

**LIBERALISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH LITERATURE 1948-1990:  
A REASSESSMENT OF THE WORK OF ALAN PATON AND ATHOL FUGARD**

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Natal, Durban, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Natal. It has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other university.

*Andrew Foley*

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(Andrew John Foley)

.....*30th* day of.....*May*.....1996

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the concept of liberalism as it informs, and is expressed in, the work of two of the most prominent South African writers during the apartheid era of 1948-1990: Alan Paton and Athol Fugard. The aim of this study is to come to a precise and objective understanding of liberalism during this time, and to demonstrate how the nature and worth of the literary achievements of these writers can be properly ascertained only through a thorough grasp of their liberal outlook. A dual focus is thus pursued. From one perspective, a fuller understanding is facilitated of the work of two major South African writers in the light of a lucid and coherent comprehension of their liberalism. Obversely, an accurate understanding of their work - as perceptive, sensitive and informed writers, addressing problems of their social and political milieu - in turn serves to illuminate some of the most important dilemmas and responses of liberals in recent South African history.

The rationale for this study arises from the fact that much confusion, imprecision and misunderstanding continues to surround the notion of liberalism in South African literary critical, political and historiographical thinking. Such imprecision, moreover, is not limited to the opponents of liberalism, but also characterises the thinking of many liberal-minded scholars in this country. In consequence, the liberal basis of a good deal of South African literature remains either unacknowledged or misconceived, and, accordingly, the actual meaning and significance of a large proportion of literary work in this country, including that of Paton and Fugard, has not been adequately apprehended or appreciated.

Given this critical imprecision, it is necessary as a preliminary measure to provide an introduction to the notion of liberalism in general theoretical terms before proceeding to a specific exploration of how the values, principles and beliefs which constitute liberal political philosophy present themselves in the literary work under consideration. The opening chapter explicates such fundamental liberal concepts as individualism, autonomy, liberty and equality, as well as some of the differences in emphasis between the leading liberal political theorists. This chapter also considers the nature of the contemporary liberal democratic state, the development of liberalism within the South African context, and some of the key linkages between liberal political philosophy and liberal literary critical practice.

Following this theoretical introduction, the greater part of the thesis involves a detailed critical scrutiny of the creative writing, in turn, of Alan Paton and Athol Fugard. These writers have been chosen, firstly, because they stand out as indisputably the most eminent liberal authors in recent South African literature, indeed, as two of the most acclaimed writers in the contemporary English-speaking world. But their selection also derives from the fact that their writing, taken together, effectively spans the entire period of apartheid. Alan Paton's

famous first novel, Cry, the Beloved Country, was written immediately prior to the Nationalist Party election victory in 1948, and his writing extends into the 1980s. Athol Fugard's career commences in the 1950s and has continued up to and beyond the ending of apartheid in 1990. In fact, his most recent work to be considered in this study, Playland, is set on the last day of 1989, on the very brink of apartheid's demise. As the critical study of each writer's primary literary texts follows a chronological sequence, their work collectively provides a comprehensive view of the developing conflicts and challenges which confronted liberals throughout the time of apartheid.

This is not to suggest that Paton and Fugard were the only liberal writers active against apartheid, and attention is paid to the achievements of other liberal authors during this time. Concomitantly, cognizance is taken of the range of differences between Paton and Fugard, including age, temperament, background, religious convictions, and involvement in formal politics. An advantage of a study dealing with both men is the ability not only to suggest the essential characteristics of liberalism which underlie individual distinctions, but also to reveal how a general liberal orientation manifests itself in particular instances.

A study of both Paton and Fugard has benefits also in a generic sense, in that it allows a perspective on the expression of liberal ideas in both a fictive and a dramaturgical mode. For the most part, this thesis concentrates on each writer's favoured genre (Paton's fiction and Fugard's drama), though consideration is given to their other creative work, such as Paton's poetry and drama, and Fugard's fiction and film work. Moreover, both men's non-creative writing (autobiographical, biographical, notebooks, speeches, articles) is taken into account as a potentially valuable source of insight into the evolution of their liberal understanding.

The most provocative factor motivating the selection of Paton and Fugard for study remains, however, the fact that neither writer's liberal standpoint has to date received full or proper appraisal. It is the contention of this thesis that each writer's liberalism, far from being a subordinate feature of his work, forms the very core of his political morality and aesthetic and demands a precise understanding. The chief objective of this study, then, is to conduct a reassessment of the work of Paton and Fugard through the filter of a rigorous account of their understanding and expression of the fundamental values and principles of liberalism.

**FOR SAMANTHA AND RYANNE**

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## NOTE ON REFERENCING

For secondary texts, this thesis uses the Harvard system of referencing, in which the relevant subject matter or quotation is followed in the text by the author's surname, the date and, where appropriate, the page number (for example, Foley 1996:1). Secondary texts include both general critical works as well as Paton's and Fugard's non-creative writing, such as biography, autobiography, articles, speeches, lectures.

For primary texts, however, the page reference of the text under discussion is indicated by the page number only (for example, p.1). By primary texts is meant Paton's and Fugard's fiction, drama and poetry. As each primary text is discussed consecutively in chronological order, it is clear from the context which novel, short story, poem or play is being cited. These page numbers correspond to the particular edition of the primary text listed under the author's primary works in the references section at the end of the thesis. The sole exception to this rule is Fugard's Notebooks which is treated as a primary text, firstly, because of its propinquity to the primary material, and, secondly, because this facilitates the provision of the specific date of the notebook entry (for example, Notebooks, May 1961, p.30).

The advantage of this system is that it enables the reader to distinguish easily between primary and secondary text references in the course of the discussion, and helps to maintain a generic distinction between primary and secondary material in the thesis as a whole.

# **LIBERALISM**

## Introduction

(i)

Political thought in South Africa during the period of apartheid was characterised by a diversity of contending ideologies and political philosophies. The apartheid system itself was underpinned and informed by an Afrikaner nationalism which was intensely ethnocentric, racially exclusive and authoritarian in nature. Ranged against the apartheid system were a variety of opposition modes which, while united in their desire to end apartheid, were all to some extent incompatible with each other, including African nationalism, the Black Consciousness movement, Marxism and liberalism. Of these rival adversaries of apartheid, liberalism appeared to many observers to be the least likely to prevail: its proponents seemed few in number, ineffectual in political influence, and marginalised in the struggle for power between the forces of the conservative right and the radical left. Yet, through the multiparty negotiations to determine the political dispensation of "the new South Africa" which followed the elimination of apartheid in the 1990s, the country emerged, to all intents and purposes, as a liberal democracy. The reasons underlying the transformation of South Africa into a liberal state are both complex and multiplex and this study will seek in due course to elucidate them. But one crucial factor which ought to be emphasised at the outset is that a number of liberals, not necessarily in formal politics but in society generally, kept faith in the importance and relevance of liberalism and continued to affirm its values and principles throughout the apartheid era. Thus, when the moment of South Africa's emancipation from apartheid finally came, the force and significance of liberal democratic ideas remained current and could readily be appreciated. Not least among such advocates of liberalism were creative writers, and especially perhaps South Africa's two foremost liberal authors, Alan Paton and Athol Fugard. It is appropriate, therefore, at this early moment in South Africa's democratic development, to consider how writers like Paton and Fugard, by consistently maintaining and promoting in their work the fundamental liberal values of individual liberty, equality, tolerance, compassion, reason and non-violence, helped to contribute not only to the eradication of apartheid, but also to the peaceful establishment of a free and open society in South Africa.

(ii)

A consideration of South African English literature from its origins in the 1820s to the present will reveal that liberalism constitutes a powerful force in the political orientation of a great many writers. At the same time, it is apparent that much confusion, imprecision and misunderstanding continues to surround the notion of liberalism in South African literary critical, political and historiographical thinking. Such imprecision, moreover, is not limited to the opponents of liberalism, but also

typifies the thinking of many liberal-minded scholars in this country. In consequence, the liberal basis of a good deal of South African English literature remains either unacknowledged or misconceived, and, accordingly, the actual meaning and significance of a large proportion of literary work in this country has not been adequately apprehended or appreciated. This critical deficiency is perhaps most evident with regard to work produced during the period of apartheid, when ideological contestation in South Africa was at its height and a strong anti-liberal sentiment emerged from a plurality of sources.

It is the intention of this thesis, therefore, to examine in close and careful detail the concept of liberalism as it informs, and is reflected in, the work of two of the most prominent South African English writers during the apartheid era of 1948-1990: Alan Paton and Athol Fugard. The aim of this study is to come to a precise and objective understanding of liberalism during this time, and to demonstrate how the nature and worth of the literary achievements of these writers can be properly ascertained only through a thorough grasp of their liberal outlook. A dual focus will thus be pursued. From one perspective, the purpose is to facilitate a better understanding of the work of two major South African writers in the light of a lucid and coherent comprehension of their liberalism. Conversely, it is envisaged that an accurate understanding of their work - as perceptive, sensitive and informed writers, addressing problems of their social and political milieu - will in turn serve to illuminate some of the most important dilemmas and responses of liberals in recent South African history.

The greater part of this thesis will involve a detailed critical study of the creative writing of Alan Paton and Athol Fugard, and issues of a specifically socio-political or historical nature will be dealt with as they arise in the course of this study. Nevertheless, it is necessary as a preliminary measure to provide an introduction to the notion of liberalism in general theoretical terms. Without an adequate theoretical understanding of the nature and meaning of liberalism at an abstract level, it will be difficult to proceed to a specific exploration of how the values, principles and beliefs which constitute liberal political philosophy present themselves in the literary work under consideration. This opening chapter will endeavour to provide a theoretical account of the term, "liberalism"; to offer a brief overview of the development of liberal thought in South African history; and to clarify the relationship between liberal political theory and literary practice.

The first task of this theoretical introduction will be to construct a clear and unambiguous definition of what is meant by liberalism in political philosophy. This will necessitate an account of the development of liberal political thought over time, as well as an identification of the dominant strands within the contemporary liberal tradition. In so doing, the position of liberalism on the political continuum will be clarified, in order to differentiate liberalism from the political ideologies which flank it both to the left and to the right. A particular task

will be to demonstrate that, although the nature of liberalism does not correspond to a rigid, monolithic ideology in the Marxist sense, this does not mean that it can be regarded as a vague and nebulous concept, devoid of theoretical power. On the contrary, it will be shown that for all its inherent flexibility and plurality, liberalism represents a coherent political philosophy that is founded upon a rich intellectual tradition, and that it is capable of supplying a solid moral and theoretical foundation for open democratic government. While acknowledging the difficulty of political neutrality, this study will attempt a critical and objective analysis of some of the central tensions and conflicts within liberal theory, as well as some of the problems of practical implementation. At all times, however, the effort will be made to account for liberalism on its own terms rather than through the terminological and methodological prism of rival political theories which may be quite inappropriate to the liberal mode.

Following the explication of liberalism at the level of political theory, this opening chapter will discuss in brief synoptic outline the historical development of liberalism in the South African context. Since this thesis is primarily concerned with the liberal response to apartheid, its principal focus will fall upon the years 1948-1990. Nonetheless, some adumbration will be offered of the nature of liberal thought in the period leading up to 1948. A preliminary account will also be presented of the major events of the apartheid era, though the specific details of the reaction of liberals to apartheid will emerge in the course of the extended study of the two authors under discussion.

Finally, it is necessary to clarify the nature of the relationship between liberal politics and liberal literature. It is especially important to distinguish liberal literary critical activity from the conservative or apolitical practice with which it is often erroneously associated in South Africa, as well as to reveal how a liberal critical approach to literature differs from the rather more narrowly theorised positions of both Marxism and post-structuralism. Once more, it is crucial to emphasise that an understanding of liberal criticism must be developed from within its own theoretical framework. As a last step, some of the main practical literary critical techniques to be employed in the study will be isolated, particularly those which help to illuminate the liberal quality of Paton's and Fugard's work.

(iii)

The selection of Alan Paton and Athol Fugard as the writers to be examined in this thesis is both inevitable and fortuitous. The choice is inevitable in the sense that these two writers stand out as indisputably the most eminent liberal authors in recent South African literature, indeed, as two of the most acclaimed writers in the contemporary English-speaking world. The choice is fortuitous in that their writing, taken together, effectively spans the entire period of apartheid. Alan Paton's famous first novel, Cry, the Beloved Country, was written immediately prior

to the Nationalist Party election victory in 1948, and his writing extends into the 1980s. Athol Fugard's career commences in the 1950s and has continued up to and beyond the ending of apartheid in 1990. In fact, his most recent work to be considered in this study, Playland, is set on the last day of 1989, on the very brink of apartheid's demise. It may be expected that their work collectively will provide a comprehensive perspective on the developing conflicts and challenges which confronted liberals throughout the time of apartheid.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Paton and Fugard were the only liberal writers active against apartheid, and attention will be paid to the achievements of other liberal writers during this time. Neither should it be supposed that Paton's and Fugard's work is identical or even similar in every respect of its character, style or outlook. It is a further advantage of including both authors in a single study that, while both are self-acknowledged liberals who themselves claim, and are generally perceived, to subscribe to a core set of liberal values and beliefs, there is nonetheless a range of differences between them, including age, temperament, background, favoured genre, religious convictions, and involvement in formal politics. It is envisaged that a study dealing with both men will be able in the first place to provide insight into the essential characteristics of liberalism which underlie individual distinctions and personal idiosyncrasies. But it will also be capable of revealing how a general liberal orientation manifests itself in particular cases, and, thus, of illustrating the dynamic interplay of differing emphases within the liberal domain, which is a distinctive feature of the liberal tradition.

A study of both Paton and Fugard has benefits also in a generic sense, in that it will allow a perspective on the expression of liberal ideas in both a fictive and a dramatic mode. For the most part, Paton's reputation lies with his fiction (though he did dabble in theatre); conversely, Fugard's major achievements are in theatre (though he did publish a novel). This study will concentrate, therefore, upon their most successful genres, though cognizance will naturally be taken of their other writing, such as Paton's poetry and Fugard's film work. Of cardinal importance also for a study of this nature will be both men's non-creative writing (political, biographical, autobiographical, notebooks, speeches, letters) which will provide a valuable source of insight into the evolution of their liberal understanding.

An analysis of liberalism in South African poetry has been excluded from this particular thesis. There are two main reasons for this. In the first place, no single South African liberal poet is the equal of either Paton or Fugard in terms of status, achievement or influence. Guy Butler is perhaps the most distinguished, Lionel Abrahams probably the most politically explicit, but neither of these two writers, accomplished though they are, can be considered of the same rank as Paton or Fugard. In the second place, the idea of a general survey of South African liberal poets under apartheid was rejected because much of the ground which such a survey would cover has already been

traversed, albeit from a somewhat different vantage point, in the final chapter, entitled "A Tradition of Dissent", of a Master of Arts dissertation which I submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand (Foley 1990). The substance of that dissertation has, moreover, been extended and developed in a series of articles published over the past few years (see Foley 1991a; 1991b; 1992a; 1993). In a sense, then, this study of Paton's fiction and Fugard's drama may, in generic terms at least, be considered an affined work with that earlier exploration of South African English poetry, though, of course, the explicit liberal focus of the present study is a crucial feature of differentiation.

Indeed, perhaps the most provocative factor motivating the selection of Paton and Fugard for study lies in the fact that neither of these writers' work has received full or proper appraisal in terms of its liberalism. Critics of their work have tended to ignore their liberalism, or relegate it to the status of a minor background influence, or explain it away as some kind of eccentric aberration, or excuse it as a defect which does not detract too severely from the overall quality of their work. Even sympathetic commentators have done little more than advert to the presence of a liberal impulse in their work without supplying an adequate account of its nature or significance. It is the contention of this thesis, however, that each writer's liberalism forms the very core of his political morality and aesthetic and demands a precise understanding. The chief objective of this study, then, is to conduct a rigorous reassessment of each writer's work through the filter of a comprehensive account of his understanding and expression of the fundamental values and principles of liberalism.

## Liberalism in Political Philosophy

(i)

It is important, at the outset of a study such as this, to provide a clear and comprehensive account of what is meant by liberalism in political philosophy.

Despite efforts to locate the origins of liberalism in classical antiquity or in various phases of early Christianity, it is generally accepted that liberalism as a systematic political tradition is a phenomenon of the modern world (Girvetz 1963; Gray 1986). Receiving a precursory impetus from the individualist ideas of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and Benedict de Spinoza, political liberalism begins with the effective collapse of feudalism and the spread of the Enlightenment throughout Europe in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The central elements of the liberal movement crystallise for the first time into a coherent political philosophy in the work of John Locke, particularly in his Second Treatise of Civil Government (1689), which sets out the fundamental argument in favour of limited government, individual liberty and private property. Such classical liberal thought is then extended and modified in the European Enlightenment period in the work of, inter alia, David Hume (A Treatise of Human Nature 1739) and Adam Smith (Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations 1776) in Scotland; of Immanuel Kant (Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals 1785) in Germany; and of Montesquieu and the French philosophes such as Condorcet, Diderot and Voltaire in France (see Ruggiero 1927; Halevy 1928). The influence of classical liberal ideas is manifest also in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States of America, as it is in the Federalist Papers of Madison, Jefferson and Hamilton (see Funderburk and Thobaben 1989).

Liberal thinking did not remain static, however, but continued to develop and evolve, particularly in relation to changing social and political circumstances (see Girvetz 1963; Gaus 1983; Shapiro 1986). Liberalism suffered its first major rupture towards the end of the nineteenth century when the novel social and economic problems caused by the Industrial Revolution gave rise to the more egalitarian and welfarist emphases of what became known as modern liberalism. Influenced chiefly by John Stuart Mill, in works such as Principles of Political Economy (1848), the "new liberals" (see Freedman 1978) included T.H. Green, J.A. Hobson, Brian Bosanquet, John Dewey, and especially perhaps L.T. Hobhouse (see his Liberalism 1911). In America, in reaction to the Depression of the 1930s and guided by the managerialist theories of J.M. Keynes (1936), a related group of "New Deal" liberals emerged. Nevertheless, classical liberalism, with its principal stress on individual freedom and minimal government intervention, was continued in the work of Herbert Spencer (1884) and others, and enjoyed a powerful revival in the period during and after the second world war, in response to the threat of totalitarianism, most notably in the writing of Karl

Popper (1945), F.A. Hayek (1944; 1960), Isaiah Berlin (1958), and economists of the Chicago School such as Milton Friedman (1962). In recent times, these two dominant strands of liberalism, classical and modern, have been most forcefully articulated by Robert Nozick (1974) and John Rawls (1971) in works which revived Western political philosophy and which continue in large measure to define the options available to contemporary liberals. Although it is simplistic to suggest that the two strands form neatly demarcated camps of opinion, liberal theorists today often tend to define themselves in short-hand terms as either classical (Buchanan 1975; Dworkin 1978; Flew 1981; Gray 1986; Lindley 1986) or modern (Girvetz 1963; Freedman 1978; Gutmann 1980; Gaus 1983; Raz 1986).

For all its plurality, liberalism remains a single, integral tradition, rather than two or more traditions, or merely a diffuse syndrome of ideas. The differences between liberals are, in essence, a matter of emphasis rather than principle, and all liberals would affirm a core set of values and beliefs which constitute a unitary political philosophy. As such, it is not that contemporary liberals hold different ideas, but that some liberals tend to give greater weight to certain ideas rather than to others.

It is unfortunately true that liberalism, particularly in recent South African thinking, has tended to be defined by its enemies rather than by its own proponents, with the result that a somewhat distorted picture of liberalism has emerged. In particular, antagonistic critics from a left-wing, Marxist background have attempted to evaluate liberalism as if it were similar to Marxism itself - a clearly circumscribed ideology or solid body of theory emanating from a few kernel texts produced by one or two founding theorists. By contrast, liberalism is not an ideology at all in the Marxist sense (though see Manning 1976), but is more properly described as a complex political philosophy which is by nature dynamic and developmental, capable of extensive adaptation to differing social and cultural contexts, and open to a range of interpretation as to its principal emphases. This is not to suggest, however, that liberalism is not amenable to precise theoretical explication. Unlike right-wing, conservative political positions, liberalism does not rely on custom, tradition and authority at the expense of theory, but seeks to base its political outlook on a clear conception of man and society, which expresses itself in a core set of rational principles of social justice. At this point, it may be useful to offer an analysis of the key elements in contemporary liberal political philosophy.

