise because of the power of his Catholic faith but in the case of Fugard's contradictory creature, the power is the apartheid State. Although Mr M in effect commits suicide, there is no way that he or Boesman or others like them can renounce the power of the State, while escape from a passionate faith is possible; it can be agnosticized.

In reviewing Mr M's character, consider first whether he is the failed Althusser hero, as described below. The dominant Ideological State Apparatuses, in this case, the school, provide the raw personnel material that the capitalist society requires to protect and perpetuate itself. Althusser charts the three paths followed by the children who are taken into the system at infant-school age so that the populace, mainly unconsciously, reproduces what he refers to as 'the

relations of production', i.e. the position of the populace as either exploiters or the exploited. Most of the teachers that work within this system, and towards the realisation of the capitalist society's demands, do not realise what they have done and are doing. However, Althusser suggests that there are a few teachers who will attempt to 'teach against the ideology' and he bestows upon them the accolade of a 'kind of hero' (Althusser 1971, p. 157). Is this Mr M? He teaches against the ideology, when this refers to Bantu education, but on the other hand he is just one of Freire's 'bankers' when he tells Isabel: 'I teach, Thami learns' (p. 179). Described by his creator as that 'flawed, beautiful Mr M and his passion for learning' (Personal interview. November 2002), the schoolmaster is a liberal idealist in a far from perfect world. On the surface he may appear as the romanticised schoolmaster, but he is not prepared to accept the school boycott and tolerate his pupils joining in, and would he have forgiven the Germans as Mr. Chips did? Mr M's stubborn zealotry rendered him irrelevant and yet pitiable in the historical context of the turbulent mid-1980s. He was killed because he acted as an informer but it could be shown that, however laudable his intentions, he had been acting for the oppressor all his working life. While preaching the liturgy of the supremacy of the English language, he was acting as an ambassador of the apartheid authorities who were perfectly content for the oppressed to learn the works of Wordsworth if this diverted them from thoughts of a violent overthrow of the oppressor. Freire covers this point:

The capability of banking education to minimize or annul the students' creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor see it transformed. The oppressors use their "humanitarianism" to preserve a profitable situation. Thus they react almost instinctively against any experiment in education which stimulates the critical faculties...

(Freire 1996, p. 54/5)

Thami repeats this in his closing speech during the debate in Act One. He mirrors Freire's views when he condemns Western culture: 'the same culture which continues to exploit us in the twentieth-century, under the disguise of concern for our future' (p. 157). However, Mr M does make it plain that on the question of 'Bantu' education, he is fervently opposed. When he asks Thami if

he thinks his schoolmaster agrees with "this inferior 'Bantu education'", and Thami replies by accusing Mr M of teaching it, the response is:

But unhappily so! Most unhappily, unhappily so! Don't you know that? Did you have your fingers in your ears the thousand times I've said so in the classroom? Where were you when I stood there and said I regarded it as my duty, my deepest obligation to you young men and women, to sabotage it, and that my conscience would not to let me rest until I had succeeded. And I have!

I have liberated your mind in spite of what the Bantu education was trying to do to it.

(p. 216)

For the unfortunate Mr M, language betrays him just as much as he has betrayed his pupils. The irony is that Mr M's love of the English language and his reverence towards words is in direct contrast with one of the causes of the unrest, the imposition of Afrikaans for some lessons.

Undoubtedly the climax of the play is in the *coup de theatre* when Mr M compares the weapon of aggression - the stone - with the dictionary - the word - epitomising tolerance and peaceful negotiation. Fugard gives the best lines in the play on the sanctity of the word to Mr M:

Be careful, Thami. Be careful! Be careful! Don't scorn words. They are sacred! Magical! Yes, they are. Do you know that without words a man can't think? Yes, it's true. Take that thought back with you as a present from the despised Mr M and share it with the Comrades. If the struggle needs weapons, give it words, Thami. Stones and petrol bombs can't get inside those police armoured cars. Words can. They can do something even more devastating than that..... they can get inside the heads of those inside those armoured cars. I speak to you like this because if I have faith in anything, it is faith in the power of the word.

(p. 217)

In this instance Mr M sees the positive value of words entering into the heads of the policemen rather than the insidious Orwellian control of the dreams and thoughts of Zachariah, that so concern his brother. As described later, the text reveals that the crux of this play is the relationship between Mr M and Thami, but the powerful subtext is the correlation between the word and the stone. It

would be simplistic to consider that Mr M represents one and Thami the other; they both present to the audience and the reader only a partial perspective. Thami is wrong to reject the word - the campaign to regain 'consciousness' for his people needed the word - as exemplified by Steve Biko, who was a prolific wordsmith. Equally, Mr M cannot be so unrealistic as to believe that in the highly-charged political situation of the 1980s, the authorities would listen to reason; they will not accept words as instruments of insubordination or insurrection any more than they will permit their opponents to use weapons to forward their cause.

Mr M represents the antithesis of the Black Consciousness Movement, that was no longer prepared to compromise and co-operate with the white man. As Thami tells Isabel: 'The Comrades don't want any mixing with whites' (p. 214). Mr M's way is no longer relevant and his failure to change with the times, plus the deliberate choice to act as an informer, leads to his death. He can be compared to Piet Bezuidenhout who also loved English poetry (and who might have been an informer), but where in Piet's world of the 1960s he can retire and log his aloes, for the schoolteacher in the 1980s, the consequences of betrayal, as he well knows, are rather more dire than a future as a lonely aloes cataloguer. Mr M tells Isabel that 'knowledge has banished fear' (p. 179) but in the end it proves little protection for him. Thami sums him up the best:

He is out of touch with what is really happening to us blacks and the way we feel about things. He thinks the world is still the way it was when he was young. It's not! It's different now, but he's too blind to see it. He doesn't open his eyes and ears and see what is happening around him or listen to what people are saying.

(p. 200)

There are characteristics that Mr M and Fugard have in common; they are both liberal humanitarians and the love Mr M has for Thami is reflected in the camaraderie and sympathy Fugard has with the black people of his country, both in his personal friendships and in the sentiments we have seen on his stages. However, where Fugard may well agree that the liberal approach in his plays has not always been accepted by audiences as fully successful, what we are given in this play is a portrait of Mr M who, except for the impact he has on

Isabel's future, can be seen as a full-blooded failure (although, in view of his fate, perhaps an inappropriate adjective). The English word has also failed because in effect it is this word that Thami rebels against. He has absorbed romantic poetry at the feet of Mr M, but he cannot accept the liberal ideology that his teacher represents, and although his radicalism is directed at the Bantu Education Act and the Afrikaans language, it can also be seen that English culture and the English language, even if only whispered, has kept the likes of Thami in his place. Mr M compares the efficacy of the dictionary, the book, against the stone, but they are both objects of subjugation. The stone represents the authorities' tactics of force used against the more militant politics of the Black Consciousness Movement while with the book, Thami, but not Mr M, comes to recognise this as another weapon used in the control of the oppressed - as it was for Sizwe Bansi who says about his out-of-order reference book: "My passbook talks good English too... big words that Sizwe can't read ...Sizwe wants to stay here in New Brighton and find a job; passbook says, 'No! Report back'" (p.180). As referred to at the beginning of this chapter, there is the view that using education as an instrument of colonial control continued to be germane after colonial empires were disbanded; certainly the disparity between white and black education was used as an instrument of oppression in South Africa. Additionally, as some of the mechanics at work in Fugard's play required the quoting of poetry by rote, this further extract from the Ashcroft edited book is apposite:

The reciting of poetry, dramatic set pieces or prose passages from the works of English writers was not just a practice of literary teaching throughout the empire - it was also an effective mode of moral, spiritual and political inculcation. The English 'tongue' (and thus English literary culture and its values) was learned 'by heart': a phrase that captures the technology's particular significance. Recitation of literary texts thus becomes a ritual act of obedience..

(Ashcroft 1997, p. 426)

Thami tells Mr M that in the circumstances of today, his lessons are not relevant: 'Yours were lessons in whispering. There are men now who are teaching us to shout. Those little tricks and jokes of yours in the classroom

liberated nothing. The struggle doesn't need the big English words you taught me how to spell' (p. 216).

Before his final exit, Mr M tells the audience why he decides to become an informer:

I sat here before going to the police station saying to myself that it was my duty, to my conscience, to you, to the whole community to do whatever I could to put an end to this madness of boycotts and arson, mob violence and lawlessness.. and maybe that is true..... but only maybe....because Thami, the truth is that I was so lonely! You had deserted me. I was jealous of those who had taken you away.

(p. 225)

This confession leads directly to the kernel of the play, namely the relationship between Thami and the worthy Mr M with the high ideals that he is prepared to sacrifice because, if we are to accept at face value what he says to the audience, he feels deserted and is jealous of the fact that Thami is prepared to put the cause before any affection or regard he has for his teacher. For all of the real-life political context forming the background to this work, and however important the themes of self-revelation are, particularly for Isabel, Fugard has once again provided a romance, but this time the love story has the most tragic of endings. The twisted love between Hally and Sam has been revealed, and it can be conjectured that it is love, tinged with a blend of resignation and familiarity, that persuades Lena to stay with Boesman, but in *My Children! My Africa!*, what Isabel primarily observes is the love story of Mr M and Thami. Mr M longs for a role like Sam's of surrogate father to Thami but when this might have been possible in the 1950s, even between black and white, by 1984 such a relationship between the conservative Mr M and the nascent rebel Thami, is impossible. After Mr M reveals that he is an informer (and tragically it is possible that this action was totally unnecessary as he, like Steve Daniels, did not tell the authorities anything they did not already know) and Thami tries to save him, these two stubborn and yet articulate people are unable to put into words what the real issue is. When Mr M queries Thami as to whether he would lie to save him, Thami says yes but when Mr M asks why, there are two crucial stage directions:

Mr M (*desperate to hear the truth*) Why?

Thami can't speak

(p. 228)

Mr M wants Thami to admit that the reason is because he loves his schoolmaster but this fact is avoided; Thami prevaricates and agrees that his only motive is the 'Cause'. As a result Mr M says he does not need to hide behind Thami's lies and he goes out to face the mob. When Isabel and Thami meet three weeks later, just before Thami leaves the location, he finally reveals that he did love Mr M.

Mr M's death provides a dramatic deceit, more sentimental in nature than Fugard has indulged in before, and the audience might wonder how credible is Mr M's action and whether his creator realises that the character of the 'beautiful and flawed' Mr M is surely more flawed than anything else. Was the schoolmaster really prepared to accept the violence that would have been inflicted upon the boycott leaders as a result of his treachery, just because he was lonely? The horrible death Mr M suffers is melodrama of the highest order that is totally absent in the other plays dealt with in this thesis. Sam would appear to have a more valid reason for resorting to violence than Mr M, but Mr M's death is entirely his own fault, brought about due to what, outside of the high drama of the play, appear spurious if not totally unbelievable reasons.

Isabel acts as onlooker, and finally reporter of the failed relationship between Thami and Mr M, but this is not the only tragedy on view. What *My Children! My Africa!* displays to a painful degree is waste. Boesman and Lena are described as being part of the white man's waste, but in the 1980s play, what is on view is the waste of thousands of young lives denied an adequate education. Mr M describes it:

Wasted People! Wasted chances! It's become a phobia with me now. It's not easy, you know to be a teacher, to put your heart and soul into educating an eager young mind which you know will never get a chance to develop further and realize its full potential.