(ii)

Liberalism is founded upon the basic premise that human beings are unique, autonomous individuals with different interests, desires and views of life. Given this natural human diversity, liberalism maintains that each individual person should be allowed the maximum freedom to pursue his or her idea of the good

life. As John Gray (1986:x) notes, liberalism "asserts the moral primacy of the individual against the claims of any social collectivity". At the same time, however, liberalism believes that each individual person is of equal moral worth, and so affirms that in society all citizens should enjoy an equality of maximum liberty. In short, political liberalism may be described as the attempt to create a just and open society in which individuals are free to live their lives as they see fit, subject only to the consideration that in so doing they do not interfere with any one else's like freedom. John Gray (1986:91) makes the point eloquently:

Liberalism is the search for principles of political justice that will command rational assent among persons with different conceptions of the good life and different views of the world. The conception of human nature which liberalism expresses is, in the end, a distillation of the modern experience of variety and conflict in moral life: it is the conception of man as a being with the moral capacity of forming a conception of the good life and the intellectual capacity of articulating that conception in a systematic form.

Three core concepts emerge that distinguish liberalism from other political philosophies: individualism, liberty and equality. Each of these concepts is complex and requires further explication. Moreover, it is apparent that there is at least some degree of potential conflict between them which needs to be resolved. While it would require a thesis on its own to elucidate all the complexities involved in these concepts and the relationship between them, it is necessary to provide some general clarification.

In the first instance, the idea of the human being as a unique, autonomous rational individual has come under assault from a number of sources. Karl Marx was one of the first modern thinkers to challenge the notion of "abstract individualism", asserting that "man is not an abstract being squatting outside the world" (in Holden 1993:146), but is rather the product of his particular social environment. It is an argument which continues to feature in the contemporary radical critique of liberalism (see MacPherson 1962, 1977; Lukes 1973, 1974). Such an argument, however, has force only in terms of an extreme, reified notion of individualism. Mainstream liberalism, by contrast, does not propagate a view of humanity as totally atomistic or insular, nor does it deny the social aspect of human life: liberalism is, after all, concerned with the establishment of social justice (see Kymlicka 1991). But liberalism does differ from Marxism in two crucial ways. Firstly, liberalism rejects the idea that individuals are, in essence, determined by their social context. As Holden (1993:167) avers:

Despite the extent to which individuals are social beings, and activity is social rather than purely individual, there is also a crucial and irreducible extent to which individuals are independent of their social environment and their activity is voluntary.

Secondly, liberalism contends, in opposition to Marxism, that the

rights of individuals are morally prior to those of the society. This is an argument which finds its most powerful modern articulation originally in the writing of Immanuel Kant, who begins with the view that human beings are, essentially, rational autonomous agents, and goes on to argue, in his famous categorical imperative in the Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals (1785;1964), that individuals should therefore always be treated as ends in themselves:

Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.

Kant's argument has been developed in the thinking, most notably, of John Stuart Mill in On Liberty (1859), and remains an important element in much contemporary liberal philosophy (for example, Rawls 1971; Dworkin 1978; Lindley 1986). The liberal notion of the autonomy of individuals, moreover, stands in direct opposition to the Marxist-Leninist claim that the proletariat in non-Communist states needs to be liberated from "false consciousness" by the vanguard party of professional revolutionaries. Indeed, the liberal perspective denies the claims of all authoritarian systems, Fascist and conservative as well as Marxist, to know better than its citizens what is in their best interests. Drawing on the lessons of history in totalitarian regimes, Richard Lindley (1986:108) argues that it is far safer to assume that

people are the best judges of their own interests, and in so far as respect is to be shown for the autonomy of citizens, their expressed preferences should be taken as definitive of their interests.

And he points out (1986:108) that a major distinction between liberalism and other ideologies is that a liberal state does not try to impose its ideas and beliefs on its citizens; instead, liberalism is

a political system which is neutral about competing conceptions of what constitutes a good life.

The idea of individual independence has also come under attack in a number of psychological theories (see Foley 1992c:178f). However, despite Freudian notions of interior determinism, or Pavlovian/Skinnerian hypotheses of exterior conditioning, the concept of the autonomy of the individual continues to be propounded by a great many contemporary theorists whose concern is not so much with psychological abnormality or behaviour under exceptional conditions, but rather with the vast majority of ordinary human beings. Beginning with the individual psychology of Alfred Adler, a protégé of Freud who came to repudiate the theories of psychoanalysis, such humanistic psychology has been developed and expanded in recent times by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, to name but two prominent figures. Common to each of these thinkers is a profound belief in the individual coherence of the human personality, in the essential autonomy of the human mind, and in the ability of human beings to come to a rational understanding of themselves and their world and to strive consciously and meaningfully for betterment, or, to use a key phrase, "self-actualisation". In Motivation and Personality,

Maslow (1970:xii-xiii) encapsulates the humanistic perspective: Human life will never be understood unless its highest aspirations are taken into account. Growth, self-actualization, the striving toward health, the quest for identity and autonomy, the yearning for excellence...must now be accepted as beyond question as a widespread and perhaps universal tendency (see also Rogers 1961:195f).

However, even given the inherent autonomy of the individual, it is clear that such autonomy can only be meaningful if the individual is free to act in an autonomous way. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the second key principle in liberalism, namely, liberty. By liberty in liberal political philosophy is meant, in essence, the individual's right to act freely in society. The liberal understanding of individual freedom is given powerful expression in John Stuart Mill's famous "liberty principle" in On Liberty (1859; 1974:68-69):

That principle is that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant .... Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

Despite ongoing debate about the practical implications of the "harm principle" (see Feinberg 1973), Mill's definition of freedom as individual freedom continues to provide an important distinction between the liberal position and other collectivist or socialist notions of freedom which do not guarantee individual rights. Even within the liberal tradition, however, there is conflict over two conceptualisations of individual liberty. The classic statement of the conflict is found in Isaiah Berlin's essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958; in Berlin 1969), in which he differentiates between "negative" and "positive" liberty. For Berlin, negative liberty means freedom from external restraints, whereas positive freedom is more broadly defined as self-directed activity or the power to act in certain ways. In practical political terms, negative freedom entails that the state does not have the right to interfere with an individual's liberty, except to prevent harm to others. By contrast, positive freedom implies that the state may at times be justified in taking action to enable individuals to act freely. In Berlin's view, true liberalism is concerned only with negative liberty, the absence of obstruction or interference from other men. Because of the inherent authoritarian danger in the idea of positive freedom of the state interfering in the lives of individuals to promote its own concept of the content of such freedom, Berlin (supported in this regard by Popper (1945) and Hayek (1944), for instance) argues that a liberal state should defend people's negative liberties and leave their positive liberties well alone. On the other hand, a number of other liberal theorists contest that the merely formal presence of negative liberty is of little use if the conditions do not exist to enable one to exercise one's freedom. They would argue, therefore, that some notion of

positive liberty must be endorsed, at least in the sense of empowerment or enabling circumstances, particularly in the light of the past injustices of society (see, for example, Girvetz 1963; Raz 1986). Although some theorists question the meaningfulness of the distinction (MacCallum 1967), it seems clear that the notion of negative and positive freedom remains a source of division within liberalism today (see Flathman 1987; Miller 1991).

The third key concept in liberal theory, equality, is similarly fraught with conflict. While there is broad consensus among liberals on some aspects of equality, a range of opinion divides them on others. Generally, all liberals would agree that liberalism is an egalitarian political philosophy in that it confers on all persons the same moral status in terms of the law and political activity. As Holden (1993:37) points out, liberalism asserts that all persons are entitled to "equal treatment by, and equal political participation in the control of, the state". In other words, contemporary political liberalism would endorse the concept of the equality of all persons under the rule of law, and the political concept of universal suffrage on the basis of one person, one vote. There is far less agreement, however, on the question of other kinds of equality, especially economic equality. Some liberals would claim that economic inequalities are not only inevitable, given differing human abilities, but moral, in that each person is entitled to the fruits of his or her labour (see Hayek 1960; Friedman 1962; Rothbard 1982). Others would argue that severe economic disparities, which are often not due to individual talent, form obstacles to many persons' freedom, and thus the onus rests upon the state to take action in minimising economic deprivation. In other words, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure conditions of equal opportunity (see Gutmann 1980; Gaus 1983). While approving the concept of equal opportunity, however, such liberals would by no means support the notion of equality of outcomes, which would violate the principle of individual liberty. In this, liberalism differs markedly from Marxism, which stresses social and economic parity and the classless society at the expense of individual liberty. Endemic to such Marxist thinking is what Anthony Flew (1981) has perceptively labelled "the politics of Procrustes", a term he derives from the classics:

After this Theseus killed a man called Procrustes, who lived in what was known as Corydallas in Attica. This person forced passing travellers to lie down on a bed, and if any were too long for the bed he lopped off those parts of their bodies which protruded, while racking out the legs of the ones who were too short. This was why he was given the name of Procrustes [The Racker] (Diodorus Siculus, quoted as epigraph by Flew 1981:np).

Flew's point is that Marxist states force upon people an artificial and inhibiting equality which stifles the expression of individual uniqueness and reduces humanity to a debilitating sameness. But liberalism also rejects the hierarchical structure of authoritarian conservative systems, in which unequal social status based on heredity and tradition also undermines the

principle of equal individual liberty.

It is part of the special identity of liberalism that it should have prompted numerous individual interpretations of what its principal emphasis should be, and, consequently, that it should have come to contain within itself several differing strands. In particular, it is the tension in liberal thinking between the at least potentially divergent principles of liberty and equality that has produced the two broad positions within the liberal tradition which continue to advance strong claims to priority today. On the one hand, then, "classical liberalism" tends to see liberty as an inviolable natural right of the individual which ought not under any circumstances to be qualified. This form of liberalism would generally favour a minimum of state intervention and a stringently free market economic system, and would distrust any intercessionary policies on the part of the government. On the other hand, "modern liberalism" would argue that a reasonable degree of equality is a legitimate goal of liberal government, and that justice is sometimes best served by some form of state intervention in matters of unfair social and economic inequality.

A consideration of these two variants of liberal thought incidentally underlines liberalism's middle position on the continuum of contemporary political theory. Classical liberalism, with its heavy stress on individual freedom, has a tendency to move towards extreme libertarianism and even individual anarchism in one sense (see Barry 1986), and, in another, towards conservatism, especially in terms of its economic thinking. Modern liberalism, by contrast, with its concern for equality, has a tendency to move towards utilitarianism, radical egalitarianism and even social democracy (see Nielsen 1985; Paul, Miller and Paul 1985). At the further ends of each of these flanks lie the extremes of reactionary conservatism and Fascism on the right, and revolutionary socialism and communism on the left. As history has shown, both of these extremes are highly susceptible of rapid transformation into tyranny and totalitarianism, and so the middle path of liberalism, it may be argued, as a safeguard against such excesses, represents a further point in its favour (though see Sandel 1982; Mendus 1989).

In order to provide a more specific understanding of the continuing relevance and force of these two liberal strands, it is useful to focus on the particular arguments of the two moral philosophers who have come, over the past twenty years or so, to represent these two positions most powerfully: Robert Nozick and John Rawls. Such an exercise will not only serve to bring contemporary liberal political theory into sharper focus, but will also help in identifying some of the key liberal concepts which have direct bearing on literary practice.

Robert Nozick, in Anarchy, State and Utopia (1974), presents a compelling case for classical liberalism in contemporary times. Against the competing claims of, on the one side, individual anarchism, and, on the other, government interventionism, Nozick (1974:ix) develops an argument, from a broadly libertarian

position, for the minimal state:

Our main conclusions about the state are that a minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on, is justified; that any more extensive state will violate persons's rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified; and that the minimal state is inspiring as well as right.

Partly in response to Rawls, Nozick formulates his own anti-distributivist theory of justice, that he calls "entitlement theory", in which it is asserted that economic goods arise already encumbered with rightful claims to their ownership and with these the state may not interfere. Moreover, he evolves a new and surprising conception of utopia based on his theory of the minimal state: here utopia is not conceptualised in terms of the particular content of any single way of life, but rather in terms of an overarching "framework" within which individuals are guaranteed the freedom to create and realise their own personal notions of the best of all possible worlds (1974:311-312):

There will not be one kind of community existing and one kind of life led in utopia. Utopia will consist of utopias, of many different and divergent communities in which people lead different kinds of lives under different institutions .... Utopia is a framework for utopias, a place where people are at liberty to join together voluntarily to pursue and attempt to realize their own vision of the good life in the ideal community but where no one can impose his own utopian vision upon others .... Half of the truth I wish to put forth is that utopia is meta-utopia: the environment in which utopian experiments may be tried out; the environment in which people are free to do their own thing; the environment which must, to a great extent, be realized first if more particular utopian visions are to be realized stably.

Thus, Nozick argues that the minimal state, the framework for utopia, far from being pale and unexciting, is, in actual fact, "an inspiring vision" (1974:333) for it allows one the freedom and indeed encourages one to live the best possible life that one is able, literally, to imagine.

John Rawls, in his magisterial work, A Theory of Justice (1971), adopts, like Nozick, a version of contract theory (see Lessnoff 1986), but he employs a rather different methodology and he reaches rather different conclusions from those of Nozick. Whereas Nozick is content to propound an evocative and provocative social ideal without attempting to ground it in meticulous analytical detail (Paul 1981), Rawls seeks to provide, through rigorous and exhaustive argument, a systematic theory of justice which will constitute "the most appropriate basis for a democratic society" (Rawls 1971:vii). The success of his endeavour is confirmed by the fact that his work has become predominant in contemporary political discourse (Daniels 1975), displacing both the unsubstantiated utilitarianism and intuitionism which preceded it and resisting the various Marxist attacks launched against it (especially Barry 1973). In an important sense, modern liberalism is Rawlsian liberalism.

Given the highly formalised philosophical prose that Rawls deploys, his views are best presented intact rather than by means of paraphrasal summary. In section 3, entitled "The Main Idea of the Theory of Justice", Rawls (1971:11-12) conveys the essence of his argument:

My aim is to present a conception of justice which generalizes and carries to a higher order of abstraction the familiar theory of the social contract as found, say, in Locke, Rousseau and Kant. In order to do this we are not to think of the original contract as one to enter a particular society or to set up a particular form of government. Rather, the guiding idea is that the principles of justice for the basic structure of society are the object of the original agreement. They are the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association. The principles are to regulate all further agreements; they specify the kinds of social cooperation that can be entered into and the forms of government that can be established. This way of regarding the principles of justice I shall call justice as fairness.

....

In justice as fairness the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. This original position is not, of course, thought of as an actual historical state of affairs, much less as a primitive condition of culture. It is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterized so as to lead to a certain conception of justice. Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain. For given the circumstances of the original position, the symmetry of everyone's relations to each other, this initial situation is fair between individuals as moral persons, that is, as rational beings with their own ends and capable, I shall assume, of a sense of justice. The original position is, one might say, the appropriate initial status quo, and thus the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This explains the propriety of the name "justice as fairness": it conveys the idea that the principles of justice are agreed to in an initial situation that is fair.

Building upon this foundation, through detailed developmental

argumentation, Rawls reaches "the final statement of the two principles of justice for institutions" in section 46 (1971:302-303):

First Principle

Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

Second Principle

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

- (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle; and
- (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

First Priority Rule (The Priority of Liberty)

The principles of justice are to be ranked in lexical order and therefore liberty can be restricted only for the sake of liberty. There are two cases:

- (a) a less extensive liberty must strengthen the total system of liberty shared by all;
- (b) a less than equal liberty must be acceptable to those with a lesser liberty.

Second Priority Principle (The Priority of Justice Over Efficiency and Welfare)

The second principle of justice is lexically prior to the principle of efficiency and to that of maximizing the sum of advantages; and fair opportunity is prior to the difference principle. There are two cases:

- (a) an inequality of opportunity must enhance the opportunities of those with the lesser opportunity;
- (b) an excessive rate of saving must on balance mitigate the burden of those bearing this hardship.

General Conception:

All social primary goods - liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect - are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or more of these goods is to the advantage of the least favored.

More recently, Rawls (1993) has sharpened his notion of "justice as fairness" by delimiting it as a specifically political conception rather than a comprehensive moral doctrine. While this move does not alter the general shape of his thought, it does mean that Rawls has accepted that his theory of justice is not supra-political but is, in fact, a particularly liberal democratic concept, and so he has reformulated his theoretical position as "political liberalism". In so doing, Rawls has confirmed the widely held impression that his work provides a philosophical justification for the belief that liberal democracy represents, theoretically at least, the fairest and most just political system of the modern world (see Daniels 1975).

The work of Rawls and Nozick repays close consideration in that

it dispels any notion that liberalism remains mired in nineteenth-century thinking, or that it is not capable of generating a coherent political theory which may, in turn, provide the basis for a just political order in a variety of socio-cultural contexts. Such confidence in liberal political theory certainly seemed to be validated by the course of global politics in the last years of the twentieth century.

(iii)

The momentous upheavals in world affairs at the end of the 1980s demonstrably exposed not only the fatal flaws at the heart of Marxist-Leninist and related authoritarian systems, but also served as a striking vindication of liberal political and economic systems and institutions. On the political right, the second world war had seen the defeat of Fascism and the subsequent discrediting of authoritarian regimes throughout the world. The "revolution of '89" (Garton Ash 1990) now witnessed the spectacular collapse of Communism as a political system, and the concomitant undermining of Marxism as a political ideology. The obvious conclusions to be drawn from these geopolitical developments have been forcefully expressed by Auberon Waugh: in a review of John Simpson's firsthand account of the disintegration of communism, The Darkness Crumbles (1992), Waugh (1992:18) asserts that

the entire history of socialism - in the sense of material equality, selfless striving for the communal good, from each according to his ability to each according to his needs - proves that it is so alien to the normal promptings of human nature that it not only has to be imposed with the greatest severity, even cruelty, but that it also, by the resulting ill-will and incompetence, produces nothing but abject, grinding poverty....Socialism seems a good idea, but it simply doesn't work.

A central thrust of Simpson's book is that ideal socialism failed almost immediately after being put into practice in the Soviet Union with the result that what was supposed to be a benevolent system of maximum advantage to the masses had to be imposed through sheer state terror for the next seven decades. And it is significant that where communism continues to survive - Red China, Burma, Vietnam - similar state terror (3 June 1989 in Tiananmen Square, for example) is required to maintain it.

With the demise of the Communist regimes, liberalism found itself as the only remaining claimant to universal political legitimacy. This point is made not in a spirit of cheap triumphalism but rather as part of an objective assessment of current geopolitical realities. The argument is not, in any event, new, having been made by, inter alia, Glenny (1990), Huntington (1991), Jowitt (1992), and articulated most extensively and audaciously by Francis Fukuyama in a famous essay in 1989 entitled, "The End of History?", and then at more length in The End of History and the Last Man (1992):

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar

history, but the end of history as such: that is, the endpoint of man's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government (1989:4).

Whether or not one agrees with Fukuyama's re-reading of Hegel and Nietzsche, or with his view that history has indeed reached its telos, there can be little doubting the cogency of his central assertion:

As mankind approaches the end of the millennium, the twin crises of authoritarianism and socialist central planning have left only one competitor standing in the ring as an ideology of potentially universal validity - liberal democracy, the doctrine of individual freedom and popular sovereignty (1992:42).

Moreover, as Fukuyama goes on to observe, far from being a political concept relevant only to the West, liberal democracy has demonstrated its universal applicability and appeal:

The success of democracy in a wide variety of places and among many different peoples would suggest that the principles of liberty and equality on which they are based are not accidents or the results of ethnocentric prejudice, but are in fact discoveries about the nature of man as man, whose truth does not diminish but grows more evident as one's point of view becomes more cosmopolitan (1992:51).

This is not to suggest, naturally, that liberal democracy has triumphed everywhere (the Islamic theocracies are an important exception), or that liberal government has taken or will take the same form everywhere: clearly, it has found differing expression in America, Britain, Germany, Japan, and so on, and it will no doubt undergo novel adaptation as it takes hold in Russia, Albania, Zambia, Namibia, and other newly democratic countries, including, most recently, South Africa itself. The point, rather, is that the core philosophical values and principles underlying all modes of liberal political practice have shown themselves to be ideally suited to the conditions and demands of contemporary political life. In particular, liberal values have proved to be especially congenial to the practice of democratic rule, so that the world-wide drive towards democracy has been, more specifically, a movement towards liberalism. By the same token, it has become apparent that of all the possible political systems amenable to liberal thought, democracy has plainly established itself as the best practical means of manifesting and sustaining liberal values in society and of approximating towards a liberal conception of social justice.

Thus, although Hoffman (1988) is right to talk of the potentially troubled relationship between the general concepts of liberty and democracy (see also Pateman 1970, 1985; Graham 1986), in practice the two are compatible and mutually reinforcing to a considerable extent (see Bobbio 1988; Holden 1993). As such, liberalism is capable of providing a powerful theoretical conceptualisation of democratic government. It may be useful to end this section, then, with a brief consideration of the general characteristics of the liberal state. As John Gray (1986:75) points out, the sine qua non of the liberal state in all its varieties

is that governmental power and authority be limited by a system of constitutional rules and practices in which individual liberty and the equality of persons under the law are respected.