(p. 175).

This catalogue of waste has its own chorus - Mr M's bell. He rings it to bring order in his classroom, and then to entice the boycotters back into school, but it is a forlorn sound - a wasted sound. He rings the bell as he exits the stage to face his death and leave behind the hell of the classroom - like the bell that invites Macbeth to dispatch Duncan to a heaven or a hell:

A bell rings.

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.

Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell

That summons thee to heaven, or to hell.

(Macbeth, Act II Scene I)

Fugard's plays are not projected on a wide screen (to mix media) and they are not agitprop or drawing room comedies or Ibsenite tragedies. Fugard is a poet who writes about ordinary people and in *My Children! My Africa!* Fugard has written another Fugard play, but there is a fundamental difference. This was his final offering before apartheid crumbled, and he has at last directly introduced the political context as a major player in to his normal scenario of a 'play about people'. The people are just as crucial and, for the purposes of this play, as well drawn as his former heroes and heroines, but in this instance, the spoken word, Fugard's credo, is declaimed from within a real political background. This is what he said during a lecture at New York University on 16 October 1990:

Again, I wrote *My Children! My Africa!* because I was appalled at certain things that were happening in my country. And I wrote it because it had come time to do two things which again involved my sense of an appointment. One was to come out of my faith in the power of the spoken and the written word. That's a faith that has been sorely tested during the thirty-two years I have been making theatre in South Africa. There were times when I have truly doubted whether writing a play, and then in some cases doing it underground (because the authorities wouldn't allow us to do it publicly), was an adequate response to the situation. Perhaps I would have been better advised to make bombs...I think my faith must have hung on by a silken thread at times. I can thank my lucky stars it did, because if you ever break faith with something like that, I don't know that you can put it together again. Anyway, I never lost faith. In fact, as time passed, my faith in the power of the spoken and

the written word has grown in strength. I stated that faith through one of the characters in my play, *My Children! My Africa!*.

(Fugard 1993, p. 388/9)

The silken thread has proved strong enough for Fugard to enter the new millennium still writing plays, even if his faith in the written word is not represented in *My Children! My Africa* in a form that rests comfortably with the speech he made at New York University in 1990. He may have wished to use Mr M as an apostle of this faith, but the schoolteacher is revealed to be something of a false prophet. He leaves and betrays his pupils because Thami has found it impossible to put into words that he loves his teacher - so that is the unspoken word - and even where the word is spoken, it fails to save Mr M. He is a failure and his words give little comfort to anyone else on view. What the New York speech does do is to underline Fugard's liberalism and his opposition to the violence that Fanon saw as a necessary element in the overthrow of the oppressor, even if Fanon never carried a gun. However, Fugard's alternative of being a bomb-maker is not necessarily an either/or situation. Unlike Fugard's liberal position that questions whether the oppressed have the right to use a gun, Che Guevara and Cabral, amongst many others, believed that the revolutionary might need both the gun and the word and it is the word that is dealt with in the last chapter of this study – the word as revealed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by the real-life representatives of Fugard's dispossessed.⁶

NOTES

¹ A phrase used by Albert Wertheim as part of the heading to Chapter Seven of his book *The Dramatic Art of Athol Fugard*.

² Steadman's categories could be likened to the differences between the theatre of protest and that of resistance. Zakes Mda explains:

You protest to the person who is oppressing you. It tended to be a theatre that lamented the situation of the black man and in many instances it would also be a theatre of self-pity. ... In other words, it was meant to appeal to the conscience of the oppressor with the hope that the oppressor will then change.....but, with the advent of the Black Consciousness Movement, there was a conscious effort by the political leadership of the time to move away from the politics of protest. Theatre now served a different function - it no longer directed itself to the oppressor with a view to changing the oppressor but it was now directed at the oppressed with the intention of mobilising them
(Mda. Personal interview. October 2000).

Fanon's colonialist might have seen protest theatre as the 'violent, resounding, florid writing which on the whole serves to reassure the occupying power', although in time Fanon saw this as developing more into the 'resistance' mode - what he refers to as 'a literature of combat' (Fanon 1990, pp. 192/193).

³ The subject of Fugard's play, *Orestes*. Harris, a former member of the Liberal Party, was acting alone and not representing any political faction.

⁴ Fugard may well have read Brecht's poem, *Questions from a worker who reads*.

Who built Thebes of the seven gates?

In the books you will find the names of kings.

Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?

⁵ Referred to in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 3 September 2004, pp.14/15.

⁶ In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Elleke Boehmer writes: 'Especially during the 1970s and 1980s, Ngugi insisted in essay after essay that, in its own sphere, the pen might do the work of the gun; a play might pack the power of a hand grenade..(Boehmer 1995, p. 184)

SEVEN

Survival and the TRC

Whoever survives has won his case, he has no right and no cause to bring charges; he has emerged the stronger...

(Sándor Márai *Embers*)

Sándor Márai, born in 1900, was one of the leading novelists in Hungary in the 1930s, but he left the country in 1948, eventually settling in the United States, where he committed suicide in 1989. His novel *Embers*, which was first published in English in 2001, is concerned with a form of survival, relating to revenge and a long-standing friendship. In the South African context, most of Fugard's characters are not winners, and only those who can be shown to have survived might have done so with some added strength. However, if we are to compare his dispossessed with those that appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Fugard's survivors, in what ever form, might accept that, within the ethos of the TRC, they 'have no cause to bring charges' against their oppressors, and have perhaps therefore 'emerged the stronger'.

Of all the Fugard characters discussed in this thesis it is Gladys who has suffered the greatest psychological violation by the apartheid State, and she only survives by retreating into herself and into the mental home at Fort England. She says to her husband: 'Is that the price of survival in this country? Thorns and bitterness' (p. 229). These are the thorns of the aloe plant and not those that Piet, the stoical Christian, might have been crowned with, but as this chapter determines what survivals are achieved in Fugard's political theatre, it will also explore how the thorns of hatred and the legacy of bitterness that the apartheid regime engendered, were dealt with in the new South Africa (as far as was possible), by the establishment of the TRC. From the outset the character of this Commission was established by the credentials of the person appointed to be the chairman, namely the same Archbishop Tutu who had said that "*Master Harold*"...and the boys mirrored the political reality of the times.¹ While in the early 1990s the new Constitution was being debated, it soon became very clear that what went before could not be washed away and the new democracy

launched without regard to the injustices suffered by many South Africans in the past, and once this was accepted, it was necessary to determine how this should be accounted for. According to Alex Boraine, the ANC could not begin to govern the country, and take over the security services, if selected members of those services faced prosecution for their actions during the previous administration, and in any case, the National Party made it abundantly clear during the constitutional negotiations that if this was to be the position, there would be no settlement. There seemed therefore to be no alternative but to set up what became the TRC that would provide some form of forgiveness and limited reparations; in other words, a trade off - revelation and truth for amnesty. The TRC was generally successful in its quest for the truth, although the efficacy of the reconciliation process was naturally more problematic and few compensation payments have been made. Nevertheless, what the TRC did at least achieve was to produce a record of suffering in the shape of a 2000 page report detailing 31,000 cases of human rights abuse. This report contained the following statements:

The state, in the form of the South African government, the civil service and its security forces, was, in the period 1960-94 the primary perpetrator of gross violations of human rights in South Africa...

In the application of the policy of apartheid, the state in the period 1960-90 sought to protect the power and privilege of a racial minority. Racism therefore constituted the motivating core of the South African political order...

A consequence of this racism was that white citizens in general adopted a dehumanising position towards black citizens, to the point where the ruling order and the state ceased to regard them as fellow citizens and largely labelled them as the enemy. This created a climate in which gross atrocities committed against them were seen as legitimate.

(BBC Special report. 29 October 1998)

The abuse suffered by Fugard's characters forms a perfect fit with this excoriating declaration and, as a further parallel, it is relevant to consider, alongside the survivors who have appeared before the TRC, what survival is achieved by Fugard's cast. It is also, in terms of the TRC, pertinent to see

whether there is any reconciliation between Fugard's abused and the powerful, and yet mostly unseen, political authorities at work in these plays or, where relevant, between the characters themselves. Survival comes in many guises: one man's endurance is another's despair, and it is possible to see this variety in Fugard's work, extending from the anguish of Gladys - and probably Winston - to cases where there are examples of survival, in one shape or another.

As already explored in some detail, Morris's identity is complex, but from the text at the end of Scene One, it can be inferred that he survives by coming home. The leaving of his brother has marked him like Cain, a 'fugitive and a wanderer on the earth' (Genesis 4.14). During those wanderings he realises that salvation is only to be found if he becomes, not just his brother's keeper, but also fully identified with him, as revealed when he puts on Zachariah's coat: 'It's been a big help to me, this warm, old coat. You get right inside a man when you wrap up in the smell of him' (p. 67).² The comfort he obtains from the coat, and his brother's company, the blood knot, is nearly destroyed by the spectre of Ethel, and as Zachariah returns to the pondok with the white man's clothes, he finds a dejected Morris who says he's given up - he can't carry on. To this, Zachariah responds:

But that won't do! Emphatically not! A man can't stop just like that, like you. That's definitely no good, because, because... because a man must carry on. Most certainly.

(p. 110)

As a result Morris confirms that he will carry on and stay with his brother: 'Stop it, Zach! I'm still here. I know I can't go... so I've given up instead' (p. 111). This is an important exchange in the comprehension of their fates. When the threat posed by Ethel is dissipated, and the final attack on the brotherhood is staged, Zachariah says: 'We're only playing', which leads to the crux of the situation for Morris and Zachariah. At that point in the play - like John and Winston who convert their prison cell into a theatre, or Styles who sells a dream as a survival kit - the brothers resort to make-believe to survive: they both follow Zachariah's advice that a man must carry on, but with their survival diluted with resignation as they join the 'people getting by without futures'.

In the next family situation, the fate of the survivors at the end of the play is not as conjoined as for Morris and Zachariah, although Boesman and Lena are both enrolled in the ranks of those reconciled to their fate, but as they leave the stage, Lena has some hope, mixed in with the inevitable cloak of resignation. This is what makes *Boesman and Lena* one of Fugard's most searing political indictments; the play catalogues with relentless detail the sufferings of these two people and yet, despite this, his Lena displays some remnants of optimism, as does Hester, another of Fugard's strong women, who leaves her brother at the end of *Hello and Goodbye* with the words: '... Live happily. Try, Johnnie, try to be happy' (p.187).

Boesman and Lena's hardships are evident from the first appearance of these two wanderers - the director is well advised by Fugard's opening stage directions:

Boesman - walks on..... dragging a piece of corrugated iron.
A life of hardship and dissipation obscures their ages.