Thus, in typical contemporary practice, liberal democracy involves the principle of open, accountable and representative government chosen in regular free and fair elections on the basis of universal suffrage. Such governmental power is limited by a series of checks and balances, including a constitution and/or a bill of rights. All citizens are subject to the rule of law, dispensed through an independent judiciary. A range of civil liberties is guaranteed, including freedom of speech, religion, assembly and political association, as well as the freedom of the media. In summary, contemporary political liberalism seeks to secure in states a free and open democracy of equals. Richard Bellamy (1992:1), a left-wing political theorist, underlines, with a certain wry irony, the virtually universal acceptance of liberal values and principles in democratic states:

Twentieth-century liberalism has suffered the curious fate of steadily declining in most countries as an electoral force exclusive to a particular party, whilst prevailing and even growing as a background theory or set of presuppositions and sentiments of a supposedly neutral and universal kind which dominates political thinking across the ideological spectrum. Today all major groupings employ the liberal language of rights, freedom and equality to express and legitimise their views and demonstrate a corresponding general acceptance of liberal conceptions of democracy and the market. From New Right conservatives to democratic socialists, it seems we are all liberals now.

## Liberalism in South Africa

(i)

It is envisaged that a clear and specific understanding of liberalism during the apartheid period will emerge through an examination of the work of Alan Paton and Athol Fugard. Nevertheless, it will be useful to provide a brief account of the history and development of liberalism in South Africa in general terms, before proceeding to a more detailed investigation of liberal thinking as it is reflected in the creative writing of the authors under consideration in this study.

The origins of liberalism in South Africa can be traced back to the permanent presence of the British settlers in the Cape in the 1820s (Marquard 1965; Davenport 1987). Early on in their residence, liberal-minded settlers found themselves in confrontation with the autocratic governorship of Lord Charles Somerset, and the successful struggle for press freedom, headed by such figures as Thomas Pringle, George Greig, John Fairburn and Abraham Faure, helped to introduce the concepts of civil liberties and limited government under the rule of law into the colonial society of the time. Later on, through the efforts of Dr John Philip and others, the Fiftieth Ordinance repealed passes for free persons of colour; the Charter of Justice instituted an independent judiciary; and, in the 1830s, local government was established and slavery abolished, a move, incidentally, which precipitated the exodus of the Voortrekkers from the Cape. Especially after the granting of responsible government in 1872, what became known as the Cape liberal tradition assumed a position of dominance in the political dispensation of the colony. This tradition, whose leading proponents included J.H. de Villiers, J.X. Merriman, W.P. Schreiner, Saul Solomon, Walter Stanford, J.W. Sauer and James Rose Innes, sought during the latter part of the nineteenth century to implement the principles of freedom, equality and the colour-blind franchise insisted on by the liberal British government under Gladstone. Though predominantly English-speaking whites, liberals at the time were also found among non-whites such as Tobagu Jabavu and Mohandas Gandhi, as well as Afrikaners like "Onze Jan" Hofmeyr and others of the Afrikaner Bond.

By the 1880s, however, reaction was setting in among the white settlers as the increasing numbers of Coloureds and Africans fulfilling the relatively simple educational and economic franchise qualifications began to threaten the notion of white government. Successive laws in 1887, 1892 and 1894 were passed to raise the voting qualifications and effectively maintain a white electoral preponderance (Robertson 1971). Such inherent conservatism served to undo the Cape liberals at the National Convention which established the Union of South Africa in 1910, where they compromised on the question of non-white political participation under pressure from Natal and, even more so, the Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Seeking first to bring about the reconciliation of Boer and

Briton, the problem of the political rights of the Bantu was left to be sorted out later (Thompson 1960; Macmillan 1963). As Leo Marquard (1965:23) remarks,

the Cape liberal tradition did not capitulate; but its defences had been breached, and as time went on the breach became ever wider.

Indeed, far from Africans becoming gradually incorporated into the political processes of the country, as was the Cape liberals' intention, the next few decades witnessed the steady erosion of liberal impulses in the government on the topic of non-whites, clearly expressed in such illiberal acts of parliament as the Native Labour Registration Act of 1911, the Land Act of 1913, the Urban Areas Act of 1923, the mining industry's "Colour Bar" Act of 1926, and the Native Administration Act of 1927.

Through the latter part of the 1930s and the early years of the 1940s, however, the increasing influence of liberals such as J.H. Hofmeyr in government seemed to suggest that the prospect of a progressive liberalisation of South Africa's racial policies was imminent, particularly in the wake of South Africa's contribution to the Allied victory in the second world war. Certainly, Prime Minister Jan Smuts's efforts in the wording of the preamble to the United Nations' charter of human rights seemed to betoken that the newly resurgent liberal spirit in world politics would carry over into South African politics in particular. As Anthony Sampson (1958:73) put it,

the victory of the Allies, and the breath of new liberal ideas that had blown into the South African hothouse as a result of the Atlantic Charter, the establishment of the United Nations, and the defeat of the Nazi doctrine of racial supremacy, all seemed to indicate a new deal for South Africa.

On the other hand, liberals like Alfred Hoernlé (1945) noted the steady decline and eclipse of the liberal ideal of full racial integration among rank-and-file members of South African society. In fact, Smuts's decision to enter the second world war on the side of Britain served to shatter white unity in the country, and helped to fuel an ever more fervent Afrikaner nationalism. The upshot was the 1948 election victory of the Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Party, which began immediately to implement the policy of apartheid (note that neither the political misnomer, "National Party", nor the euphemism, "separate development", will be used in this study). Although it is inaccurate to view 1948 as the sudden descent of "an age of darkness" in race relations (Worrall 1976), it is nevertheless the case that the Nationalists rapidly and drastically extended and tightened the principle of racial segregation, entrenching it in law and applying it ruthlessly in practice. For the next forty years and more, the basic tenets of liberal government were extinguished, as South African politics took the form of a authoritarian racial oligarchy in which concepts such as individual liberty, equality, and the open society, had no place.

Following the exclusion of Africans from the 1910 unification settlement, black political aspirations became focused through

the African National Congress (originally the South African Native National Congress), founded in 1912. After decades of moderate protest, during which their hopes of fair inclusion in the ambit of South African political life came to nothing, the ANC began in the 1940s to adopt a more militant approach under the influence of its Youth League, which included at that time such figures as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo. In 1945, in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, the ANC had published a Bill of Rights and began its call for universal suffrage; then in 1949, following the Nationalists' victory, the Youth League proposed a "Programme of Action" that would speedily bring about these democratic reforms (Carter 1962). It is important to note that in this the ANC's demands were perfectly consistent with liberal democratic principles. However, as Robertson (1971:69) observes,

in South African circumstances the implications were revolutionary: they meant the establishment of non-white majority rule.

Indeed, it may be argued that even though the ANC later adopted the principle of armed struggle and came under the influence of radical politico-economic ideas through its strategic association with the South African Communist Party, it never fully abandoned its general adherence to the basic tenets of liberal democracy, which re-emerged in the ANC's participation in the multiparty negotiations of the 1990s. It is part of the tragedy of South African history, however, that a full commitment to such liberal principles developed far more quickly among liberal-minded blacks than among white liberals, and certainly among whites generally in the country (see Robertson 1971:14).

The response of white liberals to the Nationalists' second electoral victory in 1953 was to break away from the increasingly moribund United Party and form the South African Liberal Party. Together with such groupings as the Torch Commando, the Black Sash, and the South African Institute of Race Relations, the Liberal Party represents the purest form of liberal political thought during the apartheid era. Unlike many liberals in the past, who had "shrunk from full democracy out of fear that the majority would subvert liberal values" (Butler, Elphick and Welsh 1987:7), the Liberal Party quickly adopted the policy of a universal franchise for all South Africans (see Robertson 1971:112)). Yet for most whites, the Liberal Party's policies proved far too radical, and the Party did not succeed in winning a single seat in parliament (Irvine 1987). Nevertheless, it maintained an important voice of liberal protest throughout the years of its existence, and through its black membership, including a number in leadership positions such as Jordan Ngubane and Elliot Mngadi, it served actively to challenge the doctrine of the separateness of the races. Furthermore, the influence of its leadership, which included, apart from Ngubane and Mngadi, such figures as Alan Paton, Peter Brown, Leo Marquard, Margaret Ballinger, Julis Lewin, Edgar Brooks, Donald Molteno and Oscar Wollheim, extended far beyond the limits of the party itself, and represented a moral standard of humane values which transcended the usual realm of political ideology (see Butler, Elphick and Welsh 1987:5).

From the late 1950s onwards, however, liberal political movements found themselves progressively marginalised in a context in which political thinking became ever more radicalised and polarised in terms of the fundamental struggle for power between the opposed forces of Afrikaner and African nationalism. Such radicalisation culminated, firstly, in the Sharpeville shootings of 21 March 1960, and, secondly, in the Soweto uprising of June 1976, both events resulting in an intense security clampdown in which black political organisations were banned, leaders imprisoned or forced into exile, and all black political activity outlawed. During this period, two developments in black politics immeasurably complicated the liberal position: the adoption of the strategy of armed struggle, and the influence of radical ideological thought. In the first place, liberals found themselves confronting the classic "liberal dilemma" in South Africa (van den Berghe 1978): refusing to accept violence as a political weapon, it seemed that liberalism was unable in the face of the intransigence of the regime to offer a viable means of effectively ending apartheid. Despite the manifest temptations of armed resistance, however, the total rejection of political violence from whatever quarter remained a distinctive feature of South African liberalism, a policy in large measure vindicated by the country's peaceful transition to democracy in the 1990s. In the second place, liberalism, which had long been under attack from the Afrikaner nationalists on the right, now found itself assailed by the Marxist challenge on the left, particularly the revisionist school of Marxism which came to prominence in the 1970s. While sharing with Marxism a commitment to the eradication of apartheid, liberalism proved fundamentally incompatible with Marxism in terms of social, political and economic philosophy, as well as in terms of strategies and tactics. As such, they remained ideological adversaries up until the implosion of Soviet Communism in the late 1980s. These dual problems of political violence and Marxist antagonism represent perhaps the most characteristic dilemmas confronting South African liberals in the post 1960 apartheid era, when liberalism experienced the most difficult period of its existence.

During this period, part of the predicament facing liberalism was that it often came to be criticised not in terms of its actual theoretical content as a political philosophy, but on the basis of the practical performance of supposed liberals. More than that, a caricatured stereotype of the typical "liberal" evolved in the thinking of both the right and the left, which then served as the substance of the critique. Thus, from the perspective of Afrikaner nationalists, liberals were often accused of being permissive, dissolute and immoral on the basis of the confused translation of the word "liberal" into Afrikaans as "liberaal", a term bearing the pejorative connotations of a latitudinarian (see Marquard 1965:20-22). Moreover, apartheid ideologues constantly sought to discredit liberalism by linking it with revolutionary Communism. For example, B.J. Vorster, Minister of Justice under Verwoerd and later Prime Minister, claimed in 1964 that

it was clear that the Jingoese, the Liberalists and the Communists lay in the same trench to shoot at the

Government (in Marquard 1965:44-45); while his brother, Reverend J.D. Vorster, Chairman of the National Council Against Communism in the mid 1960s, asserted that

liberal Christians, liberal Jews, and liberal-minded universities, have, down the years, rendered the greatest assistance to communism (in Marquard 1965:44).

Later, this technique of indiscriminately lumping all anti-apartheid modes together led to the development of the doctrine of the Total Onslaught, a strategy used extensively by P.W. Botha and Defence Minister Magnus Malan to justify state violence by the police and army both inside and outside South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s.

From the political left, a number of African nationalist and Marxist activists have used remarkably similar techniques to disparage liberalism. Frequently, liberals are caricatured as hypocritical affluent white bourgeoisie pretending to sympathise with black political aspirations while in actuality helping to maintain the apartheid status quo in order to preserve their white privileges. Ezekiel Mphahlele, in The African Image (1962:50-51), for instance, portrays liberals as whites (he dismisses the notion of black liberals) who offer paternalistic assistance to blacks while accommodating themselves to apartheid law. Later, Steve Biko (1978:21-22) condemns white liberals for their patronising attitude towards blacks in trying to convince their fellow whites "that the black man is also a man and that at some future date he should be given a place at the white man's table". And more recently, even Njabulo Ndebele (1986:145) has insensitively equated what he calls "the phenomenal hypocrisy of the English-speaking liberal" with "the brutality of the Boer". While the criticisms contained in these statements may well be true of some liberal (or conservative) whites, the point to note is that they have little to do with liberalism as such. A more pointed, though no less unfair, critique of liberalism itself emerges in the comments of Marxist writers such as Neville Alexander, who claimed on his release from Robben Island in 1974 (in Slabbert 1993:21) that

liberalism is a greater danger in the long run to the struggle of the oppressed than fascism; for the very reason that it seems to speak with the tongue of the people.

In this radical critique, liberals are depicted as mere obstacles who ultimately serve the interests of the ruling class by deflecting the force of the revolution. This line of criticism is typified by Martin Legassick (1972:np) in his portrayal of liberalism as

a force trying on the one hand to minimise or disguise the conflictual or coercive aspects of the social structure, and on the other to convince selected Africans that the grievances they felt could be ameliorated through reforms which liberals could promulgate (see also Johnstone 1970; Trapido 1971; Legassick 1974; Rich 1984).

The Marxist critique of liberalism is, of course, more complex than this and will receive due attention in the course of this study. Nevertheless, it is true that a significant part of the

critique has been directed at liberals in politics rather than at liberalism itself. Thus, as Butler, Elphick and Welsh (1987:11) comment in the introduction to an important collection of essays, entitled Democratic Liberalism in South Africa, which seeks to offer a more balanced view of liberalism in this country,

South African liberals have been accused of being both strong and weak - as members of the establishment complicit in maintaining apartheid and as peripheral idealists with no political constituency and a long record of failure in producing reform.

While acknowledging the partial truth of both assertions, they go on to point out (1987:11) that such criticisms do not represent the whole picture:

Counterbalancing the weakness of liberals in formal politics, however, is their disproportionate presence in powerful and prestigious institutions [which are] conduits of liberal values to citizens who would never describe themselves as liberals.

Among such institutions are the legal profession and judiciary; the English-language press; private sector business; the traditionally English-language universities; the arts; the English-speaking churches and charity organisations. It is these institutions which have helped to sustain liberal values in the face of apartheid, and which have made significant contributions to resisting and eventually dismantling the apartheid state. Moreover, partly in reaction to the Africanist and Marxist critique, and partly in response to changing social and political circumstances, liberal scholars have developed a coherent contemporary understanding of liberalism which is highly relevant to the South African context. Such scholarship has been pursued in a variety of fields, including political theory (Elphick 1983; Welsh 1987); historiography (Wilson and Thompson 1969, 1971; Davenport 1987; Elphick 1987; and see Wright 1977; Saunders 1988); economics (Yudelman 1983; Simkins 1986); and education (Enslin 1986).

It is this concerted endeavour to maintain and promote liberal values and principles in society which helps to explain how, despite the well-documented contempt for liberals in South Africa, liberal democracy came to be accepted as the political model for "the new South Africa". The reasons for this apparently unexpected development require some explication. In the first place, it became evident in the course of the 1980s that the two main contenders for power in South Africa - Afrikaner nationalism and the popular liberation movements - had reached political deadlock, while the country staggered towards violent anarchy and economic crisis. Then, in 1989, the world-wide collapse of communism deprived both the Nationalist Party of their anti-communist legitimising myth as well as certain sections of the liberation movements of their redemptive grand theory. At about the same time, the intransigent State President, P.W. Botha, suffered a stroke, which gave a number of verligte Nationalists, including F.W. de Klerk, the opportunity to seize power and find a way out of the political impasse. As the new State President, de Klerk took the step at the opening of parliament on 2 February

1990 of unbanning all political organisations, repealing all apartheid legislation, and releasing political prisoners, especially Nelson Mandela, thus effectively ending apartheid and opening the way for multiparty negotiations. Both sides found themselves, then, facing these negotiations without an ideological framework, and so they soon fell back on conventional liberal principles, firstly, to get negotiations started, and secondly, as a means of achieving compromise. As Frederick van Zyl Slabbert (1993:21) rather cynically observes, when, in such circumstances, negotiation becomes the dominant mode of transition, nothing is calculated to make a liberal democrat of a tyrant more quickly than the prospect of his most ardent adversary coming into power.

In a sense, then, the CODESA negotiations could be regarded as a perfect exemplification of liberal social contract theory in action, producing a result which corresponds very closely to the kind of social justice propounded by John Rawls in A Theory of Justice, for example. The new South African political dispensation does, indeed, bear all the hallmarks of a quintessentially liberal state, with its constitutional government, its far-reaching bill of rights, its independent judiciary, and its protection of the freedom of speech, religion, association and assembly, as well as the maintenance of a generally free market economy. It could be argued that the country at large has, in fact, become the very sort of open, common society envisaged in the 1950s by the Liberal Party.

For the establishment of this liberal democratic society to have taken place, however, it was necessary for the fundamental values and principles of liberalism to have been kept current in South Africa, and to have been propounded in such a way that their force could be readily appreciated. As suggested earlier, this was accomplished partly through liberal politics and liberal scholarship in a variety of fields. But it was also achieved through the creative arts and particularly, perhaps, through literature, in which complex, abstract ideas can be given an immediate concrete significance and their meaning tested and explored in imaginative reality. More particularly, the force of political values and beliefs, such as those of liberalism, can, in literature, be expressed with a dramatic validity which is both multiple and direct. Nowhere in South African literature, as this thesis hopes to show, has this task been accomplished with greater integrity and power than in the work of Alan Paton and Athol Fugard.

## Liberalism and Literature

(i)

In the light of the understanding of liberalism which has emerged in this theoretical introduction, it is possible to consider in what ways the values and principles inherent in liberal political thought may have application in the sphere of literary activity and, in particular, how some of the key concepts in the work of contemporary political philosophers may be used to bolster a liberal conceptualisation of literature. In so doing, both a broad and a specific liberal approach to literary interpretation will be offered, as well as an examination of the relevance of such an approach in the South African context.

It ought to be noted, however, that the intention is not to construct some kind of liberal "theory" of literature. To do so would be to misconstrue both the nature and the practice of liberalism. In nature, liberalism is composed of a complex and multivariant body of thought which cannot be facily reduced to the status of a rigid, monolithic ideology. And in practical terms, liberalism affords a wide and flexible philosophical basis for action which cannot be glibly formulated through an all-encompassing grand theory. As such, it will be useful to approach the liberal idea of the relationship between politics and literature by means of a contrastive analysis of the claims and intentions of liberalism's two main theoretical adversaries in recent times, Marxism and post-structuralism (see Foley 1992c).

(ii)

An approach to literature founded upon liberal thinking must stand in utter opposition to the prescriptive and restrictive aims of Marxist criticism. Despite the superficially hybrid and developmental appearance of its approach and method in modern times, all Marxist theories, of which Marxist literary theory is part, has as its ultimate goal the actualisation of the Marxist state. General Marxist theory asserts that, at bottom, the only true or scientific knowledge is that of the Marxist understanding of material conditions, historical dialectic, class struggle and the inexorable teleological movement towards the classless socialist future. Given that all other ideologies must, therefore, be mistaken, and given that literature is a form of ideological expression, it follows that the fundamental purpose of Marxist literary criticism is to demonstrate how texts either succeed or fail in representing or reflecting the reality of the Marxist ideology. This, in turn, is part of the larger purpose of using such literary criticism as one further means, among many, of bringing about the revolutionary conditions which will usher in the Marxist political and economic order. Ultimately, there can be no other central coherent aim of Marxist literary critical practice. Marxist criticism thus arrogates to itself the right to pass normative judgements on the content of literary texts, based on this political objective, and, consequently, to

censure or even censor texts either through outright prohibition or through the critical "correction" or "re-writing" of their content in order to bring them in line with the approved political ideology. Such a commonality of purpose may be seen to underpin the work of the best-known Marxist theorists, such as the social realism models of Lukács (1955); the "negative knowledge" critiques of the Frankfurt school, including Adorno (1955) and Marcuse (1977); the interrogation of textual silences practised by Macherey (1966) and Eagleton (1976); the socio-literary focus of Goldmann (1964); and the reconstructive analysis of the political unconscious pursued by Jameson (1981).

Liberals clearly reject such procedures for a number of reasons. Most obviously, liberalism recognises the variousness and complexity of human life manifested in the uniqueness of individual persons, and so denies the concept of the exclusive validity of a single, narrow ideology such as Marxism. As Charles Altieri (1990:2) points out, Marxist literary-political theory provides very few adequate positive social alternatives - and offers very thin models for the range of personal desires and powers that must be central to establishing ideals of the good for both private and public domains (see also Parrinder 1987).

In terms of political reality, the disintegration of communist regimes in 1989 spelled a fatal blow for Marxism both at the level of practice, since it destroyed the practical material models for critical reference, and at the level of theory, for in Marxism theory (consciousness, ideology, superstructure) is determined in actuality by material forces. But the Marxist "transgressive" reading, or correction of texts, is perhaps most unpalatable for liberalism in that it is predicated upon the belief that social or communal considerations take precedence over individual perspectives, and that individual freedom of thought may be subjugated to the supposed good of the collectivity. Given the experience in South Africa of censorship, banning and information control by the apartheid regime, the prospect of similar measures taken in the name of radical ideological necessity must be viewed with very deep suspicion.

In the broadest sense, a liberal approach to literature is founded upon the right of the individual to freedom of thought and expression, and in fact seeks to encourage the free play of individual critical and creative work. It is a principle which lies at the heart of the liberal tradition of the open society, and which has its origins in the classical liberal theorists of the past, including Locke, Voltaire, de Tocqueville and, perhaps most famously of all, John Stuart Mill in his essay On Liberty (1859). The principle of the freedom of expression forms an integral component of the work of contemporary liberal theorists also, including both Robert Nozick and John Rawls, despite their divergence on other issues, and so it is possible to extend their political theorisation in application to the principles of literary critical practice today.

From Anarchy, State and Utopia (1974), Nozick's concept of the "framework of utopias". or utopia as a "meta-utopia" (discussed

earlier), is especially germane to the matter at hand. The implication of Nozick's theory is that a liberal approach to literature should, as a prerequisite for all literary activity, insist on the fundamental and absolute freedom of writers to write what they like, how they like, and from whatever perspective they like (subject only to the ordinary laws of libel, of course). Obversely, writers should be guaranteed the freedom not to have to write about any particular topic. Given this unconditional commitment to the individual autonomy and liberty of writers, it follows that a liberal literary criticism should, by nature, be descriptive rather than prescriptive, interpretative rather than normative, explicatory rather than exclusory. While texts may certainly be assessed in terms of their aesthetic properties, their effectiveness, their perspicacity (however these may be conceptualised), there can be no support for a criticism which demands that a literary text conform to certain pre-existent and preceptive norms of "correctness" - political, moral, religious, or otherwise. Importantly, then, liberal criticism does not require texts to reflect or promote liberal political thought since this would contradict the core liberal principle of individual (authorial) freedom itself. Thus, a liberal approach to literature is neither the weak nor the conservative one it is sometimes accused of being, but is rather one which is vitally and radically free. It nurtures truly creative art because it permits and, indeed, encourages experimentation, innovation, idiosyncrasy, eccentricity, and, perhaps most importantly of all, unpredictability. And it promotes truly critical thought because it allows and even values a free and open exchange of ideas, holding no subject above scrutiny and debate and believing no social or political arrangement to be beyond potential corrigibility. In the same way, then, that Nozick's political ideal consists primarily of a stable environment in which utopian experimentation can take place, so a liberal approach to literature should as its first task seek to establish a secure context for the free play of the creative imagination and the critical mind.

The question arises, however, of what action liberals could or should take against writers or critics who take advantage of this freedom to pursue a programme designed, for whatever reason, to dissolve or dismantle the "framework" or free literary environment - and both Marxism and post-structuralism do, in different ways, threaten to do this. Nozick suggests that the framework may have to be imposed and maintained as one of the few coercive duties of the state (1974:329-331), but provides no moral argument in support of such action. It is necessary, in fact, to turn to John Rawls's A Theory of Justice (1971) for a systematic justification of the enforcement of literary freedom. Rawls's first principle of justice (1971:302-303; see above), in asserting the equal right of all persons to "the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all", confirms that no person has the right to use his or her freedom to limit the freedom of others. More specifically, Rawls's first priority rule stresses that "liberty can be restricted only for the sake of liberty" and not for the

sake of efficiency or welfare (always bearing in mind the conditions laid down in the second principle of justice). In essence, Rawls's theory of justice provides a compelling demonstration of the fact that there can be no ethical or logical reason for a violation of the principle of individual liberty in general or of authorial freedom in particular: it would not bring into being a fairer social system; it would not be to the material advantage of the members of the society generally; and it would certainly not be to the benefit of those (writers) whose liberty was restricted. Thus, the only instance where a writer's freedom may be limited is where (s)he uses such freedom in an attempt to destroy the total system of liberty shared by all other writers.

(iii)

It may be argued that if liberty is to be regarded as the cardinal issue in the arena of literary practice, then post-structuralism offers a more radical theoretical model of linguistic, and hence, literary, freedom than does liberalism. Closer examination reveals, however, that post-structuralism presents an inadequate means of theorising the nexus between literature and politics, firstly, because its own conception of freedom of interpretation is highly suspect in its political ramifications, and, secondly, because it lacks a comprehensive and coherent perspective on the actual conditions of social reality. Without ignoring the importance of post-structuralists like Lacan and Foucault, it is most profitable for the purposes of this study to concentrate on the deconstructive theories of Jacques Derrida and his followers, since these hold the most far-reaching implications for political literature, and represent the most radically anti-liberal position, of all post-structuralist thought.

At the outset, however, it is necessary to disqualify from consideration a version of "deconstruction" which sees as its function merely the exposing and unravelling of contradictions or hidden agendas in theoretical systems or political discourses. Such a process has little to do with the deconstructive practices of Derrida and represents hardly more than a continuation of the tradition of sceptical analysis, established in the Enlightenment, based on the scientific principles of rational enquiry, experimentation and verification. This tradition is wholly consistent with the liberal tenets of rational, autonomous individuality and the need for constant vigilance against mendacity and tyranny.

More properly, deconstruction, as it emerges in the writings of Derrida (1967a, 1967b, especially), involves not simply healthy, rational scepticism, but rather, in its strongest form, the attempted subversion of the very basis of such rational discourse. In brief, deconstruction seeks to undermine the claims of any textual work, in terms of its linguistic system, to be autonomous, intelligible or determinate; that is, it asserts that there can be no textual representation or demonstration of

determinate truth or knowledge or reality. The validity or otherwise of Derrida's theories is not, however, the issue here (though see Holloway 1983; Watts 1983), but rather the political ramifications of his thought. Derrida's ideas may not initially seem to hold any direct or immediate relevance for specific political issues. Particularly in the South African apartheid context, the abstruse philosophical arguments, the tendency towards solipsistic textual interpretation (or non-interpretation), the self-indulgent verbal gaming, would seem to be of limited concern. There are, however, more pertinent and alarming political implications of Derrida's thinking which have begun to emerge with increasing clarity. The issues were thrust into prominence at the inaugural series of Amnesty International lectures held at Oxford University in 1992 in aid of the then incarcerated Burmese Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi. Entitled "Freedom and Interpretation", the lectures were intended, according to Jim Reed (1992), editor of the Oxford Magazine, as "an in-depth investigation of the relations between artistic and intellectual creation and human liberty", and focused particularly on the challenge posed by modern theories such as deconstruction to concepts like human individuality and meaningful communication, which are naturally of prime importance to Amnesty. Derrida, in particular, was taken to task for promoting an arbitrariness of interpretative freedom which itself threatens to dissolve the very values on which individuals' freedom rests. As Reed (1992), following the arguments of Frank Kermode and others, maintains, deconstruction has extensive political implications:

Far from being always a democratic right and a weapon against the structures of power, "freedom of interpretation" has no keener practitioners than the holders of power themselves, from the relatively tame ones who cook and re-cook the unemployment figures to the lethal ones who deny all knowledge of the human beings whom they have "disappeared", tortured and killed. Freedom of interpretation is not a good to be blithely maximised without some regulative notion of what is not just "free", but true.

The relevance of such comments for South Africa is brought into sharp focus by any consideration of recent South African history under a government which practised precisely the kind of lethal political engineering identified by Reed. What clearer exemplification could there be of deconstruction's radically arbitrary "freedom of interpretation" than the Nationalist Party's arbitrary classification of human beings into artificial racial categories like "Coloured" or "non-white"? Or the State's frighteningly Orwellian doublespeak in naming such legislative brutalities as the Immorality Act, the Extension of University Education Act and the Prohibition of Political Interference Act, and in formulating such euphemisms as "homeland", "resettlements" and "separate development" itself? Or the Government's utter subversion of any notions of truth or justice in its "free" interpretation and manipulation of information, coupled with its draconian censorship laws? Or even, most cynically of all perhaps, the Nationalists' attempted legitimization of apartheid

through grossly casuistical biblical exegesis? From a liberal point of view, it is clear that a potent source of opposition, protest and resistance to this State oppression has been the use of literature as a means of sustaining and promoting truth. To submit to a deconstructive randomness of interpretation would mean to relinquish this mechanism for individual and popular power against the unjust practices of the present and any future government. Given the grim lessons of South Africa's political history, such a step would have to be regarded as extremely ill-advised.

(iv)

In general terms, the liberal approach to literature stands midway between the radical collectivist politics of Marxist criticism on the left, and the at least potentially conservative practical political implications of deconstruction on the right. While liberalism rejects the foundational assumptions and assertions of Marxism and deconstruction, it ought nevertheless to be acknowledged that liberal critical procedures have benefited from some of the incidental insights which each theory has generated. Such evolutionary adaptability, in fact, constitutes one of liberalism's greatest strengths. Thus, liberal literary criticism has acquired from Marxism the need to take more seriously into account the influence of material conditions of literary production on meaning, and to make more precise its own analysis of historical context. From deconstruction, on the other hand, liberal critics have recognised the necessity to be more attentive to the problematic issue of textuality and to reconsider some of their assumptions about the authorial control of linguistic meaning.

In view of liberalism's assimilation of such insights, it is important to recognise that liberal literary criticism has evolved and developed since the early part of the century when the proponents of what was loosely termed, "liberal humanism", first sought to place the practice of literary interpretation on a more rigorous academic basis than had previously been the case. It is unfortunately true, however, that many opponents of liberalism, particularly in South Africa, still strive to assail liberal literary activity on the ground of practices which have not been current for many years, or to confuse it with conservative or apolitical critical approaches which have little or nothing to do with liberalism as such. It is quite common, for instance, for critics to refer dismissively to the liberal humanist character of a work without being able or, perhaps, willing to provide a satisfactory account of what they mean by the term (Watson 1983, selectively following Trilling 1943, 1951; Chapman 1984). Alternatively, a number of critics are guilty of conflating liberal critical practice with some of the stringently apolitical approaches of the New Critics or the Practical Criticism school (Vaughan 1982; Morphett 1990); and still other critics have sought to associate liberal approaches with illiberal, conservative literary-political positions (Hofmeyr

1979; Rich 1985).

Virtually by definition, contemporary liberal approaches to literature are neither conservative nor apolitical: indeed, as a practice founded upon a political philosophy, it is difficult to see how liberal literary activity could be conceptualised as non-political (see Foley 1992b). Neither should it be imagined that liberal-based literary criticism is a vague and untheorised body of work incapable of engaging with political reality. While by no means as oppressively theoretical as Marxist or post-structuralist criticism, liberal critical practice has developed a distinguished body of theoretical scholarship, which has found expression in a variety of influential works. As in the case of liberal politics, it is part of the malleable and plural character of liberal theory that it should have produced a complex and diverse range of critical hypotheses and approaches. Among those theorists whose work is particularly congenial to liberal thinking are E.D. Hirsch (1967; 1976), especially his crucial distinction between the determinate verbal meaning of a text and its non-determinate significance; Charles Altieri (1981; 1990), who develops a compelling defence of traditional humanistic meaning based on a variety of linguistic philosophical sources; and Daniel Schwarz (1986), who provides a crystallisation of the principles of humanistic formalism through a comparative analysis of twentieth-century Anglo-American critics. In addition, a number of the most influential critics of recent times have, partly in reaction to Marxist and post-structuralist criticism, offered a weighty theoretical and practical defence of liberal values in literature, including Wayne Booth (1961: 1988), Frank Kermode (1968; 1979), Eugene Goodheart (1978), John Gardner (1978), Richard Eldridge (1990) and Harold Bloom (1995).

Nevertheless, while it is part of the distinctive character of liberalism to foster freedom of thought and expression and, hence, a diversity of critical methods and emphases, this is not to suggest that liberal critics are obliged to accept any or all conceptions of literature as equally cogent or valid. Despite its flexibility and tolerance for novelty and heterodoxy, there are certain limits to what liberal criticism would regard as legitimate, and these are set largely in relation to the liberal conception of the human creature as an essentially autonomous, rational, individual agent. Given this understanding of human nature, it is obvious that liberal criticism stands opposed to any form of literary theory which rejects the notion of the individual subject whether by dissolving the individual into a social aggregate determined by material conditions (as Marxism does) or by deconstructing the human subject into a decentred play of indeterminate signifiers (as deconstruction does). This does not mean that liberal criticism insists on a narrowly realistic or mimetic understanding of literature or on any concomitant interpretative procedure. It does mean, however, that at the very least it assumes that it is possible for a rational, independent authorial agent to convey meaning to an equally rational, independent reader, however complex the process and however complicated the relationship between reader and writer

may be. It assumes, moreover, the capacity, at least potentially, of fictional writing to represent reality or to communicate insights about human life, though again without underestimating the complexity of the process.

Liberal criticism thus shares with Marxism, and in opposition to deconstruction, a belief in the capability of literature to reveal and convey truths about human reality. Unlike Marxism, however, liberalism does not construe these truths to be limited to the prescriptive parameters of any particular ideology. Instead, based on its commitment to the fundamental principle of individual liberty, liberalism encourages writers and readers alike continually to explore and to refine our understanding of those truths. It would be self-contradictory for liberal criticism to try to force any author to write from any specific point of view about any particular subject, even in a context of extreme political injustice. At the same time, however, the very condition of such authorial freedom has inspired many liberal writers to address the subject of the political infringement of human liberty in their work. A significant feature of the relationship between liberal politics and liberal literature emerges from this phenomenon: namely, that it is part of the complex and unique nature of liberalism to function simultaneously as an absolute guarantee of freedom of expression and as a compelling moral incentive for writers to help extend to others precisely that same condition of freedom.

(v)

As stated at the outset, the principal intention of this thesis is to explore the concept of liberalism as it informs, and is reflected in, the work of Alan Paton and Athol Fugard during the apartheid period. It remains to outline, in view of the foregoing discussion of the general liberal approach to literature, the specific literary critical methods and techniques to be employed in this study.

It must be pointed out immediately that the purpose is not to judge Paton's and Fugard's understanding of liberalism against some ideal, preconceived notion of liberalism through a normative, transgressive reading of their work. On the contrary, accepting that liberalism is open to a variety of individual interpretations and shifts of emphasis, it follows that this study will seek to identify and clarify how each writer has in his own way apprehended and articulated the values and beliefs of the liberal tradition. In particular, the idea is to examine the ways in which each writer has responded, from a liberal perspective, to the developing and changing dilemmas and difficulties presented in the course of the apartheid era. An important aspect of this thesis, then, is to come to an understanding of the nature and evolution of liberal thought in South Africa during this time, and to suggest at least some of the ways in which liberals challenged and helped to undermine the apartheid system. As such, this study will follow a chronological approach to each writer's work in turn, beginning in 1948 with

the publication of Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country and the Nationalist Party's election victory, and ending in 1990 with the demise of apartheid and Fugard's most recent published drama, Playland. In this way, it is hoped to be able to present a fairly comprehensive overview of the period, and the development of liberal thinking within it.

This is not to suggest, however, that the present study will take the form merely of a sociological or historiographical survey. Instead, given the fact that the primary material under analysis is creative literature, the understanding of liberalism to emerge in this study will have to be seen in the light of the individual, subjective and artistic features of the textual discourse. In some senses, therefore, the approach to be adopted shares certain affinities with that suggested by the term, "history from the inside", coined by Stephen Clingman (1986) in his investigation of the novels of Nadine Gordimer. Clingman's comments about the novel (1986:1) have application not only to narrative fiction but also to drama:

The novel can present history as historians cannot. Moreover, this presentation is not fictional in the sense of being "untrue". Rather, fiction deals with an area of activity usually inaccessible to the sciences of greater externality: the area in which historical process is registered as the subjective experience of individuals in society.

At the same time, however, this study does not share the Marxist orientation of Clingman's work, and so will approach issues such as the historical process, individuality and society from an unambiguously liberal perspective. Thus, for example, the authors under consideration here will not be judged as inherently fallible observers whose largely socially constrained insights need to be refined and completed by the critic; rather, the writers will be regarded as autonomous witnesses who are capable of providing an accurate and assiduous account, from their personal viewpoints, of the experiences of individuals in apartheid society. In this sense, the socio-historical dimensions of this study are to be treated in a manner which is informed by the kind of understanding of literature advanced by Lionel Abrahams (1987:152); his specific reference to poetry may be extrapolated to other genres:

In a uniquely focused, uniquely intimate, uniquely articulate way, poetry embodies something of the history of what humankind has felt .... Poetry has to go where journalism and historiography do not have to go - into the core of the individual experience, where the politics, the economics, the conflict and disruption are not just thought but undergone and felt. And it has to do what they do not - it has to involve its matter with beauty in form. Poetry, the most intimate, truthful and heroic employment of language, must penetrate the cataclysm, its ironies, its paradoxes; must articulate (express by shaping) the inwardness of disaster, and thus triumph over it - that is to say, convey our humanity through and beyond it.

A crucial aspect of this thesis will involve its endeavour to

offer a close reading of the work of Paton and Fugard, making use in a flexible and eclectic way of the various tools of literary analysis, and explicating the various literary devices utilised by each writer in his particular genre. It is a basic assumption of this study that the literary methods used by each writer to articulate and convey his message fundamentally modify and shape the actual meaning of that message. It would be impossible to come to a full understanding of what Paton and Fugard are expressing in their work without taking into account the literary form which that expression is given. More than that, the effectiveness of the message, whether in terms of personal emotion and experience, social protest, or universal human insight, derives essentially from the writer's linguistic, and, in Fugard's case, dramaturgical, skill. As such, this study will be implicitly concerned with both Paton's and Fugard's artistic achievement, though conceptualised in terms which include the arena of historical reality.

It is evident that the purpose of this study beyond the purely artistic involves the attempt to elucidate the nature and development of liberalism under apartheid, through the lens of Paton's and Fugard's creative work. Clearly, this task will entail moving beyond the primary texts to a consideration of the surrounding political context. In this regard, use will be made of both general socio-historical sources as well as the two writers' non-creative work. As will become apparent, it is not part of the method of Paton or Fugard to present explicit definitions of liberalism, or to advance propagandistic claims for liberalism, in their creative writing. Even given Paton's involvement in formal politics, and his overt delineation of liberal principles in his non-fictional writing, no political pamphleteering occurs in his novels. Similarly, despite his subtle and informed liberal sensibility, Fugard chooses not to offer didactic political statements in his drama. It is therefore necessary to distil from the literary features of their creative writing their understanding of the values and principles of liberalism, especially as these are set in relation to the illiberal and unjust practices of apartheid, and, to a lesser extent, the anti-liberal aspects of radical opposition.

It will be seen, for example, that both Paton and Fugard are concerned to understand people as individuals first and foremost, rather than as members of one or other group. Both writers seek to demonstrate the innate moral equality of all persons, regardless of race, creed, ethnic origin or social background. Both writers are resolute in their opposition to all political systems or social theories which undermine or violate the primary value of the freedom of individuals. And both writers are equally unwavering in their refusal to countenance the use of violence for whatever reason, even as a means of attempting to combat and end social injustice. Developing out of their commitment to these fundamental liberal values, there is in each writer's work a delight in the variety of humankind, a willing tolerance and acceptance of difference and heterodoxy, an authentic sympathy for human suffering and despair, and a belief, in spite of everything, that apartheid can be defeated through peaceful

means. There is, thus, a faith in the power of reason, dialogue, compassion, and the development of mutual co-operation and understanding, to overcome prejudice and hatred, and to bring about the establishment of a just and equitable social order.

This thesis hopes to demonstrate that, whatever other tensions and difficulties there may be in their work, Paton and Fugard remained faithful throughout the course of their writing careers to these basic and profound liberal values and principles. In the face of the relentless oppression of successive apartheid governments, and the often vitriolic criticism of more radical ideological adversaries, such an achievement is both considerable and significant, and merits close and careful examination.

**ALAN PATON**

## Introduction

Alan Paton was without doubt one of the leading liberals of his generation. Internationally renowned for his first great novel, Cry, the Beloved Country, Paton had been the innovative and progressive principal of Diepkloof Reformatory for African boys, a founding member and leader of the South African Liberal Party, and, throughout his life, a tireless champion of liberal values and principles in the face of racial injustice and oppression. Moreover, through his several volumes of autobiography and biography, and his numerous articles and lectures, his life and thought have been thoroughly and candidly documented. And yet, despite this abundance of material, there exists among his literary critics a great deal of uncertainty and confusion about the precise nature and value of his achievement as a creative writer.