(p. 193)

and by lines such as: 'There was something else in that fire, something rotten. Us! Our sad stories, our smells, our world!' (p. 229). Unlike the new Zachariah, who no longer shares Minnie's 'Golden Moments', alcohol is an important prop for Boesman and Lena. They drink to block out, for a time, the facts of their sorry existence and yet Lena is prepared, at least during that eventful night, to give up the wine that will keep her warm, in exchange for the warmth of some alternative humanity; she yearns for another a pair of eyes. Boesman cannot understand this: 'This is wine, Lena. That's a *kaffer*. He won't help you forget. You want to sit sober in this world? You know what it looks like then?' (p. 222). Boesman does not 'sit sober', but it doesn't help. His distorted view of survival centres on the ultimate degradation - he survives because he is white man's rubbish which contains an innate element of survival within itself as he wears it, sleeps in it and eats it. Having accepted that, Boesman lashes out at Lena and Outa, he uses violence to keep his life warm, but by the end of the play Lena becomes his personal TRC as she mocks his words, 'Freedom' and 'Truth' and

then, by example and by leaving with him, she teaches him the fundamental truth: 'I'm alive, Boesman. There's daylight left in me. You still got a chance. Don't lose it' (p. 247). She's Fugard's 'woman': "almost exclusively, 'woman' - a woman - has been the vehicle for what I have tried to say about survival and defiance." (Nb, p. 198) and, like Stephen Sondheim's survivor, she is still there:

Good times and bum times,
I've seen them all and, my dear,
I'm still here.³

(Sondheim *Follies*)

One can suppose that after the traumas already revealed, and as their life goes on, Moses and Zachariah and Boesman and Lena were reconciled to each other, but in *"Master Harold"... and the boys*, the case is unproven. If there is a reconciliation it is obscure because it cannot be determined what Hally's long-term reaction will be. As to survival in that St George's Park Tea Room, Hally survives because he is white - but at what price and with what value? His relationship with Sam can never be the same, which has devalued the quality of his survival, and despite protestations of love, the text does not adequately reveal the truth about how he really feels towards his father. This is deeply ambivalent at best, but in the working of the drama, the uncertainty on this score only serves to increase the value of Sam's parenting role. Unlike Hally, the eschewing of violence that afternoon by Sam and Willie displays a level of tolerance and reconciliation that provide a striking example compared to that employed by many across the racial divide, as revealed by the TRC. They typify the ballroom dancers who perform in that ideal space, where there are no collisions, in the Fugard play which is the most receptive to the concept of truth and reconciliation.⁴

A Lesson from Aloes presents the Fugardian truth and survival analysis with its most interesting case. The experience of Steve's interrogation was that replicated hundreds of times before the TRC, but in the fictional case, the physical violence is minimal, or non-existent, and yet he is abused as surely as those victims who were reported to have hung themselves in their prison cells

or fallen from open windows in multi-storied buildings. What makes this play particularly fascinating is the fact that although Gladys has some difficulty in recognising any similarity between herself and Steve, she has been the victim of the psychological methods of the security police just as painfully as he has: 'I've discovered hell for myself' (p. 267). The next similarity is that as a result of their traumas, they both react in the same way - they retreat; they are not rooted in the earth, like Piet, or the aloes that frighten Gladys and that represent South Africa and the authorities who have invaded her fragile privacy. Piet wants to build another window in their bedroom wall to lighten the horror that Gladys has undergone, but she ignores him; she sees the possibility of Steve beginning a new life but for herself there is no chance of a rebirth; she is sufficiently vulnerable as to be jealous of Piet's strength:

He's got to start his life again. I know what that means. In some ways that's the worst...starting again...waking up with nothing left, not even your name, and having to start again....

You're a good man, Peter, and that has become a terrible provocation. I want to destroy that goodness. Ironical, isn't it! That which I most hate and fear about this country is all I seem to have learned...

(pp. 269/270)

Fugard considers that this is 'Gladys's play' because she is the one with the ambiguities. In this instance, she reflects his general pessimism, while in Steve's case, an opposite and partly optimistic perspective is on view if his retreat is seen as a survival with the possibility that he will 'live to fight another day'. The further fascination with this work, above all others in this thesis, is the contrast between Piet and Gladys. We do not know what the future holds for Hally, while for Moses and Zachariah, Boesman and Lena and Sam and Willie, whatever their future, they suffer together, but the relationship between this husband and wife cannot be re-built. They will remain apart, whether physically or psychologically, with little chance of a reconciliation. Piet's probable survival has already been detailed, but what has not been considered is the extent to which his future might be affected by guilt, not as a suspected informer, but as an Afrikaner. Will he feel the same as Antjie Krog who, at the launch of her book *Country of My Skull*, said: 'Some of us may deny it, but deep down Afrikaners

know the truth. We are embarrassed, we are deeply ashamed and isolated in our clumsy, lonely attempts to deal with our guilt' (Sparks 2003, p.168)? Will Piet's lonely stoicism be unaffected by the evidence presented to the TRC, and seen on television, that included a demonstration by Captain Geoffrey Benzien of the wet bag torture technique? This evidence was given by Benzien when confronted by one of his victims, Tony Yengeni, then a Member of Parliament, who insisted that Benzien demonstrate the technique to the Commission. Antjie Krog describes the moment:

The judges, who have come a long way from meticulously sticking to court procedures, jump up so as not to miss the spectacle. Photographers come running, not believing their luck. And the sight of this bluntly built white man squatting on the back of a black victim, who lies face down on the floor, and pulling a blue bag over his head will remain one of the most loaded and disturbing images in the life of the Truth Commission.

(Krog 1999, p.110).

Questions of survival in the two collaborative works are less complex than in the cases described above; they, more than any of the other plays, reflect how thousands upon thousands of the dispossessed did survive. When Michael Billington saw *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* at the Royal Court he described it as 'magnificent':

It is perhaps the most effective indictment of the everyday inhumanity of apartheid I have ever heard inside a theatre; yet at the same time it is humorous and humane, offering a hard-won affirmation of man's capacity to survive the vilest political systems....

...It is of course a profoundly political play: yet its virtue is that its message emerges through the humorous interaction of totally credible people..

(Billington 1974)

Sizwe's act of forgery may protect him for some time, perhaps until the pass laws are less strictly enforced,⁵ and Styles' strong room could in the future contain a measure of financial security for him, in addition to dreams. The experience of Robben Island may keep John out of trouble, although many ex-prisoners did continue with their political activities, with the result that returns to

Robben Island were not uncommon. However, Winston, like Nelson Mandela, has a long time to wait before he can join the ranks of the survivors - until he can take his long walk to freedom. *The Island* is the Fugard play that has been the most widely and frequently restaged - it has been to London at least twice in the 21st Century - and it is interesting to briefly consider how the politics in this particular play are perceived by these new audiences. Peter Brook, notoriously selective, was sufficiently impressed with the work as a piece of theatrical art to present it in Paris nineteen years after Mandela's release, but according to Miki Flockemann, her young students saw the message of the play to be concerned with the freedom of speech rather than portraying the ultimate fate of the oppressed who had rebelled against oppression (Personal interview. November 2000).

Mr M most emphatically does not survive, and, as already considered, his character is sufficiently paradoxical for it to be difficult to ascertain where he stands on the question of truth. During his first monologue, Mr M spends some time talking about hope, with a capital 'H', and explaining that he needs to nurture this by the successful education of his 'children' - but when he perceives that teaching is in abeyance, he cannot find sustenance for this hope from any other source, and so gives in; he has no Zachariah around to persuade him to carry on. However, there is a form of reconciliation - he is reconciled to the fact that he cannot achieve the relationship with Thami that he craves and is therefore resigned to his fate. Perhaps because *My Children! My Africa!* is of the 1980s, Isabel projects the most optimistic view of any of Fugard's survivors - the curtain falls to her line: 'The future is still ours, Mr M.' Thami's fate is of course unknown, but at least he takes action; he is not content to join the people getting by without a future.

And how has Fugard survived?⁶ He has continued to produce world-class dramas with arguably his finest post-apartheid play being *Sorrows and Rejoicings*, first staged in 2001. Although this was the first of his plays to be entirely written away from home soil, it represents a return to South African racial issues after the more personal works, *Valley Song* and *The Captain's Tiger*. However, whether the best or not, *Sorrows and Rejoicings* is briefly

mentioned in this thesis because with it, Fugard has produced a further example of political theatre set within his trademark of a small-scale family relationship that continues to interrogate the ambiguities of survival. This work, for the first time in his plays, reveals the specific antecedents of a Coloured person, the girl Rebecca, whose mother Marta is also Coloured, while her father, Dawid, is a white Afrikaner. The mixing of the races, begun in the 17th Century, continues. To add to this trio, we have Dawid's wife, Allison, who is of British origin; in other words, the South African melting pot. The politics in the play are very apparent. Poet Dawid is a protester like Piet, but rather more active. He has been served with a banning order, as a result of which he leaves behind his mistress Marta and goes into exile with his wife, because he believes that he can no longer write poetry while politically proscribed. However, unlike Steve Daniels whose fate in exile is not revealed, Dawid finds that life in London is not what he expected, with the result that he still cannot write. Would this have been Fugard's fate if he had gone into exile as the authorities wanted? Dawid says: 'Exile is going to give me back my voice' (Fugard 2002, p. 24), but the message conveyed by the play is that exile could be just as cruel as an incarceration on Robben Island.

Sorrows and Rejoicings also adds a postscript to *My Children! My Africa!* Allison recalls how in the 1980s she visited the local school (the play is set in a Karoo village) with Dawid:

I went with David on one of those visits. I can still see him!... standing there in the classroom, fired up with a passionate conviction, his little audience sitting cross-legged on the floor, barefoot and bright eyed, staring up at the strange white man who was talking to them about courage and having faith in the future. Because their world was going to change! They were going to have chances their mothers and fathers never had.

(Ibid. p. 7)

Sixteen years later, Allison expresses a desire to visit the school again, to which Marta, whose first words in the play are: 'Nothing has changed', replies: 'Same old building. Government keeps promising us money to do it up, but I'll believe it when I see it.' and later she says to Allison: 'Go walk around the village

tomorrow and see how much of the new South Africa you can find' (Ibid. pp 8/22). Although now everyone is politically equal, the future seen by the optimistic Isabel does not seem to have been achieved. There are still major problems with poverty and violence, not to mention the Aids pandemic that is killing more people each year than the number that died from political causes during the whole of the apartheid era.

In South Africa, survival and politics are as intertwined as Morris and Zachariah - or as connected as is the 'political unconscious' (and conscious) in these plays to the real thing and where this reading of these texts reveals them to be concerned with rather more than intimate portraits of small groups of dysfunctional people, made dysfunctional by the policy of the State; and it is this State that has rendered Fugard as something more than a humanitarian writer bearing witness. The bearing of witness is crucially important in any Fugardian analysis, but the act of witnessing has a somewhat detached connotation: an observer who is outside the action and not a participator. Many of Fugard's critics make exactly that point, but the text speaks for itself where Fugard's direct and passionate concern for the subjects of oppression is far from detached. Those that are witnessed are painfully, but fully revealed as he exposes, in minute detail, the agony and very limited ecstasy experienced by the degraded South Africans he portrays.

The locale for most of these seven plays is the Eastern Cape, where there was more resistance to apartheid than in any other part of the country. History tells us that this area of South Africa was the first frontier of hostility between black and white as the Boers pressed eastward and the indigenous Xhosa people resisted, as they continued to do into the 20th Century. Of the people detained without trial during anti-apartheid resistance, one third came from this region, which was also the birthplace of the Black Consciousness Movement. Many of the most notorious examples of human rights abuse took place in the shadow of Fugard's cultural home, Port Elizabeth, including the detention and death of Steve Biko and the assassination of the Cradock four.⁷ It would seem therefore that, whether by an accident of birth or not, Fugard has chosen the ideal location in which to set his political dramas.

In addition, the political dimension in these plays can also be considered by an investigation into their origins. *"Master Harold"... and the boys* is a personal story that is inevitably strongly politicised, in the South African milieu, because of the binaries of age and youth and black and white viewed within an unusually special relationship. Locating a specific political origin for *Blood Knot* is somewhat remote, although there are plenty of instances of real life tragedies involving inter-racial sex, but as already detailed, *Boesman and Lena* was born on the road to Cradock where Fugard met the mirror image of a flesh-and-blood Lena - and this of course is what Fugard achieves so well, the fleshing out of people he has met or of incidents observed. The inspiration for *The Island* is well recorded, nurtured as it was within the Serpent Players, while for *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, the background of the all-pervasive pass laws was there for all to see, never mind the photograph that is said to have been the germ of the plot. Piet and Gladys are directly taken from people Fugard knew and *My Children! My Africa!* from a newspaper horror story, but all this quest for origins does is to reinforce the strength of the political content that Fugard, however unwittingly, has included in his plays; as set out in Chapter One, 'seemingly understated but also powerfully and painfully apparent'. This content is presented in literary form as a sequential history of apartheid, but Fugard least of all would have seen his plays as a deliberate intention to catalogue apartheid evils. He did not have a grand plan to record this history unlike, for instance, Paul Scott and his Indian quartet where there was a continuity of characters and events - something Fugard has never ventured. Neither was he a Balzac or a Zola, embarking on a majestic sequence of interconnected literature but, as this thesis has argued, the political thread that binds these plays together is just as strong, and just as relevant, as the ambitious design of Scott or these French writers.

In 1973, when *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* was at the Royal Court Theatre, film director Ross Devenish suggested to Fugard that they collaborate on a film about Eugene Marais which eventuated in *The Guest*, first shown on BBC 2 on 5 March 1977. Marais (1871-1936) was a noted scientist whose poetry and prose made a major contribution to Afrikaans literature, but his place in this thesis is to introduce a comment made in the *Notebooks* for 1976, when Fugard

was criticised for making this film (about an incident in Marais' life that occurred in 1926), because it was: 'totally without political commitment and therefore valueless in terms of the urgent and violent realities of our time' (Nb, 223). Fugard's response to this was to return to his stance that he is a storyteller and that all stories have their consequences. In general, such a statement can be accepted, but in South Africa, stories could be described as 'valueless' if the suffering displayed in them is remote from the political stories being told throughout the country. However, the plays featured in this thesis are far from remote from the political reality, constituting as they do political theatre that fervently contributes, both inside and outside the playhouse, to a campaign that highlights the conditions endured by the South African oppressed. Fugard articulates the narrative on their behalf in small-scale theatre of human relationships that delivers its message with a potency that far outweighs the intense approach of agitprop, particularly as applied to his black South African playwriting contemporaries.

Although some critics maintain that Fugard cannot be viewed as a political writer, it is generally acknowledged that this label can be fairly attached to his friend, Dennis Brutus, whose poetry provides the prolegomenon to this thesis. 'Somehow we survive' is included in the collection of his poems, *Sirens Knuckles Boots* that was first published in Ibadan, Nigeria when he was in prison. These poems and others, including his well known work *Letters to Martha*, are part of a volume in the Heinemann African Writers Series entitled *A Simple Lust*, where a reference is made to a review in *The Guardian* that says: '...in the deft simplicity of the first part of this book he has a grace and penetration unmatched even by Alexander Solzhenitsyn.' Brutus was banned from all political and social activity and in 1963 was arrested. He escaped while on bail, was then re-arrested and shot while attempting to escape. He was eventually sent to Robben Island for 18 months but his major claim to fame was the success of his campaign to exclude South Africa from the 1964 Olympics and, by 1970, from the movement altogether.

Fugard was not in any way as politically active as Dennis Brutus, but this thesis demonstrates that in his work he was no less a political writer than the poet, and

to provide further reinforcement to this contention, take from 'Somehow we survive' the line 'monolithic decalogue of fascist prohibition' and observe how this can be applied to these seven plays, where the Ten Commandments of the apartheid regime are there for all to see - a Decalogue of Disposessions. This Decalogue, handed down by the South African government during the apartheid era, can be variously permuted, but one illustration could be that:

- Thou must not vote;
- Thou must not own land;
- Thou must only labour when allowed;
- Thou cannot freely move about in the country of thy birth;
- Thou cannot reside in a place of thy own choice;
- Thou cannot be educated to thy full potential;
- Thou cannot control thy own identity;
- Thou cannot assert thy masculinity/femininity or marry whom thou wish;
- Thou cannot narrate thy story;
- Thou cannot expect to receive justice.

These restrictions are chronicled in the history of South African apartheid as they are equally recovered from the political conscious and unconscious within Fugard's dramas. The commandment relating to the franchise applies to most of the characters in these plays but more directly, the prohibition on owning land is a major topic in *Blood Knot*. Restrictions on labour and the right of movement figure in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *Boesman and Lena*, and obviously *The Island*. The lack of a right to reside anywhere in the country of your birth is vividly demonstrated in *Boesman and Lena*, while the apartheid in education, a major concern in *My Children! My Africa!*, is also on display in the case of Sam and Zachariah. Questions of the loss of identity are specifically dealt with in *Blood Knot*, *Boesman and Lena* and particularly in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, while sexual prohibitions feature prominently in *Blood Knot*. Most of these Fugard characters are denied any justice and, although it is not specified, we can conjecture that John and Winston were imprisoned by a system that has not meted out justice with an even hand.

In *Sorrows and Rejoicings*, Dawid quotes from Yeats:

The wind is old and still at play
While I must hurry on⁸ my way
For I am running to paradise.

(Fugard 2002, p. 8)

Fugard has survived, although, ironically enough, in 'exile'; he now spends most of his time in the USA but still owns property in the Karoo at New Bethesda, locale for *The Road to Mecca*. However, the other survivors, like Lena and the rest, would no doubt have found that paradise was a goal too far. Whether that will also be the case for all South Africans in the society that Fugard's plays have - in whatever measure - helped to bring about, only time will tell.

Moving from a prospective paradise, even if illusory, to the reality of the past as revealed to the TRC, Adam Small⁹, when being interviewed as a possible Commissioner, said:

This Truth Commission thing is useless – it wastes hard-earned money to listen to a bunch of crooks. Only literature can perform the miracle of reconciliation.

(Krog 1999, p. 26).

He may have been sceptical and, as mentioned above, he was not alone in this, but in the context of this thesis, it is significant that the realistic fictions on Fugard's stage came to be replicated in another theatre, that was to be manifested as the TRC. This is not to allege that the Commission was not a serious endeavour; it has had a measure of success and cannot be compared with the Stalin show trials. With the TRC as a point of reference, the final section of this thesis provides a set of conclusions to the political analysis of Fugard's work, alongside a comparison with what was happening in this sister theatre. The stories that were enacted before Archbishop Tutu and his fellow Commissioners were, in the main, small scale domestic tragedies that, although painfully real, were not too far removed from what audiences had witnessed in Fugard's auditoria where, hopefully, his literature contributed to Small's 'miracle

of reconciliation'. Fugard's anonymous little people had become much less anonymous when telling their stories to the Commission, and if anything can prove how imperative are the politics in Fugard's plays, it is this comparison with the political reality on display before the TRC in improvised courtrooms at venues throughout the country, where, in case after case, the fates of Fugard's dispossessed were being re-told.

The question posed by this research is to consider how our understanding of Fugard's literature can be enhanced by a specific concentration on the politics that are illuminated by his scripts, and although Fugard's small scale, low key actions have not been seen in the glare of publicity accorded to the TRC, it is asserted that the scrutiny recorded in the main chapters of this thesis does provide a new understanding of these important plays. A few representative examples may suffice here. In Chapter Two, the incident of Hally's caning is expanded into a debate on the corporal (and capital) punishment to be found outside of the boy's classroom and the tea room. Hally believes Joan of Arc would have had a fair trial in South Africa, but if she had been black and found guilty of what the State considered to be a capital crime, she would no doubt have been hung. In *Country of My Skull*, there is a description of the maximum security prison in Pretoria, described to the TRC as: 'the head office for hangings - it was a place designed for death ... a place processing people towards the execution chamber.' During the period investigated by the Commission, 2500 people were hanged, of whom 95 per cent were black and, as Antjie Krog pertinently relates: '100 per cent of those who sentenced them were white.' We are also given a chilling clinical description by the heart surgeon Professor Chris Barnard of the physical result of being 'hung by the neck until dead' (Krog 1999, pp. 300/301). In the *Notebooks* for 1962 Fugard wrote:

Ferreira - caretaker of warehouse where the National Theatre Organisation kept scenery - once a warder of Pretoria Central prison. Terrifying experience of the death chamber where he worked. Mass hanging of Africans.

The man who wouldn't be weighed and measured - so to spite him the hangman gave him a fall that tore his head off.

Scrubbing the bodies afterwards. Squeezing them into coffins. Ferreira was convinced of the moral degradation of the death penalty and capital punishment

(Nb, 43)

How would Hally's behaviour have been affected if he had appreciated how some of his fellow South Africans were being, in equivalent terms, 'burnt at the stake'?

It could be maintained that of all the characters that are presented in these seven plays, the strongest is Lena, who typified many of the women who told their stories to the TRC:

She is sitting behind a microphone, dressed in beret or kopdoek (headscarf) and her Sunday best. Everybody recognised her. Truth has become Woman. Her voice, distorted behind her rough hand, has undermined Man as the source of truth. And yet. Nobody knows her.

(Krog1999, p. 84)

This is a portrait of Lena who, by the end of the play, recognises and personifies truth. However, when she first appears on stage on the mudflats of the Swartkops River, she bemoans her fate as she shakes a fist and wails at the birds that have the freedom she is denied. During the TRC hearings, Alex Borraine records that during the evidence given by the widow of Fort Calata, one of the Cradock Four, there was another wail:

In the middle of her evidence she broke down and the primeval and spontaneous wail from the depths of her soul was carried live on radio and television, not only throughout South Africa but to many other parts of the world. It was that cry from the soul that transformed the hearings from a litany of suffering and pain to an even deeper level. It caught up in a single howl all the darkness and horror of the apartheid years.¹⁰

(Borraine 2000, p. 102)

Although neither Lena nor Boesman have been tortured, Fugard provides his own 'darkness and horror', that is just as vital as the TRC dramas that have engulfed the nation since the inception of the Commission in the early 1990s.