The source of this uncertainty may in large measure be located in a general misunderstanding or - even worse, perhaps - a partial understanding of the actual character of liberalism and, more particularly, in a thoroughgoing confusion about the relationship between liberal politics and liberal art. In a context as fraught with political conflict as South Africa, it is, perhaps, to be expected that Paton's work has been frequently misrepresented - at times wilfully - by critics of opposing political viewpoints, both from the left and from the right. However, Paton has been ill-served also by critics who share his general political perspective, but who have failed to come to terms with, and hence to articulate, the full significance of the liberal nature of his literary work. Thus, as a writer, Paton has been scorned by the right-wing as a "sickly liberalist" and "cat's paw of Communists" (see Callan 1968b:4), while several left-wing critics have claimed that Paton is at best misguided and naive (Mphahlele 1962; Wade 1973; Watson 1982, 1983; Hutchings 1992) and at worst a covert conservative reactionary (Cooke 1979; Nash 1983; Rich 1985). These criticisms will be discussed more fully later, but it is useful to note at this point that such critics almost invariably proceed from very limited definitions of liberalism, if indeed they offer any express accounts at all of what they understand by liberalism. No explicit descriptions of liberalism are provided by critics such as Mphahlele, Wade, Cooke, Nash or Rich, while others, like Watson and Hutchings, define liberalism in such vague and nebulous terms as to distort its actual meaning completely. Hutchings (1992:184), for example, describes "Paton's liberalism" simplistically as "a rationally governed sense of decency and fair play, with little concern for the historical determinants of that sense"; and Watson (1983:15), selectively following Lionel Trilling, proffers an equally facile "definition": "a ready if mild suspiciousness of the profit motive, a belief in progress, science, social legislation, planning and international co-operation". However, if unsatisfactory accounts of liberalism have been presented by its opponents, it is unfortunately true that liberal critics have themselves tended to be equally vague and unsure about the meaning and qualities of liberalism in

literary work such as Paton's. Richard Rive (1983:21), for example, discussing Cry, the Beloved Country, expresses the following admission of confusion:

I experience great difficulty in defining what I mean by the liberal tradition in South African literature, so I am not going to define it but merely mention what I feel are relevant characteristics.

If Rive's efforts seem rather unhelpful, then so do those of critics like Jack Cope (1970), Raymond Sands (1970) and Christopher Hope (1985). Indeed, even the best of Paton's critics, Edward Callan (1968a, 1982, 1991) offers something less than an explicit and comprehensive explanation of the specifically liberal core of Paton's creative work.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to provide a clear and precise account of Paton's liberal thought and to demonstrate how this informs and is expressed in his imaginative writing. More particularly, the fundamental argument which will be advanced is that Paton's liberal position, as communicated through his literary work, is neither naive nor inadequate, but instead constitutes an important, valid and relevant response to the social and political circumstances of his time.

In terms of focus, it may be noted that this study will concentrate primarily on Paton's fiction, since it is principally through his novels and short stories that his liberal thinking is most ably and thoroughly articulated, but cognizance will nevertheless be taken of his poetic and dramatic work.

Moreover, part of the method to be pursued in this study will involve a careful examination of Paton's own political, religious and other non-fictional writing, in order to discern how Paton himself formally understood liberalism. As will be seen, in this writing, much of it often ignored or neglected, Paton proves himself far more capable of providing a lucid definition of liberalism and describing its salient features than his detractors. There will also be an endeavour to place Paton's fictional texts accurately within their specific temporal contexts. This will be done not so much to trace the development over time of Paton's liberal thinking per se, for it remained fairly stable in essence from the mid 1940s onwards, but rather to see how Paton responded, as a liberal writer, to the changing socio-political challenges presented by post-war South African history.

It is necessary to clarify at the outset, however, that it is mistaken to regard Paton as some implacable ideologue relentlessly pursuing a political programme through the guise of creative fiction. Indeed, a major limitation of many readings of Paton's work, both radical and conservative, is that they have tended to focus almost exclusively on what they have perceived as the political message in the text, subordinating balanced literary critical procedure to the promotion of specific political agendas. Such readings yield a very narrow perspective on Paton's work and, in fact, implicitly reject Paton's own claim, as a novelist, to be first and foremost a creative artist

who chose to focus on some of the central problems and dilemmas of his society at various stages of its development. He makes the point explicitly in Towards the Mountain (1980:272-273):

I tried to make a story, not a denunciation or a sermon or lesson .... [I]f you want to preach you must go to the pulpit, if you want to teach you must go to the podium, but if you want to tell a story you must go to the desk and obey the rules of the craft. If your story also expounds some moral truth because of the kind of person you are, that is acceptable so long as it is the writer and not the preacher or the teacher who tells the story. If the preacher or the teacher intrudes, that will mean the end of the story.

This is not to say, of course, that Paton is advocating a stringently apolitical approach to literature. Quite obviously, his writing is at its very core political. What he is asserting is that his fiction involves the techniques, methods and characteristics specific to the fictional mode, and these must be taken into account in appreciating fully the meaning and significance of the work.

In this study, then, an attempt will be made to read Paton's fiction on its own terms, rather than through the restricting filter of an externally imposed ideological paradigm. The aim is to treat Paton's fiction not as if it were merely a special form of political propagandising or as a vehicle for espousing theoretical abstractions, but instead as authentic literary expression which renders through its own coherent terms of reference a legitimate response to the issues and concerns of South Africa's unfolding social history. Paton's literature is at all times concerned not simply with overall social formations and political structures, but with the experiences, feelings, hopes and fears of individual human beings. It is, indeed, precisely this concern, not solely with abstract notions of social justice, but specifically with individuals and individual liberty as the basis of any understanding of social justice, that distinguishes Paton's fiction as quintessentially liberal in nature, and that constitutes a central part of its value and meaning.

## Background

Although Paton's status as a pre-eminent liberal and his unwavering commitment to the liberal cause are beyond question, it is important to realise that he neither came from a liberal background nor did he appreciate the attraction of liberalism as a specific political philosophy during his early adulthood. It was only in his mid forties, not too long before the writing of Cry, the Beloved Country, that he came to understand and accept formally the central tenets of liberalism and to devote himself fully to the liberal enterprise. It would be instructive, therefore - not least for the light that it sheds on Cry, the Beloved Country - to chart his development towards acceptance of the values and ideals of liberalism.

As he has recounted in his first autobiographical volume, Towards the Mountain (1980), Paton was born into a devout Christadelphian family. From an early age, however, he began to reject the strict, even authoritarian, rule of his father, and to differentiate between what he later termed "the lesser and the greater moralities" (1980:32). As such, while Paton remained a practising Christian all his life, he possessed always an ecumenical temperament, seeking to establish common ground with those who cherished similar ideals rather than emphasising sectarian differences in dogma. His Christianity, moreover, was based firmly on the principles of love and tolerance rather than judgement and force. A gentle and even quiet boy at school, Paton's leadership qualities began to emerge clearly at Natal University College (now the University of Natal) where he became president of the Students' Representative Council and was selected to represent his fellow students at the first Imperial Student Conference in England in 1924. It was also at university, chiefly under the influence of an older student whom he greatly admired, Railton Dent, that Paton came to adopt an axiom which he upheld throughout his life, namely "that life must be lived in the service of a cause greater than oneself" (1980:59). After qualifying as a teacher and taking a post at his former school, Maritzburg College (following brief stints at Newcastle and Ixopo High Schools), Paton joined the Pietermaritzburg branch of Toc H (the Talbot House charity organisation), which first led him to feel "responsible for society" (1980:111), and he made a substantial contribution to its work.

From this brief account of Paton's early life, it is clear that he was a decent, moral young person, concerned about his neighbour, and eager to serve his community in whatever way he could. However, he could not at that time be termed a liberal because he had not as yet comprehended the importance of what he later identified as the defining characteristic of liberalism in South Africa, "its particular concern with racial justice" (1958a:6). As he points out in Towards the Mountain (1980:105):

I must record that in those days of the 1920s it never occurred (to my knowledge) to any member of Toc H to consider opening the organisation, whose supreme aim was to create a new spirit between man and man, to any person who

was not the possessor of a white skin. And he goes on to admit candidly (1980:111) that in his own ToC H activities,

the society for which I was beginning to feel responsible was a white society. I have no doubt that I knew there were other societies, but I felt no responsibility for them. The realisation that all these societies were interdependent was hidden from me. Least of all did I accept the belief which was later to become the driving force of my life, that all these societies were in fact one society.

Indeed, in his autobiographical article of 1971, "Case History of a Pinky" (1971; in Paton 1975:235-236; see also Paton 1957a), Paton relates his experience directly to that of Arthur Jarvis in Cry, the Beloved Country (reported in Jarvis's essay, "Private Essay on the Evolution of a South African"), where it is claimed that one can grow up as an English-speaking South African and yet know literally nothing at all about other ethnic groups in the country. Jarvis notes:

I was ... brought up by honourable parents, given all that a child could need or desire. They were upright and kind and law-abiding; they taught me my prayers and took me regularly to church; they had no trouble with servants and my father was never short of labour. From them I learnt all that a child should learn of honour and charity and generosity. But of South Africa I learnt nothing at all (p.150).

The first significant event which served to precipitate the start of Paton's "learning" about South Africa was his contraction of Enteric fever (Typhoid fever) and his subsequent long and grave illness. When he eventually recovered, he began to take serious stock of his life. He was thirty-two years old, had been a schoolmaster for eleven years, and he now decided that he wished to do something quite different. Inspired by his reading of Cyril Burt's The Young Delinquent (1925), and with the help of his friend, Jan Hofmeyr (then Minister of Education, and a keen and regular participant at the Student Christian Association boys' camps launched by Paton and his friends, Reg Pearse and Cyril Armitage), Paton applied for the post of Principal at a reformatory. He did not want that of Diepkloof Reformatory for African boys - a deeply problematic institution - but that is what he got and what he accepted, despite serious opposition from his wife, Dorrie. Speaking of himself in the third person in "Case History of a Pinky" (1971; in Paton 1975:238-239), he comments:

It opened his eyes. For the first time in his life ... he saw South Africa as it was .... During those years at Diepkloof Reformatory he began to understand the kind of world in which Black people had to live and struggle and die. I won't say that he overcame all racial fear, but I will say that he overcame all racial hatred and prejudice.

In fact, he likens this turning point in his life to that of St Francis of Assisi when he came down from his horse to embrace the leper in the road on the Umbrian plain, and he feels that the saint's famous words could be applied with equal validity to himself (in Paton 1980:169):

The Lord himself led me amongst them, and I showed mercy to them, and when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of body and soul.

However, despite his experiences at Diepkloof, Paton (1980:240-241), like many other well-intentioned white South Africans, had by 1941 still not grasped the full implications of the South African issue:

One loved what was right and good and just, but one did not yet understand that these things could not be had except at the cost of a change in one's whole life and situation.

From a personal perspective, Paton's life seemed quite satisfactory and fulfilled (Paton 1980:241):

The land of my birth was beautiful, my home life was satisfying, the success of Diepkloof was established, so that one could easily deceive oneself that the future was safe and secure.

But two crucial events occurred in his life at that time which brought him to full liberal consciousness: firstly, the Anglican synod of 1941 on which Paton served under Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton; and secondly, Paton's attendance at the remarkable funeral of Edith Rheinallt-Jones. While it is clearly too simplistic to reduce Paton's development as a liberal to these two incidents only, it is useful to highlight them as crucial stages in that development.

Firstly, as Paton has delineated in Apartheid and the Archbishop (1973a) and elsewhere, the Anglican synod of 1941 decided to establish a Diocesan Commission under the chairmanship of the then Bishop of Johannesburg, Geoffrey Clayton, with the task of attempting to define "what it believed to be the mind of Christ for South Africa" (1973a:116). Paton (1973a:117) has commented that his involvement in the Commission was for him like coming from the darkness into the light as he began to understand at last that one could not be a Christian in South Africa and claim to love justice and truth without becoming actively concerned about the socio-political problems of the country. As he trenchantly remarks in Towards the Mountain (1980:248), "the bishop's commission ... didn't change the heart of the nation but it changed me."

The second seminal event that Paton stresses is his virtually epiphanic encounter at the funeral of Edith Rheinallt-Jones, recalled in his essay, "A Deep Experience" (1961). Paton had met Edith and her husband at the South African Institute of Race Relations, and had driven her on some of her frequent visits to girls' Wayfarer troops in the rural areas where she helped to provide them with a sense of significance and purpose in their activities - one such episode is described in Paton's poem, "Black Woman Teacher" (Songs of Africa p.85). While Paton was very impressed with Edith's work, as well as with her relationships with blacks, whom she treated as absolute equals, his real revelation came at her funeral in 1944 at St George's Presbyterian Church in Johannesburg: scores of people of every colour and creed "had come to honour her memory - their hates and their fears, their prides and their prejudices, all for the

moment forgotten" (1961:24). For Paton (1961:24) the experience was profoundly significant:

In that church one was able to see, beyond any possibility of doubt, that what this woman had striven for was the highest and best kind of thing to strive for in a country like South Africa. I knew then I would never again be able to think in terms of race and nationality. I was no longer a white person but a member of the human race. I came to this, as a result of many experiences, but this one ... was the deepest of them all.

By the mid 1940s, then, Paton had come to understand and accept the fundamental precepts of liberalism. He had, in fact, begun to express some of these beliefs in a series of articles on crime and punishment, published in the liberal journal, The Forum, during 1943-1944 (see Paton 1943a-c, 1944a-c). These pieces propounded the basic message, as one of their titles suggests, that the "real way to cure crime" was for society to "reform itself" (1944a); in particular, a society should provide its members with a sense that they were "socially significant" because "to mean something in the world is the deepest hunger of the human soul" (1944a:24). Paton continued to enunciate such sentiments in a number of other articles written during the 1940s (see Paton 1944d; 1945a-c; 1946b; 1947; 1948a-c), by which time his liberal thinking within the civil service had become more or less settled.

This is not to say, however, that Paton had never considered a career as a writer. As Peter Alexander (1994:109-117, 178-179) has disclosed, Paton in fact completed in the earlier part of his life a number of books: three novels (Ship of Truth, c1922; Brother Death, c1930; John Henry Dane, c1934), a play (Louis Botha, c1932), and two works of non-fiction (Religion and my Generation, c1933; The Afrikaner, c1941). None of these works was ever published, but they serve as an early indication of the literary dimension of Paton's temperament. Moreover, his correspondence with Jan Hofmeyr throughout the 1930s and 1940s reveals Paton's political ambitions, though Hofmeyr offered him no assistance in this direction (see the Hofmeyr Collection, University of the Witwatersrand; the Alan Paton Centre, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg; and Alexander 1994:99f). Nevertheless, despite these literary and political pretensions, Paton seems by the mid 1940s to have accommodated himself to a career in the civil service, in which he was looking forward to imminent advancement. Indeed, he undertook a tour of the penal institutions of Europe and America mainly to qualify himself "for the eminent post of Director of Prisons" (Paton 1980:254).

However, two further events of seminal significance were going to change his life forever: the first was the writing (during that same tour), publication and overwhelming international acclaim of his first novel, Cry, the Beloved Country; the second was the victory of the Nationalist Party in the general election of 1948.

## Cry, the Beloved Country

(i)

It is important to realise that when Paton wrote Cry, the Beloved Country, it was at a time when South Africa appeared to be set to move steadily away from racial injustice towards a more equitable social system. A variety of circumstances, both within South Africa and abroad, seemed to have coalesced to produce conditions conducive to progressive political change.

By 1945 the war against Nazism and Fascism had been won and the world - the western world, at least - looked forward to an era of peace and freedom from tyranny. The preamble to the United Nations Charter - written, indeed, by South Africa's Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, and even ratified by Parliament on 7 February 1946 - encapsulated the pervasive mood of liberal democratic hope of the times:

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED  
to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,  
which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to  
mankind, and  
to reaffirm faith in fundamental rights, in the dignity and  
worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and  
women and of nations large and small, and  
to establish conditions under which justice and respect for  
the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of  
international law can be maintained, and  
to promote social progress and better standards of life in  
larger freedom,

....

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE  
AIMS (in Boyce 1974:91).

Many white South African servicemen, recently returned from the war, were filled with an invigorated sense of justice as well as with a new internationalist perspective, having seen and experienced a world far less hidebound by racial prejudice than South Africa. Moreover, this flowering of liberal attitudes seemed set to be reinforced by the South African government. In the first place, Smuts had begun to take certain steps towards addressing the inequities of the country: the appointment of the Fagan Commission in 1946, for instance, to look into the question of various African grievances (see Davenport 1987:340-345).

Even more promisingly, Hofmeyr seemed due to take over the leadership of the government and to put into practice the liberal ideals which he had been articulating in a number of speeches and articles at that time. In one such article, entitled "Faith, Fear and Politics", and published in the first edition of Forum in 1938, Hofmeyr (in Paton 1964a:294-295) called on white South Africans to abandon the delusively "realist" approach of resorting to "a policy of repression which is based on fear", and to embrace instead the position of "the much-abused liberal", who particularly "asserts the essential value of human personality as something independent of race or colour". This

article, which Paton (1964a:294) felt "was as clear an exposition of liberal philosophy as could have been had in those times", argued powerfully that "the way forward", to be taken in "faith" and not "fear", was the liberal way. Such sentiments were repeated with equal conviction in Hofmeyr's famous "Herrenvolk" speech when he was deputy Prime Minister. In this speech, given in his address as Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1946, Hofmeyr (in Paton 1964a:421-423) explicitly compared South Africa's dominant racist mentality to that of Nazi Germany and called on white South Africa to rid itself of "the lie in the soul" and "the greatest evil of all" - "the tyranny of prejudice".

Outside the ranks of those in power, a similarly strong liberal spirit appeared to be abroad. In the African National Congress, for example, its president, A.B. Xuma, upheld its liberal-minded tradition, inherited from its forerunner, the South African Native National Congress. Indeed, the A.N.C.'s Bill of Rights, published in 1945, owed a great deal to the Atlantic Charter of 1941, and although its objectives were rather more far-reaching than those laid down in the S.A.N.N.C.'s original constitution of 1912, it remained a transparently liberal document. Its demand for a universal suffrage, by way of illustration, seemed quite in keeping with the liberal mood of the post-war period. In fact, as Janet Robertson (1971:33-34) points out, the leaders of the A.N.C. were generally optimistic that many of their more reasonable demands - such as the abolition of some of the most discriminatory legislation - would be met quite shortly.

On the opposite side of the political fence, it appeared that many Afrikaner nationalists, too, were beginning to soften their tone in this new era. Paton himself, for example, firmly believed that the Afrikaner was about to move away from extreme nationalism towards a more liberal stance. In an article published in July 1946 in the journal, Common Sense, Paton (1946; in Paton 1975:26-27) makes the following judgement:

The world is obviously a changing world, and world opinion has never been so sensitive to the rights of minorities and voiceless majorities. The Afrikaner who intelligently understands his own development and who knows how conquest confirmed him in his own struggle, clearly - and probably very painfully - sees the inevitability of a similar non-European struggle. He sees clearly too, for no one today follows international events more thoughtfully, that world opinion hardens against repression.

....

The Afrikaner intellectual is forced too, on moral grounds, to re-examine such consoling phrases as "hewer of wood and drawer of water", and to compare the contention that God made the races different with its shaky corollary of white domination. I think that one may expect that Afrikaner religion, which is inevitably and quite understandably shot through and through with extreme nationalism, will be progressively purified as the supports of extreme nationalism crumble; and that there will be more and more searching Christian examination of the view that it is

right to secure one's advance by denying advance to others, as well as more searching intellectual examination of the view that such a programme is possible at all.

This optimism of Paton and other liberal-minded people was, of course, to prove quite unfounded when the Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Party came to power in 1948 and immediately set about entrenching and extending apartheid legislation. Despite a number of warning signs, which will be discussed later, such a prospect in 1945 or 1946, certainly to Paton, was quite unanticipated (Paton 1980:254):

Smuts as Prime Minister and leader of the United Party, and Hofmeyr as his deputy, were in a position of great power. No one could foresee that three years later they would be defeated by Dr. Malan, leader of the National Party. I certainly did not foresee it, and I made plans for a future the realisation of which would depend totally on the continuance of the United Party.

One of such plans was the tour of European and American penal institutions during which he came to write Cry, the Beloved Country.

As has been well documented (Paton 1980; Callan 1968a; 1982; 1991; Alexander 1994), Paton began the novel in Trondheim, Norway, which he had visited not on business but out of a curiosity to see the land of Knut Hamsun's darkly realistic novel, Growth of the Soil. This novel may have been an influence on parts of Cry, the Beloved Country in its descriptions of landscape and in its social realist mode, but generally the books are dissimilar. More importantly, Paton's time overseas, in Norway especially, gave him a sharp critical distance from his country and enabled him to think objectively about its problems.