Sad to say, many of the testimonies heard by the TRC involved black-on-black violence. In some cases this was the result of a conflict between the more politicised young and the older generation (a conflict at the heart of *My Children! My Africa!*), but more often than not, the victims, who were often subject to necklacing,¹¹ were killed because they were suspected of being informers. We know that Mr M is an informer but his violent death is not witnessed by the play-going public, any more than the hundreds of similar murders were directly observed by the TRC - all that was available were the testimonies of those who bore witness to such horrors, as Fugard was doing. As with "*Master Harold*"... and the boys, *My Children! My Africa!* is a play about the failure of love, but this love story is presented against the most real of political backgrounds, a background that was exposed day-by-day at the sittings of the TRC. There is no violence whatsoever on display in *A Lesson from Aloes*, unless we view the situation through the eyes of Gladys who considers the aloes themselves as 'turgid with violence' (p. 230). However, the impact on the lives of this husband and wife, partly due to the suspicion that Piet could have been an informer, destroys the friendship with Steve and consigns Gladys to her fate in the mental hospital as surely as Mr M and many other informers, or suspected informers, were sentenced to death.

In 1982, Mel Gussow, who had been the theatre critic of the *New York Times*, wrote that he considered Fugard's works to be unmatched as political theatre in our century; while, as already mentioned, in 1990 Richard Hornby considered that Fugard was the best political dramatist writing in English today. It has been the purpose of this thesis to analyse the politics in the texts themselves, rather than to justify these accolades, and to some extent, Richard Eyre assists in this by specifically excluding Fugard (at the time of the first London productions of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*) from the remarks made in 1978 by David Hare when he criticised the British political dramatists of the 1970s for: 'brandishing their political credentials as frequently as possible' (Eyre 2000, p. 311). However acclaimed, it is Fugard's texts that provide the political message - there is no brandishing of credentials by this South African playwright as he describes the desolation of so many of his fellow citizens.

Unfortunately, away from the theatre, this desolation persists throughout Africa. In a speech given by Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, at the University of Pennsylvania on 26th April 2005 ¹², he tells the story of a visit he had made recently to Zambia where a group of women living with Aids were successfully growing cabbages to supplement their diet, with a surplus to be sold at the market. When he asked what they did with the proceeds of such sales, he reported: 'there was an almost quizzical response as if to say what kind of ridiculous question is that - surely you know the answer before you asked: "We buy coffins of course; we never have enough coffins"'. Athol Fugard's plays are concerned with both African men and women who were not oppressed by a medical disease, but by a political and moral one. Apartheid, Derrida's 'ultimate racism in the world', was the awful fact of life for most of the people of South Africa from 1948, when the Afrikaner National Government came to power, until the release from prison of Nelson Mandela in 1990. The tragedy of Africa is that for most of its people, life has not improved over the last 50 years; Fugard's dispossessed may have achieved democracy but disease and poverty are still widespread. Although in South Africa theatrical practitioners, including Pieter-Dirk Uys, Fatima Dike and Mbongeni Ngema amongst others, have dealt, and are dealing with this subject, perhaps the scourge of HIV/Aids in Africa needs a storyteller of the stature of Fugard to reveal the true agonies.

NOTES

¹ The deputy chairman, Alex Boraine, author of *A Country Unmasked*. Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was also a man of the church - a Methodist. RW Johnson, a severe critic of the value of the TRC, wrote that the hearings were turned into quasi-religious occasions, although he does admit that the TRC did allow 'many ordinary people to express their sufferings' (Johnson 2004, p. 216).

² Fugard comments on John Berry directing *Blood Knot*:

He was always wrestling with my deepest level of meaning - man and man, not just white or black. At one stage he thought that the best dramatisation of this statement would be a moment when, either through lighting, or because Morrie and Zach sat with their backs to the audience - it would be impossible to tell who was Morris and who was Zach. (Nb, p.72)

It is also interesting to compare this text with the *Notebooks* entry made when the Serpent Players were producing *The Coat* (see page 154 above).

³ Although ironically this echoes the first word spoken in *Boesman and Lena* where Lena says: 'Here', representing her desperation at the beginning of the play that after eighteen years of wandering she is back in the Swartkops River mud - in direct contrast to the spirited sense of Sondheimian survival that she displays as she exits the stage at the end of the play.

⁴ Mannie Manim, a close friend for well over forty years, perceptively said that Fugard: 'sought to promulgate the truth about this country' (Personal interview. November 2000).

⁵ They were repealed in 1986.

⁶ At one extreme, his recognition by the general public in his own country is derisory. In 2004, the South African Broadcasting Corporation programme, *Great South Africans*, produced a list of a hundred names that, not unsurprisingly, had Nelson Mandela at number one, but with Athol Fugard at the other end of the scale at number 100, eclipsed (if that is the right word) by such luminaries as Hansie Cronje at number 11, Charlize Theron at number 12 and non-South African Mahatma Gandhi at number 4. Nobel prize-winner JM Coetzee did not figure at all. The mania of the celebrity has spread to Africa.

⁷ Activists, including Fort Calata, who were murdered in 1985. In 1992 a document came to life within the military/security establishment that evidently instructed that these 'persons be permanently removed from society as a matter of urgency'. The message was dated twenty days before the murders took place (Sparks 2003, p. 158) In *Country of My Skull* Krog quotes a friend of hers: 'The funeral of the Cradock Four ...changed the political landscape of this country for ever. It was like a raging fire....in a sense it was the real beginning of the end of Apartheid (Krog 1999, p.65).

⁸ In the Yeats poem it is 'upon'.

⁹ Adam Small, a Coloured writer who used Kaaps (once the lingua franca of colonial Cape Town), was the author of the play *Kanna Hy Kô Hystoe* that André Brink described as a 'high point in Afrikaans drama' (Kruger 1999, p.119).

¹⁰ Krog saw this crying as: 'the beginning of the Truth Commission - the signature tune, the definitive moment....She was wearing this vivid orange-red dress, and she threw herself backwards and that sound - that sound - it will haunt me for ever and ever (Krog 1999, pp. 63/64).

¹¹ A car tyre was filled with petrol, placed round the neck of the victim, and set alight.

¹² Copy obtained from the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, London.

Contacts & Interviews

Akerman, Anthony *	Born in Natal in 1949, and a graduate of Rhodes University, he left South Africa in 1973 and was in exile for seventeen years. Much of his time in Europe was spent directing a wide range of works from Pinter to Beckett including the Dutch premieres of many Fugard plays. He worked in Britain, Mexico, France and Holland, where he produced his first play set against South Africa's border war in Namibia, the superbly realised <i>Somewhere on of the Border</i> (1983). He returned to South Africa in 1992. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 25 October 2000.
Astbury, Brian *	Founder, with his wife Yvonne Bryceland, of The Space Theatre in Cape Town, which opened in May 1972 with the premiere of <i>Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act</i> . This was the first pioneering fringe theatre in South Africa. Astbury moved to England in 1979, where his wife died in 1992, and now teaches theatre studies in London. Interviewed in London, 21 February 2001.
Cooke, Vanessa *	Actress and playwright. Founder member of The Market Theatre Company and now a trustee. Director of The Laboratory, a theatre school and workshop. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 3 November 2000.
Dike, Fatima *	Playwright, born 1940 in Cape Town. Author of <i>The First South African</i> , <i>Glasshouse</i> , <i>The Sacrifice of Kreli</i> (the first play by an African woman published in South Africa) and <i>So What's New</i> . Worked at The Space Theatre. Went into exile to the United States from 1979 to 1983. Visiting Writer Fellowship at the Open University. Worked with schools on HIV/AIDS awareness. Interviewed at the Open University, July 1996 and in Cape Town, 3 November 2000.
Flockemann, Miki *	Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of the Western Cape where her area of research and expertise includes South African theatre, performance and media studies. Interviewed in Cape Town, 31 October 2000.
Hauptfleisch, Temple *	Born at Bloemfontein in 1945. Director of the Centre for Theatre and Performance at Stellenbosch University. Founder, with Ian Steadman, of the <i>South African Theatre Journal</i> . Interviewed at Stellenbosch University, 2 November 2000.
Hofmeyr, Isabel	Professor of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 23 October 2000.
Fugard, Athol *	Interviewed in Dublin, 22 November 2002.
Langa, Mandla	Born in Durban 1950. Arrested 1976, slipped bail and fled to Botswana. Held various posts abroad for the ANC including Cultural Representative in the UK and Western Europe. Former board member of the SABC. Author of three published novels. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 3 November 2000.
Lindop, Grahame	Former Chairman of the Market Theatre Foundation.
Manim, Mannie *	Founder member of the Market Theatre Company. Director Baxter Theatre, Cape Town. Interviewed in Cape Town, 1 November 2000.
Maponya, Maishe *	Playwright and director. Works include <i>The Hungry Earth</i> , <i>Dirty Work</i> , <i>Gangsters</i> and <i>Umongikazi/The Nurse</i> . Interviewed in Johannesburg, 26 October 2000.
Marks, Shula	Emeritus Professor of History, School of Oriental and African Studies. University of London..
McDonald, Marianne	Professor of Theatre and Classics at the University of California, San Diego.

Mda, Zakes *	Playwright, poet and academic at the National University in Lesotho and as Research Fellow at Yale. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 26 October 2000.
Morphet, Tony	Associate Professor, University of Cape Town. Interviewed in Cape Town, 30 April 2003.
Pechey, Graham	Former lecturer at University of Hertfordshire. Authority on Mikhail Bakhtin. Interviewed at Cambridge, 8 May 2003.
Peterson, Bheki *	Associate Professor of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 24 October 2000.
Purkey, Malcolm *	Professor at the School of Dramatic Art, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and recently appointed Director of The Market Theatre. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 24 October 2000 and 28 April 2005.
Sampson, Anthony	Former editor of the Drum magazine in Johannesburg. Author of <i>Anatomy of Britain</i> and the authorised biography of Nelson Mandela. Interviewed in London, 6 November 2001.
Sher, Antony	Actor and writer. Interviewed in Stratford-upon-Avon, 15 March 2000.
Smith, Rowan	The Dean of Cape Town. St George's Cathedral. Interviewed in Cape Town, 30 April 2003.
Sparks, Allister *	Former editor of the Rand Daily Mail. Author of, <i>inter alia</i> , <i>The Mind of South Africa</i> . Interviewed in Johannesburg, 25 October 2000.
Steadman, Ian *	Former Head of the School of Dramatic Art, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, now Director of the University of the Witwatersrand Foundation. Interviewed in Johannesburg, 23 October 2000.
Suzman, Janet	Actress.
Uys, Pieter-Dirk	Playwright and satirist.
Wakashe, Themba	Department of Arts Culture Science and Technology, Pretoria.

* Meetings where the conversation was tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Chronology

Year	South African Politics	Athol Fugard's Life
1931	Statute of Westminster confirms South African union. Entertainments Act allows censorship.	
1932		Athol Fugard born at Middelburg, Great Karoo. Cape Province.
1935		Fugard family move to Port Elizabeth.
1936	Native Representation Act. Black people excluded from the voters' rolls in the Cape.	
1938		Attends the Marist Brothers College. Mother and father run a boarding house. From 1941, to the 1970s, the mother runs St George's Park Tea Room.
1939	Customs Act excludes unwanted publications.	
1946 - 1950		On a scholarship, attends secondary school at Port Elizabeth Technical College.
1948	National Party elected.	
1951 - 1953		At the University of Cape Town studying philosophy, sociology and anthropology. Leaves in third year, before final examinations. Sails on <i>SS Graigaur</i> around the world, boarding at Port Sudan, and returning in 1954 from Glasgow.
1949	Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act.	
1950	Population Registration Act. Group Areas Act. Suppression of Communism Act. Immorality Amendment Act	
1951	Bantu Authorities Act. Homelands established. Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act.	
1952	Events to mark the 300 th anniversary of a 'refreshment station' founded by the Dutch at the Cape, are greeted by a widespread 'Defiance Campaign of Unjust Laws'. About 8000 people are imprisoned for their acts of defiance.	
1953	Public Safety Act could declare states of emergency including arresting and jailing people for protesting. Criminal Laws Amendment allowed floggings and prisoners could be held for up to six months without a hearing. Bantu Education Act. Abolishment of missionary schools. Reservation of Separate Amenities Act.	
1954	Natives Resettlement Act (extension of the Group Areas Act).	

1955	People's Congress adopt a Freedom Charter, following the UN Declaration of Human Rights, demanding equal rights.	Career in theatre begins. Founds Circle Players in Cape Town. <i>The Cell</i> and <i>Klaas and the Devil</i> .
1956	Riotous Assemblies Act.	
1957	Separate Universities Education Bill.	
1958	Verwoerd Prime Minister - to 1966.	Move to Johannesburg and works in the Natives Commissioner's Court and then becomes stage manager for the National Theatre Organisation. <i>No-Good Friday</i> .
1959	Pan- Africanist Congress (PAC) founded.	<i>Nongogo</i> . Leaves for London and Notebooks begun.
1960	Demonstration at Sharpeville; police kill 67 blacks and wounding 178. Unlawful Organisations Act. Banning of all black political parties. PAC initiates action against pass laws. ANC encourages strikes and boycotts. PAC and ANC banned.	
1961	South Africa expelled from the Commonwealth and formal link with Britain is ended. Republic of South Africa born. General Law Amendment Act (Sabotage Act). <i>Umkhonto we Sizwe</i> ("Spear of the Nation"), an armed wing of the banned ANC, is founded.	<i>The Blood Knot</i> . Daughter born and father dies.
1962		International playwright's boycott. Fugard writes an open letter to block plays in South Africa as protest.
1963	General Law Amendment Act allows detention of 90 days without charge. Publications and Entertainments Act.	<i>The Occupation</i> . Serpent Players founded. First production, Machiavelli's <i>Mandragola</i> , adapted as <i>The Cure</i> .
1964	Many leaders of the PAC and the ANC, including Nelson Mandela, are sentenced to life imprisonment.	
1965	Criminal Procedure Act extends 90 days to 180 days without trial.	<i>Hello and Goodbye</i> . <i>New York Times</i> votes <i>Blood Knot</i> the best play of 1964.
1966 - 1968	Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland become independent states.	<i>The Coat</i> . British Equity bans actors playing in segregated theatres.
1967	Terrorism Act. Indefinite detention allowed.	<i>The Blood Knot</i> presented on BBC 2. Fugard's passport taken.
1968	Liberal Party dissolved. Non- racial political parties prohibited. Steve Biko founds the South African Students' Association (SASO).	Robin Midgley directs <i>People Are Living There</i> in Glasgow.
1969		<i>People are Living There</i> opens in South Africa. <i>Boesman and Lena</i> , first performance in Grahamstown. <i>The Last Bus</i> .
1970		<i>Boesman and Lena</i> performed in a New York.

			<i>Friday's Bread on Monday.</i>
1971			<i>Boesman and Lena</i> at the Royal Court Theatre in London. <i>Orestes</i> . Fugard's passport is returned.
1972			<i>Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act</i> , presented at the opening of the Space Theatre in Cape Town. <i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> .
1973			<i>The Island</i> . <i>Boesman and Lena</i> filmed.
1974			<i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> and <i>The Island</i> performed in New York. Kani and Ntshona win Tony awards.
1975			<i>Dimetos</i> .
1976			Kani and Ntshona are detained in the Transkei, followed by an international outcry leading to their release.
1977	Soweto riots begin, when at least 575 people die in confrontation with the police. Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei Homelands made 'independent'.	Steve Biko killed. SASO banned. UN embargo on supply of arms to South Africa	<i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> at the Royal Court Theatre in London. Film of <i>The Guest</i> with Fugard as Eugene Marais. Fugard in the film <i>Meetings with Remarkable Men</i> directed by Peter Brook.
1978			
1978			<i>A Lesson from Aloes</i> .
1980			<i>Marigolds in August</i> filmed. <i>The Drummer</i> . <i>Tsotsi</i> , a novel, published.
	Botha is Prime Minister.		<i>"Master Harold"...and the boys</i> .
1982			<i>Notebooks</i> published.
1983			<i>The Road to Mecca</i> .
1984			
1985	Unrest and rioting brutally suppressed by the Government. State of Emergency. USA and the European Community impose sanctions. Immorality Act modified.		
1986			
1986	Pass laws are abolished. Riots continue with brutal suppression and the media are forbidden to report on this activity.		
1987	Three-week strike by 250,000 mine-workers.		<i>A Place with the Pigs</i> .
1989	F W de Klerk becomes State President.		<i>My Children! My Africa!</i>
1990	ANC becomes a recognised party. Restrictions lifted on public protests. Nelson Mandela and others released.		

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Billington, Michael	1971	<i>Boesman and Lena</i> In: <i>Plays and Players</i> 18.49	London	MultiMedia Publishing
Billington, Michael	1974	'Sizwe Bansi' In: <i>The Guardian</i> 9 January	London	<i>The Guardian</i>
Black, Michael	1992	'Alan Paton and the rule of law' In: <i>African Affairs</i> 91.362	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Bloom, Harry	1961	<i>King Kong - An African Jazz Opera</i>	London	Collins
Blumberg, Marcia	1991	'Languages of Violence: Fugard's <i>Boesman and Lena</i> In: <i>Themes in Drama</i> - 13: <i>Violence</i> Redmond, James (ed)	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
Blumberg, Marcia	1998	'Re-Staging Resistance, Re-Viewing Women: 1990s Productions of Fugard's <i>Hello and Goodbye</i> and <i>Boesman and Lena</i> In <i>Staging Resistance</i> by Collieran, Jeanne & Spencer, Jenny (eds.)	Ann Arbor	University of Michigan Press

Blumberg, Marcia	1993	'Fragmentation and psychosis' In: <i>Themes in Drama 15: Madness</i> , Redmond, James (ed)	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
Blumberg, Marcia & Walder, Dennis (eds.)	1999	<i>South African Theatre As/And Intervention</i>	Amsterdam-Atlanta	Rodopi
Boal, Augusto	1985	<i>Theatre of the Oppressed</i> translated by Charles A and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride	New York	Theater Communications Group
Boehmer, Elleke	1995	<i>Colonial and Postcolonial Literature</i>	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Boraine, Alex	2000	<i>A Country Unmasked Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission</i>	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Branford, Jean	1980	<i>A Dictionary of South African English</i>	Cape Town	Oxford University Press
Brecht, Bertolt	1991	'Questions from a worker who reads' In: <i>The Poetry Anthology</i>	Milton Keynes	The Open University
Brecht, Bertolt	1998	<i>Collected Plays: One</i>	London	Methuen
Brecht, Bertolt	2001	<i>The Measures Taken and Other Lehrstücke</i> edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim	New York	Arcade Publishing
Breytenbach, Breyten	1984	<i>The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist</i>	London	Faber & Faber
Breytenbach, Breyten	1986	<i>End Papers</i>	London	Faber & Faber
Breytenbach, Breyten	1999	<i>Dog Heart: A memoir</i>	London	Faber & Faber
Brink, Andre	1983	<i>Mapmakers</i>	London	Faber & Faber
Brink, Andre	1990	'All of Me' In: <i>Leadership</i> (9.3)		
Brink, Andre	1993	<i>Looking on Darkness</i>	London	Random House
Brink, Andre	1996	<i>Re-inventing a Continent</i>	London	Secker & Warburg
Brink, Andre & Coetzee, J M	1987	<i>A Land Apart</i>	London	Penguin Books
Brook, Peter	2000	<i>Listening to the silence In: ZA at Play</i>		<i>Mail & Guardian</i> On-line: 11 February
Brustein, Robert	1991	<i>The Theatre of Revolt Studies in modern drama from Ibsen to Genet</i>	Chicago	Ivan R. Dee
Brutus, Dennis	1973	<i>A Simple Lust</i>	Oxford	Heinemann
Bunting, Brian	1969	<i>The Rise of the South African Reich</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Campschreur, Willem & Divendal, Joost	1989	<i>Culture in Another South Africa</i>	London	Zed Books
Camus, Albert	1971	<i>The Rebel</i> translated by Anthony Bower	London	Penguin Books

Camus, Albert	1975	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> translated by Justin O'Brien	London	Penguin Books
Camus, Albert	1983	<i>The Outsider</i> translated by Joseph Laredo	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Cary, Joyce	1976	<i>Mister Johnson</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Childs, Peter & Williams, Patrick	1997	<i>An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory</i>	Hemel Hempstead	Prentice Hall
Christopher A J	1994	<i>The Atlas of Apartheid</i>	London	Routledge
Clingman, Stephen	1990	'Revolution and Reality' In: <i>Rendering Things Visible</i> Trump, Martin (ed.)	Athens (USA)	Ohio University Press
Clingman, Stephen	1993	<i>The Novels of Nadine Gordimer</i>	London	Bloomsbury
Coetzee, Ampie	1990	'Literature and Crisis' In: <i>Rendering Things Visible</i> Trump, Martin (ed.)	Athens (USA)	Ohio University Press
Coetzee, J M	1996	<i>Giving Offense</i>	Chicago	University of Chicago Press
Cohen, Derek	1978	'Athol Fugard's <i>Boesman and Lena</i> ' In: <i>Journal of Commonwealth Literature</i> 12.3	London	Sage Publications
Cohen, Derek	1991	'Athol Fugard and the Liberal Dilemma' In: <i>Brick</i> 40	Toronto	Michael Redhill
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	1952	<i>Kubla Khan</i> In: <i>The London Book of English Verse</i> Read, Herbert and Dobree, Bonamy (eds)	London	Eyre & Spottiswoode
Colleran, Jeanne	1988	<i>The Dissenting Writer in South Africa: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Drama of Athol Fugard and the short fiction of Nadine Gordimer</i>	Ohio	PhD thesis. Ohio State University
Colleran, Jeanne	1995	'Athol Fugard and the problematics of the Liberal Critique' In: <i>Modern Drama</i> 38.3	Toronto	University of Toronto Press
Colleran, Jeanne	1995	'Resituating Fugard: Rethinking Revolutionary Theatre' In: <i>South African Theatre Journal</i> 9.2	Stellenbosch	<i>South African Theatre Journal</i>
Colleran, Jeanne & Spencer, Jenny (eds.)	1998	<i>Staging Resistance Essays on Political Theater</i>	Ann Arbor	University of Michigan Press
Coplan, David	1985	<i>In Township Tonight South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre</i>	Harlow	Longman
Couzens, Tim	1985	<i>The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H. I. E. Dhlomo</i>	Johannesburg	Ravan
Coveney, Michael	1973	'Challenging the Silence' In: <i>Plays and Players</i> 21.2	London	MultiMedia Publishing