Cry, the Beloved Country is, thus, as Paton (1980:272) has said, "a cry of protest against the injustices of my own country". But it was also written out of a deep sense of loneliness and homesickness, and hence it may be seen, too, as a moving evocation of Paton's much adored land and as an expression of hope for its social and political amelioration. As Paton (1969:82) has also commented:

It is a song of love for one's far distant country, it is informed with longing for that land where they shall not hurt or destroy in all that holy mountain, for that unattainable and ineffable land where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for that land that cannot be again, of hills and grass and bracken, the land where you were born. It is a story of the beauty and terror of human life ....

From this brief discussion, it should be clear that while the specific time in which, about which, and for which, Cry, the Beloved Country was written was certainly a troubled and difficult one, it was also one in which real hope for future justice and peace seemed possible. Hence, the novel Paton wrote was one in which - as its sub-title suggests - some "comfort" is indeed offered in the midst of the "desolation". Far from such

optimism being a sign of political naivety, as some critics have argued, it reveals instead how Paton in this novel embodied and expressed the hopeful, liberalising mood of the times. It is to a more detailed examination of how Cry, the Beloved Country functions as a seminal liberal document that this discussion now turns.

(ii)

One of the underlying purposes of this study is to suggest the full significance and value of Cry, the Beloved Country as a novel of social protest in South Africa. Although it is true that several novels up to that time had dealt with what was rather loosely referred to as "the native question" - most notably William Plomer's Turbott Wolfe (1925) and Peter Abrahams's Mine Boy (1946) - none had done so in as comprehensive, insightful and moving a fashion. Christopher Hope (1985:41) has rightly termed Cry, the Beloved Country "the great exemplar" of protest novels in South Africa, of "powerful works which lay bare the evil of apartheid". Jack Cope (1970:13), moreover, has claimed that Cry, the Beloved Country in fact ushered in "a new period" in South Africa's literary history and that "with this book, South African fiction really came into its own", not least of all because "there is a new awareness in it of the man on the other side of the barbed wire, a true fellow-feeling between white and black as we had never had before".

It was, indeed, part of Paton's express intention, in writing the novel, to "stab South Africa in the conscience" (in Callan 1982:29), and to effect this he set out to portray the country's social ills with uncompromising candour. Thus, in the "Author's Note" that precedes the novel, Paton observes that his book is a work of fiction rather than fact in its primary aspects, but he goes on to stress that in terms of its social analysis of South Africa it is both valid and accurate:

In these aspects therefore the story is not true, but considered as a social record it is the plain and simple truth.

If such claims seem rather large ones to make, it is important to see that Paton's situation and background had put him in a very advantageous position to write a novel of this kind. In the first place, Paton's experiences, over ten years, as principal of Diepkloof Reformatory had placed him personally and directly in touch with the effects of racial discrimination in South Africa, at the level both of the individual and of the society at large. Furthermore, as a social analyst and commentator, he had over a long period of time wrestled with the question of the underlying causes of these effects, and had frequently presented statistical and other evidence before various public and private bodies (see Callan 1968a:52).

By way of example, shortly before the writing of Cry, the Beloved Country, Paton had published an article in The Forum (1945c:7-8), entitled "Who is Really to Blame for the Crime Wave in South Africa?", which deals critically and objectively with many of the

issues raised in the novel; indeed, the novel itself contains an oblique reference to the article in the title of one of Arthur Jarvis's speeches (p.72). In this article, Paton offers a liberal alternative to the prevailing official view, embodied, for instance, in the 1943 committee under S.H. Elliott, chief magistrate of Johannesburg, which with gross insensitivity recommended simplistically that the way to combat the increase in crime was merely through stricter enforcement of the pass laws (see Davenport 1987:340). Paton, in contrast, warns that the causes of the crime wave are to be found not simply in the fact of the rapid urbanisation of the post-war period - though this is certainly relevant. Rather, he asserts that the more important underlying cause is the alarming disintegration of traditional African society under pressure of the impact of Western social and economic forces. This decay in the moral and spiritual support structure of African society, both in the tribal reserves and in the cities, which had for some time been gradually worsening, had now reached crisis proportions and required urgent attention. Typically, though, Paton is not content to suggest a facile or partial solution along abstract economic lines. Instead, he maintains (1945c:8) that ultimately "moral and spiritual decay can be stopped only by moral and spiritual means", and that social regeneration can only occur if the conditions are created where morality and social responsibility can flourish:

Men obey the laws when they are pursuing worthy goals, working for some good purpose, making the most of their seventy years, using their gifts.

He makes the further telling point that the real reason why white society denies blacks opportunities to develop these gifts is out of blind, irrational "fear", a fear which obscures the causal connection between African social frustration and its criminal consequences (see also especially Paton 1943b, 1944a, 1945a).

It is authentic details such as these of "the social record" with which Paton was directly familiar, and which he sought to portray in his novel, Cry, the Beloved Country.

The novel's structure falls naturally into two main movements, each of which will be dealt with in turn: the first involves the parallel experiences of Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis as they come to understand the nature and extent of their society's problems more fully; the second then turns to the possibilities of the restoration of that society. It is in the first of these movements, in particular, that Paton provides a deeply disturbing yet lucid account of South Africa's dismal "social record".

To begin with Stephen Kumalo, the initial circumstances which set off the dramatic conflict correspond closely to the situation described in Paton's Forum article discussed above (1945c). Kumalo, a humble village parson in Ndotsheni in rural Natal, receives a discreet yet urgent letter from the Reverend Theophilus Msimangu in Johannesburg briefly stating that Kumalo's sister, Gertrude, is "sick" and needs his help. Some time previously, Gertrude had gone to Johannesburg to look for her and Stephen's missing brother, John, and had never returned.

Gertrude's sickness is of course moral rather than physical and has, as it turns out, infected not only Gertrude, who has become a loose and dissolute woman, but also John himself, a politician who is a corrupt self-serving opportunist. Most disturbing of all, however, is the case of Stephen's son, Absalom, who, in turn having gone to look for Gertrude, has become caught up in criminal activities, and is, by the time Stephen finally finds him, the confessed murderer of Arthur Jarvis.

The first part of the novel charts Stephen's quest to locate the members of his family and to re-unite the family structure, a quest which forces him into a greater understanding of himself and his society. It must be noted that Stephen is not a bad man; far from it, he is a kind and decent old parson who has led a quiet, uneventful life in the Natal rural interior. His failings and limitations, therefore, are not those of morality but of knowledge and comprehension. He has simply never been fully confronted by the fundamental problems of his society at large and has no experience of how to deal with them. He now embarks not merely on a physical journey but also on a spiritual journey of discovery and learning. In an important sense, Paton positions his readers so that they share the journey and learn, with Kumalo, the often brutal facts about their own society, facts of which they too may well have been ignorant.

In Johannesburg, then, Kumalo is brought face to face with the poverty and squalor of the townships; he is appalled by the descent into crime, wrongdoing and corruption of so many people, including his own relatives; he is confronted everywhere in the city by the fact of white oppression, racial inequality and injustice; and he is horrified by the infrastructural inadequacies of African life in the city as a whole. These realities are given immediate expression in the first of three choral chapters in the novel, where the voices of the townships clash and mingle to speak directly of the crushing misery and frustration suffered by thousands of black South Africans daily. This chapter (chapter 9) serves the purpose both of widening the perspective of the novel beyond that of Kumalo alone to include the society in general, as well as of providing a form of objective confirmation of Kumalo's alarmed personal response to what he sees.

What Kumalo is fundamentally compelled to understand is that (as Paton suggested in his Forum article) the root cause of all this degradation and corruption lies in the disintegration of traditional African society. Furthermore, Kumalo's failure to re-unite his family and restore the traditional kinship structure suggests, symbolically, the impossibility of restoring the former tribal system generally. It is Msimangu, Kumalo's physical and intellectual guide in Johannesburg, who makes the point explicitly and draws the relevant conclusion:

The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again. The white man has broken the tribe. And it is my belief - and again I ask your pardon - that it cannot be mended again. But the house that is broken, and the man that falls apart when the house is

broken, these are the tragic things. That is why the children break the law, and old white people are robbed and beaten (p.25).

Kumalo does eventually accept the validity of Msimangu's assertion:

Yes, it was true, then. He had admitted it to himself. The tribe was broken, and would be mended no more (p.79); and he begins to recognise that this reality is as relevant to Africans living in the rural areas as it is to those in the cities, his words echoing the narratorial description of the rural waste scene of the opening pages of the novel:

The tribe was broken and would be mended no more. The tribe that had nurtured him, and his father and his father's father, was broken. For the men were away, and the young men and the girls were away, and the maize hardly reached to the height of a man (p.79).

However, even in this moment of dark despair, there is already forming in his mind an incipient thought about the possibility of a way forward in restoration:

He turned with relief to the thought of rebuilding .... After seeing Johannesburg he would return with a deeper understanding to Ndotsheni .... One could go back knowing better the kind of thing that one must build. He would go back with a new and quickened interest in the school, not as a place where children learned to read and write and count only, but as a place where they must be prepared for life in any place to which they might go. Oh for education for his people, for schools up and down the land, where something might be built that would serve them when they went way to the towns, something that would take the place of the tribal law and custom. For a moment he was caught up in a vision ... (p.79).

Thus, already present at this point in the novel - barely a third of the way through - is the implicit faith in the potential for the regeneration of society. Indeed, it is part of the general liberal ethos of the book that, no matter how desperate the situation might seem, the world is never wholly bad any more than it is or can ever be wholly good. Paton makes just this point in Towards the Mountain (1980:122), explaining that he distrusts both total pessimism and utopianism since "the battle between good and evil is perennial" and "the purpose of the good life is not to win the battle, but to wage it unceasingly". The world of Cry, the Beloved Country is, to be sure, a complex admixture of good and evil, as a few scattered examples confirm. Although Kumalo is cheated and robbed by a stranger when he arrives in Johannesburg, he is also assisted by Mr Mafolo to find Msimangu's house. Though the city is full of decay and despair, it is also ministered to by the church, as at the Anglican mission of Sophiatown, and especially by priests like Msimangu, described by Kumalo as "the best man of all my days" (p.194). While Kumalo is repelled by the immorality of women like Gertrude and Absalom's various dissipated landladies, he is also highly impressed by the goodness and kindness of those such as Mrs Lithebe. Horrified as he is by slums like Claremont, "the garbage heap of the proud city" (p.27), he is profoundly moved by his

visit to Ezenzeleni, "the wonderful place" where the blind "had eyes given to them" (p.80). And if he is deeply disturbed by the number of young African criminals and delinquents, not least of all his own son, he is thankful for the work done at the Reformatory (based to some extent, in fact, on Diepkloof itself).

Because of the presence of goodness and generosity even in the very midst of evil and despair, it is possible for there to be, at least potentially, in the words of the novel's sub-title, "comfort in desolation". Even in his bleakest moments, Kumalo is comforted and sustained by Msimangu and Father Vincent, and finds succour in sources unimagined:

Who indeed knows the secret of the earthly pilgrimage? Who indeed knows why there can be comfort in a world of desolation? (p.56; see also p.187 and p.224).

The implication is that this principle applies with equal validity at the level of the social and political. So, in one sense, the novel records the extent of the problem:

Cry for the broken tribe, for the law and the custom that is gone. Aye, and cry aloud for the man who is dead, for the woman and children bereaved. Cry, the beloved country, these things are not yet at an end (p.66);

but it also suggests that there is enough humaneness and practical good-will in the world for the beloved country to be restored. For example, although Kumalo is confronted continually by the injustice of a political system of white oppression, so too does he meet several instances of white men who have dedicated themselves to fighting that system and aiding the oppressed: the Afrikaner official at the Reformatory; Father Vincent at the mission; Mr Carmichael, the lawyer who takes Absalom's case pro deo; the white motorists who help the bus boycotters; and, of course, Arthur Jarvis himself.

It is, indeed, clearly part of the novel's main purpose to make plain that the large proportion of blame for the social ills of South Africa is to be laid squarely at the door of the whites, and so it is in large measure their responsibility to make amends and aid the restoration of the country. Msimangu, in affirming that the tribe cannot be mended, makes this clear:

It suited the white man to break the tribe, he continued gravely. But it has not suited him to build something in the place of what is broken. I have pondered this for many hours and must speak it, for it is the truth for me. They are not all so. There are some white men who give their lives to build up what is broken.

But they are not enough, he said. They are afraid, that is the truth. It is fear that rules this land.

....

They give us too little, said Msimangu sombrely. They give us almost nothing (pp.25-26).

Msimangu's speech raises two vital issues in the novel: the responsibility of whites to take action to restore society; and the pervasive fear which militates against their doing so. If the chorus of African voices in chapter 9 serves to confirm the

extensiveness of the frustration and hardship suffered by black South Africans, then the corresponding chorus of white voices in chapter 12 emphasises the ubiquitous fear and confusion in white society generally:

Have no doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless? Who can enjoy the lovely land, who can enjoy the seventy years, and the sun that pours down on the earth, when there is fear in the heart?

....

There are voices crying what must be done, a hundred, a thousand voices. But what do they help if one seeks for counsel, for one cries this, and one cries that, and another cries something that is neither this nor that (pp.67-68).

Paton's response is to provide a portrait of one white man who does manage to move beyond his own prejudices and fears towards a greater understanding not only of the fundamental problems of his country, but also of the urgent necessity of attempting to solve them.

Like Stephen Kumalo, James Jarvis is a basically decent man living a sedentary farmer's life in the Natal hills. His quiet, comfortable world is shattered, however, by the news of his son's murder in his home in Parkwold, Johannesburg. As a result, he is led, again like Kumalo, on a quest to Johannesburg for his son, which becomes a voyage of discovery and learning about himself and his society. Although his son is already dead when he begins his journey, his search is to understand his son, through his writings and achievements, as he had never done when he was alive.

Jarvis readily admits that "my son and I didn't see eye to eye on the native question" (p.119), but he is led into a re-appraisal of his son's views and devotion to the cause of racial justice partly as a result of his son's writings which he encounters in Johannesburg and partly because of his realisation of the extent of his son's reputation and accomplishments. His son's brother-in-law and friend, John Harrison, pays tribute to his standing in the community, and this is confirmed by the extensive media coverage and the many and diverse sympathy notes which follow his death, but most especially by the numerous guests of all creeds and colours who attend his funeral. As a result, in a way reminiscent of Paton's "deep experience" at Edith Rheinallt-Jones's funeral, Jarvis undergoes his own spiritual and political enlightenment and comes to question and eventually reject his previously held conventional and conservative views. This process is subtly but effectively conveyed by Paton through the series of conversations Jarvis has with his son's father-in-law, Mr Harrison, at whose house he stays in Johannesburg. Initially, Jarvis allows Harrison to expound his obtuse and racist views at length (pp.120-123). After the funeral, however, Jarvis politely yet firmly cuts him short by retiring to bed and, in parting, wishing aloud that he could have heard his son counter Harrison's arguments (pp.131-132).

Jarvis finds his own attitudes challenged and changed to a large

extent by reading his son's articles and essays. His son's study itself, where he does the reading, with its pictures of Christ and Abraham Lincoln and its great variety of books, gives an initial impression of the quality of his son's character - broad-minded, tolerant, enlightened, compassionate and deeply concerned about his fellow man - an impression which is substantiated by his son's writing. Jarvis reads three pieces, in particular, which affect him profoundly. The first, a fragment which he finds on the desk, deals with the very same issue of the broken tribe that Msimangu had broached earlier. In essence, Arthur's piece focuses on the way in which the whites who came to South Africa conquered the black peoples, and then proceeded to exploit them both politically and economically. It distinguishes carefully between what is "permissible" and what is not, or between what was once considered permissible but which is no longer "in the light of what we know":

It was permissible to allow the destruction of a tribal system that impeded the growth of the country. It was permissible to believe that its destruction was inevitable. But it was not permissible to watch its destruction, and to replace it by nothing, or by so little, that a whole people deteriorates, physically and morally (pp.126-127).

Like Msimangu, Arthur concludes that whites have "an inescapable duty" (p.127) to make appropriate reparation for the harm they have wrought on African society. Indeed, this commonality of concern between Arthur Jarvis and Msimangu is not an insignificant point. For if the ineluctable interconnectedness of the white and black communities in the novel is affirmed in a negative way by the fact that Kumalo's son kills Jarvis's son, then the similarity of Arthur's and Msimangu's views suggests in a positive manner the actual common ground that exists between the two communities as well as the potential for eventually establishing a single common society in South Africa.

The second article, entitled, "The Truth About Native Crime" (see p.119), embodies once more many of the arguments which Paton himself advanced in his Forum articles of 1943-1945 discussed earlier. In it, Arthur Jarvis highlights the fact that native crime is frequently a result of African social frustration which in turn arises out of the hypocrisies and prejudices of a white community which refuses to allow blacks the opportunities to better themselves and achieve advancement. He goes on, in some of the last words he ever wrote, for he was busy with this manuscript when he was killed, to expose the mendacity of so-called white South African Christian society in so far as it condones, even by its silence on the matter, the practice of racial discrimination:

The truth is that our civilisation is not Christian; it is a tragic compound of great ideal and fearful practice, of high assurance and desperate anxiety, of loving charity and fearful clutching of possessions (p.134).

"Deeply moved", James Jarvis begins to comprehend the validity of his son's argument, and to move towards the adoption of his son's views and attitudes.

The final turning point occurs when he reads the third piece,

"Private Essay on the Evolution of a South African", which it was noted earlier Paton felt was directly applicable to himself. James Jarvis is at first "shocked and hurt" (p.150) to read his son's comment that although he had learned from his parents the values of "honour and charity and generosity", he had learned "nothing at all" about South Africa (p.150). But having recovered, he reads on and recognises the truth of what his son has written, and that it is he, indeed, who must "learn" about South Africa from his son. In particular, he is "moved" by the closing paragraphs, which include Arthur's dedication to the cause of justice and truth in his country:

Therefore I shall devote myself, my time, my energy, my talents, to the service of South Africa. I shall no longer ask myself if this or that is expedient, but only if it is right (p.151).

Jarvis walks out of the house into what he now realises has been "a strange country" to him, determined that "he was not going that way any more" (p.152). The implication is that his conversion is complete and that he has decided to take up and pursue, in his own limited way, his son's goals. As such, he finds guidance through reading one of his son's heroes, Abraham Lincoln; in particular, Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address, a speech mentioned though not actually quoted in the novel (p.127):

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ... (in Callan 1982:39).

Significantly, before Jarvis leaves to return to Natal, two incidents occur which reveal how his attitudes have changed. In the first, he coincidentally encounters Stephen Kumalo himself at Springs, where he had gone with his wife to visit her niece, Barbara Smith. Kumalo in turn is there to look for Sibeko's daughter as he has promised to do. Kumalo, in great distress, reveals to Jarvis that it was his own son who murdered Jarvis's son. Despite his shock, Jarvis treats the old man with kindness, unlike Smith's daughter, and the mutual respect shown by the two bereaved men foreshadows their closer contact later on. In the second incident, Jarvis gives John Harrison an envelope containing one thousand pounds for the Claremont African Boys' Club, whose letter to Arthur, their president, Jarvis had come across in his son's study. He expresses the hope that the club might be renamed the "Arthur Jarvis Club", though he does not make this a condition of his donation.

These incidents immediately and directly raise the issue of what sorts of solutions the novel proposes to the problems which it has identified. For the particular purposes of this study, it is necessary to consider in what sense these solutions correspond to a specifically liberal perspective, and, further, whether such solutions constitute a valid, practical and adequate response to the socio-political circumstances described by the novel in South Africa at the time.

(iii)

In addressing the question of the nature and form of the solutions which are advanced in Cry, the Beloved Country, it is useful to begin by considering some of the various criticisms levelled against this aspect of the novel, especially those by African nationalist and Marxist critics. Most of the criticism directed against Cry, the Beloved Country is of two kinds: in the first place, the novel is accused of embodying a paternalistic attitude towards Africans; in the second, it is condemned for its political naivety and the ideological inadequacy of its vision for the practical transformation of South African society. Since such remarks have frequently been made about liberalism in South Africa, a discussion of this criticism will help to focus the examination of the novel's specifically liberal perspective which follows.

The tone for the first form of criticism - that of paternalism - is set by an anonymous writer for the Times Literary Supplement in an article called "South African Conflicts" which formed part of a "Special Insert" on "Modern Literature" (1957:xxxvi). After disparaging liberal politics in South Africa in general, the writer goes on to assert that because the political situation has changed so much since Cry, the Beloved Country was published in 1948, the novel has come to be "regarded by many who would have praised it then as an old-fashioned, paternalistic book, which portrays Africans in a sentimental and unrealistic light". This line of attack is picked up by Ezekiel Mphahlele in The African Image (1962) and developed in some detail by Paul Rich (1985), who, writing from an aggressively Marxist position, tries to use the novel as an example of the failure of liberalism in this country. He argues, for instance, that the novel is in essence a nostalgic pastoral romance with little sense of historical reality, and he claims that

the novel completely bypasses the emerging black culture of the townships and slums of the Witwatersrand, which are seen only through the deadening lens of Paton's paternalistic moralism that had been fortified by his experiences as Warden of the Diepkloof Reformatory for "delinquent" African boys outside Johannesburg (1985:56).

The give-away phrase in this quotation is "delinquent", placed in emphatic inverted commas in an attempt to imply that Paton himself patronisingly regarded his charges as "delinquents". Such an attempt reveals that Rich is either alarmingly unfamiliar with Paton's attitudes and work at Diepkloof (Paton deliberately replaced the title "Warden" with "Principal", and strove to transform the institution from a corrective to an educative one) or he is deliberately distorting the facts to suit his theory. Rich's entire article is, unfortunately, shot through with such inaccuracies and distortions: to take but a couple of examples, he confuses Paton's short story "Ha'penny" with "Death of a Tsotsi"; and he utterly misrepresents the well-known debate between Hoernlé and Clayton, discussed by Paton in Apartheid and the Archbishop (1973:106-112). In his comments on this debate, which revolved around liberal hope, Rich tries to make Hoernlé

seem a covert conservative who abandoned liberalism for a version of apartheid - a claim made earlier in White Power and the Liberal Conscience (1984:48f) - all of which Phyllis Lewsen (1987:100-101) has demonstrated is "absurd". Such lack of rigour or candour, or both, as Harrison M. Wright has revealed in The Burden of the Present (1977), has tended to mar a great deal of Marxist writing since the 1970s, writing which has frequently placed the achievement of particular political goals above balanced and responsible scholarship. Indeed, similar strictures could be levelled against the Times Literary Supplement writer, who seems quite mistaken in stating that Paton knew little of the "African struggle" before writing Cry, the Beloved Country and only became familiar with South African politics much later (1957:xxxvi); as well as against Mphahlele (1962:157), who makes several disturbingly inaccurate assertions such as that Stephen Kumalo in the novel "remains the same suffering, child-like character from beginning to end" when the novel is clearly concerned with his maturation and development. Nevertheless, despite the evident limitations of many of these critiques of Cry, the Beloved Country, the charge of paternalism against the novel continues to be made, and so it will be addressed shortly.

The second line of criticism has centred around the view that Paton's liberal outlook is jejune and inefficacious in dealing practically with South Africa's real social problems. Once more, a good deal of such criticism often seems unjust and inaccurate. Mphahlele (1962:159-160), again, for example, seems very far from the mark when he claims that

because the message keeps imposing itself on us in Cry, the Beloved Country, we cannot but feel how thickly laid on the writer's liberalism is: let the boys be kept busy by means of club activities and they will be less inclined to delinquency; work for a change of heart in the white ruling class (Jarvis's final philanthropic gesture and his son's practical interest in club activities together with his plea to South Africa indicate this).

Nevertheless, Mphahlele is quoted approvingly by Stephen Watson (1982) - before he renounced Marxism - who goes on to maintain (1982:35) that Paton in Cry, the Beloved Country

advances the solution of love .... Of course, this is useless; the problem has not been caused by a lack of love in South Africa and therefore to prescribe an antidote of love for it is simply naive and beside the point.

Watson alleges, moreover, that Paton appears unaware that the social problems in the novel "are quite explicable in terms of the man-made reality and historical conditions in South Africa in the first half of the century" (1982:33), and therefore he is quite wrong to be "preaching for a revolution of hearts ... rather than for a revolution in social and economic structure" (1982:37). This argument represents one of the classic Marxist critiques of liberal texts, namely that their understanding of political and economic realities is deficient and that their proposed solutions in terms of "personal love" (Watson 1982:44) are inadequate. It should be clear from our foregoing discussion of Paton's background as a social analyst and reformer that Watson's aspersions on his experience and understanding are crude

and unfounded. Similarly, Watson's assertion that Paton's proposals for social transformation may be reduced to a plea for increased personal love reveals that Watson has failed to comprehend what the term, "love", means in the context of the novel. Nonetheless, the charge of political naivety against a liberal writer like Paton is a grave one, however clumsily it is presented, and it will be treated seriously in the following discussion.

Edward Callan (1982:38) has pithily labelled Book Three of Cry, the Beloved Country "the Book of Restoration", and there does indeed seem to be in it a shift in tone and mood, as well as in content, beyond an unsettling portrayal of social distress towards a vision of restorative possibilities for the beloved country. Far from being paternalistic and/or naive, however, this section of the novel offers a variety of valuable, feasible and acceptable short- and long-term solutions to the problems which have been identified earlier, as well as providing informed theoretical debate about many of the most difficult dilemmas of the time. These proposed solutions may, in fact, be sub-divided into at least four different levels at which they operate: the level of basic material resources; the physical restoration of the land; the spiritual; and the political. Each of these will be discussed in turn, though naturally, as will be seen, a certain degree of overlap exists between them.

Firstly, in what has often been misrepresented by antagonistic critics as a series of empty paternalistic gestures, Jarvis provides help in the form of resources at a basic material level. As has already been noted, he donates one thousand pounds to the Claremont Boys Club, a huge sum of money in those days, and by no means an exiguous portion of his reserves. Back in Natal, he provides milk to the black schoolchildren of Ndotsheni when he learns of their shortage from his grandson. And he supplies the materials to repair Kumalo's leaky church, whose dilapidation he notices during his visit there. It is important to see that these actions are not designed as terminal solutions, but as short-term measures to meet urgent needs. Jarvis does not perform them in a patronising manner, or out of a desire to establish himself in a position of control over the people, or out of some misplaced sense of guilt. On the contrary, he acts from a wish to lend real practical assistance where it is manifestly necessary. One might well ask those critics who have condemned his actions whether the recipients of his philanthropy would have been better off without it. Jarvis does these things, then, not as part of some grand paternalistic scheme, but simply in the spirit of Archbishop Clayton, who was wont to suggest that, in times of difficulty about what to do, one should "do the next right thing" (in Paton 1973:140). As such, Jarvis's actions, coming from a man who had hitherto not even noticed the needs of the people around him, let alone addressed them, represents real moral progress.

This is not, in any event, the only kind of assistance which Jarvis provides. At a second level, he seeks to facilitate a more permanent and extensive upliftment of the people of

Ndotsheni through the restoration of the land, which has become waste through poor farming methods as well as the drought. To help achieve this, he hires a young black agricultural demonstrator, Napoleon Letsisi, whose task it is to teach the people more modern and successful farming techniques, and thus to help them to help themselves. Jarvis's intention, therefore, is to empower the people to become agriculturally and financially autonomous and self-supporting rather than in any way dependent upon either his skills or his largesse. Once more, it is difficult to see in this case how charges of paternalism may be made against this aspect of the novel. Indeed, at the end of the book, Jarvis announces to Kumalo that he will be leaving his home in Natal to live in Johannesburg with his daughter and her children, thus symbolically giving up his "High Place" (the name of his farm), though he assures Kumalo of his continued support for the "work" in Ndotsheni. This complex issue of land ownership will be examined a little later, though it is worth noting at this point that it is one with which Paton is clearly concerned.

For Kumalo's part, he too has not been content to do nothing after his return from Johannesburg. Aware of at least the partial validity of his brother's dictum that "what God has not done for South Africa, man must do" (p.25), Kumalo seeks actively to effect some positive changes:

Kumalo began to pray regularly in his church for the restoration of Ndotsheni. But he knew that was not enough. Somewhere down here upon the earth men must come together, think something, do something (p.195).

However, his initiative proves at first a failure: his visits to the chief and the headmaster bear no fruit, because the chief is a mere figurehead with no insight and no real power, and the headmaster, though well-intentioned, is hopelessly out of touch with the everyday needs of the people, caught up as he is in education department bureaucracy and barren theorisations:

The headmaster explained that the school was trying to relate the life of the child to the life of the community, and showed him circulars from the Department in Pietermaritzburg, all about these matters. He took Kumalo out into the blazing sun, and showed him the school gardens, but this was an academic lecture, for there was no water, and everything was dead (p.198).

Nevertheless, despite Kumalo's failure to mobilise the leaders of the community into effective action, the novel suggests that through his and Jarvis's combined actions - a white man and a black man coming together and thinking and acting in concert - the land may at least partly be restored, an idea symbolically emphasised by the fact that the drought breaks when they commune together in Kumalo's church (pp.208-209). It is efforts such as these, it is implied, that will help the present "waste land" (p.188) to be revitalised as "Africa, the beloved country" (p.189) once more.

The clear allusion to T.S. Eliot's poem, The Waste Land (1922; in Eliot 1963:61-86), in which the moral and spiritual decay of early twentieth century Europe is laid bare, suggests that Paton

is not concerned only with the physical and material regeneration of South Africa. And, indeed, the third level at which the possibility of restoration is explored is the spiritual. Paton remained a deeply committed Christian all his life, and his vision in this novel of the restoration of the land and its people is suffused by his Christian belief in a God who is not merely transcendent but coterminously immanent in the world and involved in human life. The fate of Africa, the beloved country, rests, in a fundamental sense, therefore, in the hands of God, as expressed in the anthemic prayer, "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika: God save Africa" (p.191). At the same time, the ultimate fate of every individual human being lies in the hands of God, through Jesus, the son of God, and the personal saviour of his believers. Throughout the novel, then, Paton's faith in the continuing validity and relevance of the Christian church is represented not just in the specific words and actions of various characters, but also through the ministry provided by such ecclesiastical ceremonies as confirmation, marriage, burial, and it is given symbolic weight in the actual restoration of the church building at Ndotsheni.

The novel ends, moreover, with the profoundly religious experience of Stephen Kumalo, his faith restored after his bleak moments of near total despair in Johannesburg, going up the mountain to endure a vigil in which he shares the agony of his son's last night before execution. Like the biblical King David, who also lost his beloved but aberrant son, Absalom, and like the first Christian martyr, Stephen, after whom he is named, Kumalo must confront real pain and suffering. But he has by this stage learned the great Christian lesson that "kindness and love can pay for pain and suffering" (p.193) and that Christ's divine suffering and love can provide the ultimate "comfort in such desolation" (p.187). Finally, just before the awful moment, he breaks bread and drinks tea in a private mass recalling Christ's sacrificial redemption of mankind. Significantly, as he stands facing the dawn, he sees that "the sun rose in the east" (p.236), suggesting not merely the beginning of a new day, but also, through the profound pun, the promise of resurrection and new life.

Given this deeply moving sense of closure to the novel in its religious dimension, it is difficult to accept Tony Morphet's assertion (1983:7) that the novel's "meditation" on Christianity and its effects in the world "produces no resolution". In an otherwise sensitive and perceptive article, Morphet (1983:7) claims that the novel is made particularly pessimistic by the fact that the person meditating upon the problem of personal responsibility in a society racked by fear is not

the hard, unexpectant, unillusioned man at the very base of a bitter and unfulfilling world, but a priest who intellectually, socially and in faith has come to expect some fulfilment of the Christian message in history. On him falls the full weight of the destructive force of the society. He can perceive and value the grace of ameliorative and reconstructive efforts but the facts of ruin occupy his mind.

On the contrary, the novel suggests through Kumalo's experience especially that God is truly present in human affairs and that the Christianity preached and practised in the novel is neither otherworldly nor uninvolved in history. At the very heart of the novel, in fact, is Msimangu's sermon at Ezenzeleni, a sermon concerned with both personal and social liberation. His text is taken from chapters 40 and 42 of the book of Isaiah, the beginning of what is known as Deutero-Isaiah or Second Isaiah, which prophesies the emancipation of the Israelites from Babylonian captivity, sustained by the power and love of God (see Bright 1980:354f). As such, while the sermon certainly is meant to provide succour for personal suffering - such as physical blindness - it also affirms the efficacy of God's intervention in political history.

It may well be argued that the novel's true ethos is distilled from these chapters of Isaiah. What is frequently referred to as the biblical texture of much of the novel's language (see Callan 1982:33f, for example) derives largely from the diction, tone, rhythms and imagery of these chapters, especially Isaiah 40:1-11, which is filled with images of "comfort" in the midst of suffering and despair, of the "wilderness" being tamed, of "cries" of national suffering being transformed into cries of freedom, and of God acting directly in history to defeat the oppressor and liberate the oppressed (all biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version of 1971):

Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that her warfare is ended,  
that her iniquity is pardoned,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway  
for our God ...."

A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All flesh is grass,  
and all its beauty is like the flower  
of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the Lord  
blows upon it;  
surely the people is grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand  
for ever.

Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, fear not;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
"Behold your God!"  
Behold, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
He will feed his flock like a shepherd,  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
he will carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead those that are with young.

In addition, much of the novel's implicit political value system seems to derive essentially from the fundamental principles of Christ's teaching. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-10), in particular, for example, are concerned not only with individual comforting and heavenly reward, but also, vitally, with such socio-political issues as peace-making, righteousness and justice on earth:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Christian theme of Cry, the Beloved Country seems, therefore, to impinge directly upon the political, appropriately enough since, from Paton's perspective, the two were intimately connected. Throughout his career, in fact, Paton insisted on the crucial affinity between his liberal political ideals and his Christian beliefs. He has stated (1958c:278), for instance, that

Because I am a Christian I am a passionate believer in human freedom, and therefore, in human rights.

He has also expanded (1958d:11) on what he viewed as the Christian underpinnings of much liberal thought, with specific reference to the South African Liberal Party of which he was a founding member:

Now although the Liberal Party is not a Christian organisation, its policies have a great deal in common with Christian ethics, and its philosophy has been influenced by Christian theology. I shall not apologise for writing something about these things.

If one is a Christian, one believes that there is a spiritual order as well as a temporal, but one also believes that the values of the spiritual order - justice, love, mercy, truth - should be the supreme values of the

temporal society, and that the good state will uphold and cherish them. Further one believes that the Church, while without temporal power, has the duty of championing these values in the temporal world.

This similitude between Christian principles and liberal ones is given further concrete expression in Paton's comparative summation of his three mentors (1980:243):

Hofmeyr and Clayton would have regarded themselves as servants, however poor, of the Holy Spirit. Hoernlé regarded himself as a servant of the liberal spirit. And in so doing each of them cherished the same ideals of truth, justice and compassion.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Christianity and liberalism are interchangeable or identical, but simply that for Paton certain cardinal values are shared by both (see also Paton 1951; 1959a). It may, therefore, be observed that much of the religious dimension of Cry, the Beloved Country functions also as an extension or confirmation of the liberal ideas which are advanced in the novel as a whole.

While acknowledging the pervasiveness of the religious perspective in the novel, it is still viable to isolate a fourth level at which the text offers a sense of the possibility of restoration, namely, the political. This specifically political aspect is conveyed through both the words and the deeds of the various characters in the book. Most obviously, something very close to the liberal political views of Paton himself and other leading liberals of the day is expressed through the writings of Arthur Jarvis, which have already been discussed in some detail. These pieces provide a lucid and coherent outline of liberal political philosophy, based upon both moral grounds and intellectual conviction, and supply a clear course for positive practical action. If there is some objection to them, it may be that they are presented in somewhat too pat a fashion in the novel, rather than growing organically out of the plot structure. Nevertheless, the views expressed in these pieces are lent an urgent immediacy of context through the character, Msimangu, who acts as Kumalo's intellectual as well as physical guide in Johannesburg. It is he, as has been noted, who asserts that the tribe is broken beyond mending and who insists on the moral responsibility of whites to aid in the development of a new society. It is he also who speaks of the practicalities involved in a transition to a new society where political power will be shared between black and white. Just as Msimangu is scrupulously honest in holding whites largely culpable for the present social and political problems in the country, so he is candid in warning of the dangers inherent in a sudden acquisition of power by the oppressed. Such power, he feels, may very likely become "corrupted" through pride or greed or desire for revenge, and so it is crucial that this power be informed by love:

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 this 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 (p.37).

And he goes on to observe, sombrely and gravely:

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 (p.38).

It is this speech of Msimangu's, which is repeated at the end of the novel, that has particularly led to the novel's being condemned by critics like Stephen Watson (1982) for offering a solution based on love rather than hard political theory. Yet it is, in fact, a speech precisely about politics. What it is vital to understand is that by "love" as it is used here, Paton - via Msimangu - does not mean simply some vague notion of interpersonal goodwill. More properly, the term, "love", may be glossed here as the desire to create and live in a just society, and so the act of loving may be thought of as right political conduct which will help bring about a more equitable socio-political order where all persons can live as freely and fully as possible. It ought, in any event, to be clear from the political context of Msimangu's remarks that he visualises such love in terms of black and white South Africans actively and selflessly working together for "the good of their country" as a whole. This understanding of the political meaning of love lies at the centre of the liberal enterprise, which upholds the principle of social and political corrigibility and amelioration, and believes in the general will and desire of the majority of persons to live under a just system of government. The alternative to liberalism, especially in the politically volatile South African context, is one which Paton, like Msimangu, dreaded. In an article entitled, "On Turning 70", Paton (1973b; in Paton 1975:258) offered a trenchant response to those who continued to sneer at proponents of a liberal solution to South Africa's problems:

But if Black power meets White power in headlong confrontation, and there are no Black liberals and White liberals around, then God help South Africa. Liberalism ... is humanity, tolerance, and love of justice. South Africa has no future without them.

In Cry, the Beloved Country itself, Paton is at pains to make clear that the mere verbalisation of liberal sentiments is not enough, and that these sentiments need to be accompanied by meaningful action at the level of the economic and political structures and conditions of society. Hence, it is important to see that characters like Arthur Jarvis and Msimangu do take active steps to change their society. Msimangu, as Tony Morphet (1983:7) points out, "is exemplary in showing what to do", tirelessly striving to improve the welfare of his fellow South Africans and inspiring others, like Stephen Kumalo, to emulate his efforts. Similarly, Arthur Jarvis does not simply write articles and correspond with an African boys club, as Mphahlele (1962:159-160) suggests, but is actively involved in numerous charitable and social organisations, from Toc H and the YMCA to the Society of Christians and Jews and various African social groups. Moreover, he has, as Mr Harrison rather disapprovingly observes, intervened directly into the socio-economic sphere, calling for "more Native schools", protesting "about the

conditions at the non-European hospital", and insisting on "settled labour" on the mines (p.121). In so doing, he shows not only courage and compassion, but also a sound grasp of the social and economic roots of many of his country's problems, as well as an understanding of the basic need for racial equality in the fields of education and health care, and the elimination of unjust labour practices like the migrant worker system. Far from seeming naive and uninformed, as Stephen Watson (1982:35) avers, Paton, in Cry, the Beloved Country, reveals an ability to comprehend and address the fundamental problems of his country in a way which even from this vantage point in time appears remarkably perspicacious and illuminating.

What Paton refuses to condone in this novel, or anywhere else for that matter, is what Watson (1982:37) calls social and political "revolution", to be brought about through the use of violence, if necessary. Throughout his life, Paton resisted any notion of violent revolution, not because he felt personally threatened by it, but because he believed that it would do more harm than good. In South Africa and Her People (1957:151), for example, he asserts that revolution would not "solve any problems. It would in my opinion bring chaos, from which we would take generations to emerge". It is a tenet which he espoused constantly during the dark days of the sabotage trials of the young members of the Liberal Party who had secretly formed the African Resistance Movement in frustration at the intransigence of the Nationalist Party government; writing of John Harris, the A.R.M. member who was convicted of murder for the Johannesburg Station bomb, Paton (1965b:2) states categorically:

By temperament and principle I am opposed to the use of violence. By intellectual conviction I am opposed to its use in South Africa, believing that it will not achieve its declared purpose of making this country happier and better. And in his assessment of Hendrik Verwoerd following the Prime Minister's assassination, Paton (1967; in Paton 1968a:269-270) again broaches this most difficult of all liberal dilemmas:

Of course there are some South Africans who feel so deeply and disturbedly about the injustice of the status quo that they declare that violence is the only solution left, and they declare that a person like myself secretly wishes to preserve his own state of privilege, or is simply a coward. I can well understand these views, but I have no intellectual trust in them. If a situation seems unchangeable, there is no reason to believe that violence will change it. One draws back from the prospect of an unending history of murders and assassinations.

This is not to say that Paton, like many other liberal opponents of political injustice in South Africa, was never tempted by the idea of a radical solution to this country's ills. Even in Cry, the Beloved Country, there is a telling scene where Stephen Kumalo, playing with Gertrude's son, acts out a symbolic violent overthrow of the city and, by extension, the political system:

So they brought out the blocks, and built tall buildings like the buildings in Johannesburg, and sent them toppling over to destruction with noise and laughter (p.105-106).

But this anarchic impulse passes, for Paton's more considered view is that such violence is ultimately counter-productive and futile, and that there can be no viable alternative to a society founded on the rule of law and transformed, where necessary, only through non-violent means (see Paton 1952; 1953b; 1960b; 1964b).