Crow, Brian with Banfield, Chris	1996	"Athol Fugard and the South Africa 'workshop' play" In: <i>An introduction to post-colonial theatre</i> Crow, Brian	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
Crowder, Michael	1987	'Whose Dream Was It Anyway? Twenty-Five Years of African Independence' In: <i>African Affairs</i> 86.342	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Davenport, T R H	1989	<i>South Africa A Modern History</i>	Bergvlei	Southern Book Publishers
Davis, Geoffrey & Fuchs, Anne (eds.)	1996	<i>Theatre and Change in South Africa</i>	Amsterdam	Harwood Academic Publishers
Davis, Geoffrey V	1999	'Of "Undesirability" The Control of Theatre in South Africa during the Age of Apartheid' In: <i>New Theatre in Francophone and Anglophone Africa</i> Fuchs, Anne (ed)	Amsterdam - Atlanta	Rodopi
Davis, Geoffrey V (ed)	1997	<i>Beyond the Echoes of Soweto Five plays by Matsemela Manaka</i>	Amsterdam	Harwood Academic Publishers
Daymond, M J; Jacobs, J U & Lenta, Margaret (eds)	1984	<i>Momentum On Recent South African Writing</i>	Pietermaritzburg	University of Natal Press
De Klerk, W A	1975	<i>The Puritans in Africa</i>	London	Rev. Collings
De Kok, Ingrid & Press, Karen (eds)	1990	<i>Spring is Rebellious</i>	Cape Town	Buchu Books
Deacon, Harriet (ed)	1996	<i>The Island A History of Robben Island 1488-1990</i>	Claremont	David Philip
Denniston, Robin	2000	<i>Trevor Huddleston A Life</i>	London	Pan Books
Derrida, Jacques & Tlili, Mustapha (eds)	1987	<i>For Nelson Mandela</i>	New York	Seaver Books
Dhlomo, Herbert	1985	<i>H I E Dhlomo Collected Works</i>	Johannesburg	Ravan Press
Dubow, Saul	1990	'Race, civilisation and culture: the elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years' In: <i>The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa</i> Marks, Shula & Trapido, Stanley (eds.)	Harlow	Longman
Dubow, Saul	1995	<i>Scientific racism in modern South Africa</i>	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
Durbach, Errol	1984	'Sophocles in South Africa' In: <i>Comparative Drama</i> 18.3	Kalamazoo	West Michigan University

Durbach, Errol	1987	"Master Harold...and the boys" Athol Fugard and the Psychopathology of Apartheid' In: <i>Modern Drama</i> 30.4	Toronto	University of Toronto Press
Durbach, Errol	1989	'Surviving in Xanadu: Fugard's "A Lesson from Aloes"' In: <i>Ariel</i> 20.1	Calgary	University of Calgary
Eagleton, Terry	1999	<i>Literary Theory An Introduction</i>	Oxford	Blackwell Publishers
Edgar, David	1997	<i>Plays:1</i>	London	Methuen
Eliot, TS	1977	<i>The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot</i>	London	Book Club Associates
Ellison, Ralph	1965	<i>The Invisible Man</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Eyre, Richard & Wright, Nicholas	2000	<i>Changing Stages A View of British Theatre in the Twentieth Century</i>	London	Bloomsbury
Fanon, Frantz	1986	<i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> translated by Charles Lam Markmann	London	Pluto Press
Fanon, Frantz	1970	<i>Toward the African Revolution</i> translated by Haakon Chevalier	Harmondsworth	Pelican Books
Fanon, Frantz	1990	<i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> translated by Constance Farrington	London	Penguin Books
February, Vernon	1991	<i>Mind Your Colour</i>	London	Kegan Paul
Fenton, James	1980	'A protest before our very eyes' In: <i>The Sunday Times</i> 13 July	London	<i>The Sunday Times</i>
Fletcher, Jill	1994	<i>The Story of South African Theatre 1780-1930</i>	Cape Town	Vlaeberg
Fletcher, John & Spurling, John	1978	<i>Beckett A study of his plays</i>	London	Eyre Methuen
Foley, Andrew	1994	'Courageous Pessimist' In: <i>New Contrast</i> 22.4	Cape Town	South African Literary Journal
Foley, Andrew	1996	<i>Liberalism in South African English Literature 1948-1990 A reassessment of the work of Alan Paton and Athol Fugard</i>	Durban	PhD thesis. University of Natal
Forgacs, David (ed)	1988	<i>A Gramsci Reader</i>	London	Lawrence & Wishart
Forster, E M	1972	<i>Two Cheers for Democracy</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Foucault, Michel	1991	<i>Discipline and Punish</i> translated by Alan Sheridan	London	Penguin Books
Freire, Paulo	1996	<i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> translated by Myra Bergman Ramos	London	Penguin Books
Fuchs, Anne	1990	<i>Playing the Market The Market Theatre Johannesburg 1976-1986</i>	Chur	Harwood Academic
Fugard, Athol	1978	<i>Orestes</i> In: <i>Theatre One</i> Stephen Gray (ed)	Johannesburg	AD. Donker

Fugard, Athol	1983	<i>Tsotsi</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Fugard, Athol	1984	<i>Sizwe Banzi is Dead In: A Night at the Theatre</i> Harwood, Ronald (ed)	London	Methuen
Fugard, Athol	1987	<i>Selected Plays</i>	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Fugard, Athol	1993	<i>Playland and A Place with the Pigs</i>	New York	Theatre Communications Group
Fugard, Athol	1993	'Some Problems of a Playwright from South Africa' and 'Recent Notebook Entries' In: <i>Twentieth Century Literature Athol Fugard Issue</i>	New York	Hofstra University
Fugard, Athol	1994	<i>Cousins A Memoir</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Fugard, Athol	1996	<i>My Life and Valley Song</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Fugard, Athol	1998	<i>Athol Fugard: Plays One</i>	London	Faber and Faber
Fugard, Athol	1999	<i>The Captain's Tiger A Memoir for the Stage</i>	New York	Theatre Communications Group
Fugard, Athol	2000	<i>Interior Plays</i>	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Fugard, Athol	2000	<i>Port Elizabeth Plays</i>	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Fugard, Athol	2000	<i>Township Plays</i>	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Fugard, Athol	2002	<i>Sorrows and Rejoicings</i>	New York	Theatre Communications Group
Fugard, Athol	2004	<i>Entrances and Exits</i>		Unpublished
Fugard, Athol & Devenish, Ross	1992	<i>Marigolds in August and The Guest</i>	New York	Theatre Communications Group
Gainor, J Ellen (ed)	1995	<i>Imperialism and Theatre</i>	London	Routledge
Gates, Henry Louis, Jr.	1986	'Race' Writing and Difference	Chicago	University of Chicago Press
Gilbert, Helen & Tompkins, Joanne	1996	<i>Post-Colonial Drama</i>	London	Routledge
Gillomee, Hermann	1995	'The non-racial franchise and Afrikaner and coloured identity, 1910-1944' In: <i>African Affairs</i> 94.375	Oxford	Oxford University Press
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Golding, William	1979	<i>Darkness Visible</i>	London	Faber & Faber
Gordimer, Nadine	1978	<i>The Conservationist</i>	London	Penguin Books
Gordimer, Nadine	1988	'Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest' In: <i>The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places</i> Clingman, Stephen (ed)	London	Jonathan Cape
Gordimer, Nadine	1994	<i>Something Out There</i>	London	Bloomsbury Publishing
Graver, David	1999	<i>Drama For A New South Africa</i>	Bloomington	Indiana University Press
Gray, Stephen	1979	<i>South African Literature</i>	Cape Town	David Philip
Gray, Stephen	1984	<i>Stephen Black Three Plays</i>	Craighall	AD Donker
Gray, Stephen	1990	"Between Me and My Country': Fugard's 'My Children! My Africa!' at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg" In: <i>New Theatre Quarterly</i> 6.21	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
Gray, Stephen (ed)	1982	<i>Athol Fugard</i>	Johannesburg	McGraw Hill
Gray, Stephen (ed)	1993	<i>South African Plays</i>	London	Nick Hern Books
Green, Michael	1984	"The Politics of Loving': Fugard and the Metropolis" In: <i>English Academy Review</i> 2	Johannesburg	The English Academy of South Africa
Green, Michael	1997	<i>Novel Histories Past, Present, and Future in South African Fiction</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Green, R J	1969	'South Africa's Plague: One View of <i>The Blood Knot</i> ' In: <i>Modern Drama</i> 12.4	Toronto	University of Toronto Press
Green, Robert J	1968	'Athol Fugard: Dramatist of Loneliness and Isolation' In <i>Teater S.A.</i> Vol No. 2	Cape Town	
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Grotowski, Jerzy	1991	<i>Towards A Poor Theatre</i> edited by Eugenio Barba	London	Methuen – Drama
Gunner, Liz (ed)	1991	<i>Politics and Performance Theatre, Poetry and Song in Southern Africa</i>	Johannesburg	Witswatersrand University Press
Gussow, Mel	1982	'Witness' In <i>New Yorker</i>	New York	<i>New Yorker</i>

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Hastings, Adrian	1981	'The Christian Churches and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa' In: <i>African Affairs</i> 80.320	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Hauptfleisch, Temple	1997	<i>Theatre and Society in South Africa</i>	Pretoria	J L van Schaik
Hauptfleisch, Temple & Steadman, Ian	1991	<i>South African Theatre Four plays and an introduction</i>	Pretoria	Kagiso Tertiary
Hauptfleisch, Temple, Viljoen, Wilma & Greunen, Celéste Van	1982	<i>Athol Fugard: A Source Guide</i>	Johannesburg	AD Donker
Head, Bessie	1993	<i>The Cardinals</i>	Oxford	Heinemann
Henry, William A III	1989	'On the Front Line Of Anger' In: <i>Time</i>		Time Inc.
Hirson, Baruch	1981	'Language in Control and Resistance in South Africa' In: <i>African Affairs</i> 80.319	Oxford	Oxford University Press
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Hobsbawm, Eric & Ranger, Terence	1997	<i>The Invention of Tradition</i>	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
Hobson, Harold	1963	'(Knock)ings at the Door: Anti-Apartheid at the Arts' In <i>Sunday Times</i> 24 February	London	<i>Sunday Times</i>
Hofmeyr, Isabel	1990	'Building a nation from words' In: <i>The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa</i> Marks, Shula & Trapido, Stanley (eds.)	Harlow	Longman
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Horn, Andrew	1997	'South African Theatre Ideology and Rebellion' In: <i>Readings in Popular African Culture</i> Barber, Karin (ed)	Oxford	James Currey
Hornby, Richard	1990	'Political Drama' In: <i>The Hudson Review</i> 43.1	New York	The Hudson Review
Jameson, Fredric	1996	<i>The Political Unconscious</i>	London	Routledge
Jameson, Fredric	2000	<i>Brecht and Method</i>	London	Verso
Johnson, R W	2004	<i>South Africa The First Man, The Last Nation</i>	London	Weidenfield & Nicolson
Jones, Laura	1994	<i>Nothing Except Ourselves The Harsh Times and Bold Theater of South Africa's Mbongeni Ngema</i>	New York	Viking

Jordon, John O	1993	'Life in the Theatre: Autobiography, Politics, and Romance in "Master Harold"...and the boys' In: <i>Twentieth Century Literature Athol Fugard Issue</i>	New York	Hofstra University
Joubert, Elsa	1987	<i>Poppie Nongena</i>	New York	First Owl Book
Kani, John (ed)	1994	<i>More Market Plays</i>	Johannesburg	AD Donker
Kannemeyer, J C	1993	<i>A History of Afrikaans Literature</i>	Pietermaritzburg	Shuter & Shooter
Kauffmann, Stanley	1974	<i>Sizwe Banzi Is Dead The Island In: The New Republic</i> 21 December	New York	<i>The New Republic</i>
Kavanagh, Robert	1985	<i>Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa</i>	London	Zed Books
Kavanagh, Robert (ed)	1981	<i>South African People's Plays</i>	London	Heinemann
Kay, Jackie	1999	<i>Trumpet</i>	London	Picador
Kearney, Richard	2002	<i>On Stories</i>	London	Routledge
Keneally, Thomas	1987	<i>The Playmaker</i>	London	Guild Publishing
Kerr, David	1995	<i>African Popular Theatre</i>	London	James Currey
Kerr, Walter	1980	'A History Lesson From Miller, A Social Lesson From Fugard' In: <i>The New York Times</i> 30 November	New York	<i>The New York Times</i>
Khan, Naseem	1971	'Athol Fugard: (I'm more interested in talking about rubbish than politics)' In: <i>Time Out</i> 23-29 July	London	
Kiewiet, C W De	1975	<i>A History of South Africa</i>	London	Oxford University Press
King, Robert	1993	'The Rhetoric of Dramatic Technique in <i>Blood Knot</i> ' In: <i>South African Theatre Journal</i> 7.1	Stellenbosch	The University of Stellenbosch
Kirby, Robert	1982	<i>It's a Boy</i>	Sandton	Triad Publishers
Krog, Antjie	1999	<i>Country of My Skull</i>	London	Vintage
Kruger, Loren	1999	<i>The Drama of South Africa</i>	London	Routledge
Lange, Margreet de	1997	<i>The Muzzled Muse Literature and Censorship in South Africa</i>	Amsterdam-Philadelphia	John Benjamins
Larlham, Peter	1991	<i>Black Theatre, Dance and Ritual in South Africa</i>	Ann Arbor	UMI Research Press
Larsen, Nella	1997	<i>Passing</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Leigh Hunt, James Henry	2004	'Abou Ben Adhem' In: <i>The Times Book of English Verse</i>	Glasgow	HarperCollins
Leitch, Vincent (ed)	2001	<i>The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism</i>	New York	WW Norton & Co
Lelyveld, Joseph	1985	<i>Move Your Shadow</i>	New York	Times Books

Lelyveld, Joseph	1983	"Master Harold' Stuns Johannesburg Audience" In: <i>The New York Times</i>	New York	<i>The New York Times</i>
Lessing, Doris	1994	<i>The Grass is Singing</i>	London	Flamingo
Levy, Frank	1973	'Fugard's Boesman and Lena Physical and Metaphysical Exhaustion' In: <i>Yale/Theatre</i> 4.1	New Haven	Yale University
Lodge Tom	1983	<i>Black Politics in South Africa</i>	London	Longman
Loomba, Ania & Orkin, Martin	1998	<i>Post-Colonial Shakespeares</i>	London	Routledge
Maake, Nhlanhla	1992	Multi-cultural relations in a post-apartheid South Africa' In: <i>African Affairs</i> 91.365	Oxford	Oxford University Press
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Malan, Rian	1990	<i>My Traitor's Heart</i>	London	Vintage
Mandela, Nelson	1999	<i>Long Walk to Freedom</i>	London	Abacus
Maponya, Maishe	1995	<i>Doing Plays For A Change</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Márai, Sándor	2003	<i>Embers</i> translated by Carol Brown Janeway	London	Penguin Books
Matshikiza, Todd	1982	<i>Chocolates for my wife</i>	Cape Town	David Philip
Matshoba, Mtutuzeli	1971	<i>Call Me Not a Man</i>	Johannesburg	Ravan Press
Maylam, Paul	1990	The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa' In: <i>African Affairs</i> 89.354	Oxford	Oxford University Press
McClintock, Anne	1995	<i>Imperial Leather</i>	New York	Routledge
Mda, Zakes	1990	<i>The Plays of Zakes Mda</i>	Johannesburg	Ravan Press
Mda, Zakes	1993	<i>And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Mda, Zakes	1993	<i>When People Play People Development Communication Through Theatre</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Mda, Zakes (ed)	1996	<i>Four Plays</i>	Florida Hills	Vivlia Publishers
Memmi, Albert	1990	<i>The colonizer and the colonized</i> translated by Howard Greenfield	London	Earthscan Publications
Merrett, Christopher	1994	<i>A Culture Of Censorship Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa</i>	Cape Town	David Philip
Mhlope, Gcina; Vanrenen, Maralin & Mtshali, Thembi	1988	<i>Have You Seen Zandile</i>	London	Methuen

Millin, Sarah Gertrude	1986	<i>God's Stepchildren</i>	Craighall	AD Donker
Modisane, Bloke	1965	<i>Blame Me on History</i>	London	Panther Books
Mphahlele, Ezekiel	1959	<i>Down Second Avenue</i>	London	Faber and Faber
Mtwa, Percy; Ngema, Mbongeni & Simon, Barney	1983	<i>Woza Albert</i>	London	Methuen
Munro, Margaret	1981	'The Fertility of Despair: Fugard's Bitter Aloes' In: <i>Meanjin</i> 40.4	Melbourne	Melbourne University Press
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Ngugi wa Thiong'o	1986	<i>Decolonising the Mind</i>	London	James Currey
Nicol, Mike	1991	<i>A Good- Looking Corpse</i>	London	Secker & Warburg
Nightingale, Benedict	1973	'Sparks of Life' In: <i>The New Statesman</i> 28 September	London	<i>The New Statesman</i>
Nightingale, Benedict	1999	'White out of black' In: <i>The Times</i> 12 April	London	<i>The Times</i>
Nixon, Rob	1994	<i>Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood South African Culture and the World Beyond</i>	New York	Routledge
Nkosi, Lewis	1973	<i>The Rhythm of Violence In: Themes of Drama An Anthology</i> George E Wellwarth	New York	Thomas Y Crowell Company
Nkosi, Lewis	1983	<i>Home and Exile</i>	Harlow	Longman
Nkosi, Lewis	1987	<i>Mating Birds</i>	New York	Harper & Row
Nuttall, Sarah & Coetzee, Carli (eds)	1998	<i>Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa</i>	Oxford	Oxford University Press
O'Brien, Anthony	2001	<i>Against Normalization Writing Radical Democracy in South Africa</i>	Durham	Duke University Press
Omond, Roger	1985	<i>The Apartheid Handbook</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
Onselen, Charles Van	1996	<i>The Seed is Mine The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894-1985</i>	Oxford	James Currey
Orkin, Martin	1991	<i>Drama and the South African State</i>	Manchester	Manchester University Press
Orkin, Martin	1988	'Body and State in <i>Blood knot/The Blood Knot</i> ' In: <i>South African Theatre Journal</i> 2.1	Johannesburg	<i>South African Theatre Journal</i>

Orkin, Martin (ed)	2001	<i>At the Junction Four plays by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
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O'Sheel, Patrick	1978	"Athol Fugard's 'Poor Theatre'" <i>In: Journal of Commonwealth Literature</i> 12.3	London	Sage Publications
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Plaatje, Solomon	1978	<i>Mhudi</i>	Oxford	Heinemann
Plaatje, Solomon	1987	<i>Native Life in South Africa</i>	Harlow	Longman
Platzky, Laurine & Walker, Cheryl (eds)	1985	<i>The Surplus People</i>	Braamfontein	Ravan Press
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Rushdie, Salman	1991	<i>Imaginary Homelands Essays and Criticism 1981- 1991</i>	London	Granta Books
Ryan, Colleen	1990	<i>Bayers Naudé Pilgrimage of Faith</i>	Cape Town	David Philip
Sachs, Albie	2000	<i>The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter</i>	Cape Town	David Philip
Sachs, Wulf	1996	<i>Black Hamlet</i>	Baltimore	The John Hopkins University Press
Said, Edward	1983	<i>The World, the Text, and the Critic</i>	Cambridge, Massachusetts	Harvard University Press
Said, Edward	1985	<i>Orientalism</i>	London	Penguin Books
Said, Edward	1993	<i>Culture and Imperialism</i>	London	Chatto & Windus
Said, Edward	1995	<i>The Politics of Dispossession</i>	London	Vintage
Sampson, Anthony	1999	<i>Mandela</i>	London	Harper Collins
Sanders, Mark	2002	<i>Complicities: the intellectual and apartheid</i>	Durham	Duke University Press
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Schwartz, Pat	1988	<i>The Best of Company</i>	Craighall	AD Donker
Seidenspinner, Margarete	1986	<i>Exploring the Labyrinth</i>	Essen	Verlag Die Blaue Eule
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Sher, Anthony & Doran, Greg	1997	<i>Woza Shakespeare</i>	London	Methuen
Simon, Barney (ed)	1997	<i>Born In The RSA Four Workshopped Plays</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Slabolepszy, Paul	1985	<i>Saturday Night at the Palace</i>	Johannesburg	AD Donker
Slabolepszy, Paul	1994	<i>Mooi Street and other moves</i>	Johannesburg	Witwatersrand University Press
Smith, Stevie	1999	<i>The Holiday</i>	London	Virago
Solberg, Rolf	1990	<i>Alternative Theatre in South Africa Talks with Prime Movers since the 1970s</i>	Pietermaritzburg	Haded Books
Sophocles	1998	<i>Antigone, Oedipus the King and Electra</i> Hall, Edith (Ed)	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Sparks, Allister	1991	<i>The Mind of South Africa</i>	London	Mandarin
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Themba, Can	1999	<i>The Suit</i>	Johannesburg	ViVa Books

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Thomson, Peter & Sacks, Glendyr (Eds)	2002	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Brecht</i>	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
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Trump, Martin (ed)	1990	<i>Rendering Things Visible Essays on South African Literary Culture</i>	Athens (USA)	Ohio University Press
Tucker, Percy	1997	<i>Just The Ticket</i>	Jeppestown	Jonathan Ball Publishers
Tynan, Kenneth	1963	'Under the Influence' In: <i>The Observer Weekend Review</i> 24 February	London	<i>The Observer</i>
Vandenbroucke, Russell	1986	<i>Truths the Hand can Touch: The Theatre of Athol Fugard</i>	Craighall	AD Donker
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Walder, Dennis	2003	<i>Athol Fugard</i>	Tavistock	Northcote House
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West, Rebecca	1949	<i>The Meaning of Treason</i>	London	Macmillan
Willan, Brian	1984	<i>Sol Plaatje South African Nationalist 1876-1932</i>	London	Heinemann
Willett, John (ed)	1964	<i>Brecht on Theatre</i>	London	Methuen Drama
Williams Patrick & Chrisman, Laura (eds.)	1992	<i>Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory</i>	New York	Columbia University Press
Williams, Raymond	1973	<i>Drama from Ibsen to Brecht</i>	Harmondsworth	Penguin Books
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