It is, perhaps, for this reason that Paton chooses to depict the potentially revolutionary John Kumalo in such a negative light. It is, of course, quite mistaken to think that Paton in this novel was critical or distrustful of black politicians in general. He clearly approves of Dubula and his wife, for example, especially since they strive, like Msimangu and Arthur Jarvis, to translate their beliefs into positive action. Indeed, Paton condones fully the bus boycott and the creation of Shanty Town as legitimate political action consonant with liberal principles of peaceful protest and passive resistance. John Kumalo, on the other hand, does nothing in the service of others and can offer the people little more than his "golden voice", which is disparagingly contrasted with Msimangu's "golden words".

Nevertheless, there remains a problem with Paton's portrayal of John Kumalo. As a number of critics have remarked, his depiction as a selfish coward and corrupt hypocrite detracts from the several valid points which he makes in conversation and in speeches. For instance, when Stephen Kumalo and Msimangu first visit him, he observes quite rightly that the "tribal society" is "breaking apart" and that a "new society is being built" (p.34), and he goes on to claim with some justification that the church, like the old chiefs, is doing little to facilitate this social renewal, while the people suffer (p.35). Indeed, even Msimangu is compelled to admit that "many of the things he said are true" (p.37). Furthermore, his speech to the mine workers seems eminently reasonable, merely calling for decent wages and proposing legitimate strike action, but by no means demanding "equality and the franchise and the removal of the colour-bar" (pp.158-160), as, for example, the A.N.C. had in actuality recently done (see Robertson 1971:31). As such, it is difficult to know what to make of the narrator's remark that Dubula and Tomlinson listen to his voice "with contempt, and with envy" (p.158), or of Msimangu's comment:

Perhaps we should thank God he is corrupt .... For if he were not corrupt, he could plunge this country into bloodshed (p.161),

because such statements inevitably serve to undermine the political validity of the speech itself. The difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that the gold mining industry in particular, and materialistic white society in general, have just been excoriated in the third of the choral chapters in the novel, that dealing with the gold rush at Odendaalsrust (pp.145-149).

In fact, the problem is further compounded by Msimangu's strange decision to retire into a religious community where he "would forswear the world and all its possessions" (p.183), since this seems precisely to remove him from the sphere of practical action and influence which Paton has been highlighting in the novel. It would appear, moreover, to substantiate the views of Msimangu's

unnamed critics in the novel who, following Marx's axiom that religion is the opium of the people, despise Msimangu for preaching "of a world not made by hands,....making the hungry patient, the suffering content, the dying at peace", and for sending the people "marching to heaven instead of to Pretoria" (pp.82-83).

These elements in the novel are genuinely problematic, and nothing is to be gained from trying to ignore them or wish them away. Perhaps they ought to be viewed as indicative of a real tension in Paton's thinking at that time between his desire for urgent, fundamental change in his society and his apprehension that too rapid or extreme a process of change could prove destructive rather than regenerative, and bring with it widespread social suffering and misery. It must be recognised, for example, as Robertson (1971:28-39) points out, that many black nationalistic demands of the 1940s, which seem quite moderate from today's perspective, would have been rejected as unthinkably radical and revolutionary at the time by almost all whites as well as by many blacks. To have tried to implement such demands too quickly would thus have inevitably resulted in violent conflict and repression rather than constructive social amelioration. Paton's awareness of this dilemma may be deduced from some of the emendations he made to the original manuscript, such as the downplaying of the mine workers' strike (Oppenheimer collection, Brenthurst Library, Johannesburg). Whatever the source of the problem, it ought not to be allowed to deflect attention away from the central thrust of the novel, namely, that the land must be restored, and that this restoration should take place at a number of different levels.

In fact, Paton's awareness of the difficulties involved in the regeneration of his society is again underlined when he raises a further thorny problem by linking the literal, agricultural restoration of the land with the political question of land ownership. Paton successfully weaves the issue into the story through the character of the young, politically conscious agricultural demonstrator, Napoleon Letsisi, who is hired by James Jarvis to teach the Ndotsheni community more modern farming methods. In response to Kumalo's praise of Jarvis, Letsisi remarks,

Umfundisi, it was the white man who gave us so little land, it was the white man who took us away from the land to go to work. And we were ignorant also. It is all these things together that have made this valley desolate. Therefore, what this good white man does is only a repayment (p.228).

This deeply problematic question of second-generation rights and the redistribution of the wealth is clearly too much for the old man, however, and, indeed, it is not brought to any definite resolution in the novel. For instance, though James Jarvis is to leave his farm to live in Johannesburg, Paton stops short of suggesting that farmers like Jarvis should relinquish their land, or that they should be encouraged to sell off part of their farms in order to equalise land ownership. This tension between property rights and economic equality remains a problem to this day, however (see Simkins 1986), and Paton could hardly have been

expected to resolve it in Cry, the Beloved Country. It is to his credit, in fact, that he presents the issue in all its difficulty, and that he refuses to offer any glib or facile proposals for its solution.

It could well be argued that one of the distinctively liberal features of the novel is its willingness to confront complex problems and to present a variety of competing viewpoints on the subject rather than a rigid, monolithic ideological perspective. In this novel, as opposed to the typical social realist text, one encounters what a critic like Edward Callan (1982:35) has called "a multitude of voices":

South African voices talking incessantly about problems - problems of race, problems of language, and problems of separate living space.

As Callan (1982:33) points out, one of the great advantages of this multifaceted perspective is that it provides both an understanding of individual experiences as well as an "overall point of view" on South Africa "and the struggles of its diverse peoples as a whole": it is

a dramatic manifestation of the agony of a country in which the spirit of South Africa hovers always on stage and dominates the human actors.

A similar argument has recently been advanced by the Italian critic, Armando Pajalich (1992:223), who has described the novel's narrative mode as "dialogic", in that it is made up essentially of a continuous dialogue between a variety of voices in conflict. Although he suggests (1992:227-228) that Paton does not express a truly comprehensive spectrum of black opinion, he maintains, like Callan, that the novel derives several major benefits from its "polyphonicity" (his term for a "multitude of voices"). In particular, he believes that this sophisticated narrative strategy permits a variety of problems to be confronted "objectively and dialectically", while avoiding the inevitably simplistic bias of "a definite or univocal closure".

This readiness to express divergent ideas, and this refusal to offer facile utopian solutions to complex problems, represents some of the greatest strengths of liberalism, and may well help to explain the remarkable success of the novel. Far from descending into crude propaganda or arid theorisation, the novel manages to expose and explore some of the central social concerns of South Africa in a way which is moving, honest and enlightening. Moreover, while it remains deeply aware of the intensity and extent of the problems it identifies, it retains a sense of hope, however tentative, for the future, based not upon naive idealism, but upon a fundamental belief in the power of humankind's innate desire for freedom and justice to prevail.

(iv)

In Cry, the Beloved Country, Paton reveals himself to be keenly aware of the complex debates going on about South Africa's social, political and economic problems. As a liberal, however, he is interested not merely in general social theory but also in

the individuals who make up the society. As such, his principal concern in the novel is to explore how these problems and their possible resolution are experienced at the level of the individual, of ordinary human beings. This he does especially through the characters of Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis.

At the beginning of the novel, Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis, though technically neighbours, live in totally different worlds, each utterly ignorant of the other. For example, Kumalo reveals to Father Vincent that he knows of Jarvis "by sight and name", but has never spoken to him (p.65); and Jarvis, in conversation with Mr Harrison, vaguely remembers the mission at Ndotsheni and its old parson, but can recall little about them (p.123). By the end of the novel, however, the two men have grown significantly closer together, and have established meaningful human contact, if only briefly and haltingly. Paton traces the gradual but steady development of their relationship through a number of carefully depicted incidents. Their first actual meeting, as noted earlier, occurs by chance at Springs, but the mutual respect they reveal to each other then lays the foundation for their future association. Their next meeting takes place during Jarvis's efforts to aid the Ndotsheni community, when, in a scene heavy with significance, they shelter from the drought-breaking rain in the local church. Later still, their communication continues through the wreath for Mrs Jarvis and the sympathy note which Kumalo organises and sends from Ndotsheni; and through Jarvis's letter of thanks, which, incidentally, convinces the bishop to allow Kumalo to stay on in Ndotsheni.

Finally, they meet fortuitously at the end of the story as Kumalo is on his way to his vigil for his son, and this last encounter provides some measure of how far the two men have come in their relationship (pp.231-232). This meeting occurs in solitude and, as it were, on common ground - literally the mountain near the village but symbolically the holy mountain of Isaiah (11:6-9) where "the wolf shall lie down with the lamb":

They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the  
knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.

The symbol of the holy mountain held great significance for Paton, and recurs throughout his work, most notably in the title of his first volume of autobiography. In one sense, it represents the teleological hope of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but in another, Paton uses it to suggest the ideal of a just society, particularly in the South African context (in Paton 1975:288, for example). Thus, the setting of this final meeting between Kumalo and Jarvis is not accidental but carefully chosen to betoken the possibility of the real and meaningful reconciliation of the races in South Africa. Paton is particular, however, to avoid rendering the scene implausible, and so the white man remains mounted while the black man stands on foot and there is no physical contact for "such a thing is not lightly done" (p.232). Nevertheless, despite the gathering darkness, the two men find the words to thank each other for their kindness and

to console each other for their loss, and, in so doing, to confirm the potential for true human interaction that they have established. Such potential is, indeed, reinforced by the fact of the generations coming after them: Jarvis's "bright" young grandson who has clearly inherited some of his father's best qualities; Kumalo's promising young nephew and daughter-in-law; and the child about to be born to take the place of the father who is about to die.

These details are clearly meant to provide some of the "comfort in desolation" that has been proposed in the narrative. However, while Paton seems adamant in this novel that there is, indeed, "hope for South Africa" (see Paton 1958a), he is also at pains to emphasise that it is by no means certain how or when that hope will be actualised. Hence, in the last pages of the novel, the pervasive theme of fear is repeated, particularly Msimangu's great fear that when the whites finally turn to loving, they will find the blacks responding only with vengeful hatred. The famous final paragraph captures the complex mood of the novel perfectly:

But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret (p.236).

The implication is that just as the literal dawn comes at the end of the book, so this political dawn must, of necessity, occur, even though it is difficult to predict precisely when this might be. As such, the novel may be said to end on a clear, if restrained, note of expectancy, a sentiment which seemed, perhaps, quite justified in 1946. This optimism, however, which has surfaced once more in the 1990s, was, by the time Paton came to write his second novel, almost completely extinguished, and remained so for over forty years.

## Too Late the Phalarope

(i)

At the end of Cry, the Beloved Country, a clear note of hope, however moderate or qualified, is sounded. This hopefulness may be seen to derive in some significant degree from what seemed in 1946 to be the gradual but steady liberalising of South African politics. Indeed, the forward movement of the novel as a whole is towards the expectation of the "emancipation" of the beloved country. Within a few months of the novel's publication in early 1948, however, South Africa, and Paton's life, had changed dramatically.

Despite the general optimism of the immediate post-war years, a number of ominous warning signs existed to suggest that such optimism was premature, and perhaps even unfounded. Firstly, from one end of the political spectrum, there were indications that Afrikaner nationalism was intensifying rather than weakening, as Paton had supposed (1946; in Paton 1975:26-27; see above). Though Paton had flirted with Afrikanerdom in the 1930s, empathising with the oppression of the Afrikaners under the British during the Boer War and after, he had come to reject completely the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism. This decision had been reached in 1938 after Paton had participated in the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek only to be appalled at the spirit of intense exclusivism evinced at the Voortrekker monument (1980:212):

From that sixteenth day of December, 1938, I became anti-Nationalist. With Malan's brand of exclusive nationalism, and particularly with his race theories, I wished to have nothing to do.

Not everyone shared Paton's mistrust of Afrikaner nationalism, however, and the 1943 general election witnessed a definite shift to the right, with significant gains made by Malan's party. This occurred at least partly because of the rapid urbanisation of the Afrikaner in the 1930s and 1940s, with the typical attendant socio-economic problems, many of which, interestingly enough, resembled those of blacks described in Cry, the Beloved Country. This trend to the right had increased markedly by the 1948 election, and it brought the Nationalist Party to power with a strong nationalist mandate.

From the opposite end of the spectrum, although the leadership of the A.N.C. during the 1940s remained for the most part liberal and moderate in its aims, demands and methods, a new militancy was brewing among its junior members. The A.N.C. Youth League was formed in 1945, and though its influence did not peak until 1949 (in reaction to the white election result), it soon served warning of a potential radicalisation of black politics in South Africa (see Lodge 1983). Concomitantly, a number of whites responded with fear and alarm to what they perceived as the threat of African nationalism. Such white fears were further fuelled by an upsurge in labour militancy in the 1940s,

culminating in the African mine workers' strike of 1946 (referred to at the end of Cry, the Beloved Country), as well as by an increase in social unrest, with the clashes between Zulus and Indians in Durban, for example, causing much anxiety. All of this, in conjunction with widespread concern over the government's failure to provide effective social planning for the rapidly urbanising black masses, led many whites to switch allegiance from the relatively liberal United Party to the more conservative Nationalist Party.

It must be said, nevertheless, that such latent conservative instincts had long formed part of the white South African mentality, and had not gone wholly unnoticed. Professor Alfred Hoernlé, whose liberal spirit pervades Cry, the Beloved Country, had spoken of this shortly before his death in the early 1940s. Paton had been a great admirer of Hoernlé, and refers to him approvingly in his Author's Note to Cry, the Beloved Country as "the prince of Kafferboeties" for his work in improving race relations, as well as including several other complimentary allusions to him in the body of the text. It was Hoernlé who, in his 1941 Presidential address to the South African Institute of Race Relations, had offered a much less sanguine outlook for liberalism in South Africa than either Hofmeyr or Clayton (or for that matter, Paton) had done at the time. Paton (1979:2) recalled that famous speech of Hoernlé's during his own address, "Towards Racial Justice", given at the 50th anniversary of the SAIRR in 1979, which formed the 35th Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Memorial Lecture. He quotes Hoernlé as follows:

"My argument is at an end. But custom demands a peroration. Let me say then that I do not believe that our caste society will endure indefinitely. If I am a 'pessimist' it is not because I regard our caste society as permanent; change will come to it and transform it. But I am a pessimist in that I deny that there is in our caste society either the will or the vision for planning and effecting this change. Only complacency or self-delusion could lead us to believe otherwise. The changes which will come will be forced on us by world-forces and world-events over which humanity has little conscious control."

But Paton observes that Hoernlé did temper this pessimism with a significant conclusion:

"Meanwhile I continue to believe in the liberal spirit and try to be its servant to the best of my ability".

Hoernlé's pessimism certainly seemed to be justified by the outcome of the 1948 election. And his example as a servant of the liberal spirit thus became one which people like Paton were to find ever more difficult to emulate in the days and years which followed.

By the time that Paton came to write Too Late the Phalarope in 1952 - again while overseas, though this time during a three month stay in London and Cornwall - South Africa had become a very different place. The Nationalists were victorious, the official opposition was in some disarray, and the extra-parliamentary groups found themselves subjected to ever

increasing repression as the policy of apartheid began to be ruthlessly and comprehensively implemented. Most unfortunately, the main hope of liberal politics, Jan Hofmeyr, had died shortly after the Nationalists' victory, and with him, as Paton (1964a:525) pointed out,

a great light went out in the land, making men more conscious of its darkness. It was the light of a man not radiant by nature but by character.

Paton's elegiac poem for Hofmeyr (in Paton 1949; Songs of Africa, p.96) captures the mood of intense loss and despair amongst liberals in general:

Toll iron bell toll extolling bell  
The toll is taken from the brave and the broken  
Consoling bell toll  
But toll the brave soul  
Where no brave words are spoken

Strike iron bell strike ironic bell  
Strike the bright name  
From the dark scrolls  
Of the blind nation  
Strike sorrow strike shame  
Into the blind souls

Clap iron bell clap iron clapper  
Clap your iron hands together  
Clap the loud applause  
That life denied him  
Clap the dead man  
And if you can  
The dead man's cause  
Clap in beside him

Strike iron bell  
Strike iron hammer  
Strike deaf man's ears  
Lest man's earth hears  
Heaven's clanging and clamour

Clap iron bell clap iron clapper  
And drown the clapping of the million million  
Who clap the great batsman returning  
To his Captain's pavilion

Besides Hofmeyr, Smuts too was dead, and although the tradition of liberalism continued in organisations such as the Black Sash and the Torch Commando, party-political leadership was lacking, and liberals, like all other opposition formations, began to feel the full authoritarian weight of Afrikaner nationalistic rule.

Paton himself had resigned his post at Diepkloof Reformatory before the 1948 election - chiefly because of the pressure of work and time brought on by the incredible success of Cry, the Beloved Country - and had moved to Anerley on the Natal south coast to devote himself full time to writing. It turned out, however, to be an intention thwarted by the call to political

leadership in the 1950s in the fight against apartheid. Indeed, Paton had experienced a disturbing augury of the future when he discovered his farewell function at Diepkloof to be officially segregated. Diepkloof itself, in fact, soon ceased to exist under the Nationalist government, and plans for the establishment of an Alan Paton School for disadvantaged pupils were shelved (Paton 1980:302f; 1988:9f).

Paton's second novel, Too Late the Phalarope, was thus written in a quite different world from that of Cry, the Beloved Country, and is, understandably, a rather different sort of book. It tells the story of a young, successful Afrikaner policeman who transgresses the law most strictly upheld by Afrikaner nationalists, that enshrined in the Immorality Act, and brings ruin upon himself and his family. Paton (1988:47) has related that the story was based upon an actual incident in which a white policeman was charged under the Immorality Act in a small Transvaal town:

The story in itself was not unusual. What moved me deeply was that the policeman's wife sat in court throughout the trial, and by her demeanour showed that she had forgiven him. There was also the implication that when he was discovered, he had confessed to her. Acts of infidelity are as common in South Africa as in any other country in the world, and such acts of forgiveness are also not unknown. But the forgiving of a white man - and especially an Afrikaner - by his wife when the act of infidelity had been committed with a black woman has an emotional and moral quality that is unknown in any other country in the world.

Though Paton goes on to aver that his story differed in the end from the original, the clear implication of his statement is that there is some moral significance to be derived from the novel, and that, given the subject matter involved, this moral significance is going to have strongly political ramifications. To what extent this occurs in the novel, and in what specific sense it does, is the central task of this analysis. For the purposes of this study, in particular, it is necessary to investigate how this very different novel, like its famous predecessor, also embodies and expresses the key values and ideas of liberalism.

Perhaps because of its relatively less illustrious reputation, in comparison to Cry, the Beloved Country at least, Too Late the Phalarope has received rather less critical attention than Paton's first novel, and has certainly not been attacked as vigorously by antagonistic commentators. The general trend among Paton's detractors, as represented especially by Paul Rich (1985:50f), for example, is that Too Late the Phalarope "represents a considerable technical advance" on the former novel, but is marred by its "flawed" content, which, it is claimed, removes Africans to the margins and treats Afrikaners and the topic of miscegenation in a facile and stereotyped way (see also Hooper 1989). A careful examination of the novel suggests that such criticism is not justified, either in terms of the selected story matter or with regard to the manner in which that material is presented.

In the first place, Paton in Too Late the Phalarope is most certainly not avoiding the urgent issues of the day, but is instead going beyond and beneath the obvious realities of the early period of Nationalist Party rule in order to examine the underlying psychological sources of such ethnocentric exclusivism. As Edward Callan (1982:43) has remarked, Paton's "purpose was not simply to describe apartheid, but to explore the racial attitudes that gave rise to it". For the same reason, Paton locates his story in one of the small country towns out of which modern Afrikaner nationalism grew and from which it derived its main impetus, and he sets the novel immediately before, not after, the election victory. In so doing, as Callan (1982:45) again points out, the novel "embodies an authentic portrait of one aspect of Afrikaner nationalism on the eve of its political triumph in 1948". The advantage is that it is possible to explore the nature and purport of the Afrikaner mentality in a lucid and uncluttered way, undistracted by the terrible turmoil which it began to wreak after 1948. Paton's aim, thus, is to attempt to understand the mind of apartheid, rather than merely to criticise its self-evidently brutal manifestations, and then to suggest alternative courses of action, both practical and theoretical, which are realistically open to the Afrikaner.

In the second place, a close reading of the novel will reveal that Paton's treatment of the characters, both Afrikaners and others, as well as the story line, is neither simplistic nor clichéd, but is instead subtle, complex and convincing. To demonstrate this, the present study will examine in turn the Afrikaner community of Venterspan; the character of Pieter and the nature of his temptation; the reaction of the community to his transgression in either retribution or forgiveness; and, finally, the question of whether any genuine restoration takes place at the end of the novel.

(ii)

In setting the scene for the main plot of the novel, Paton is at pains not simply to describe the external characteristics of the Venterspan community, but also to provide a vivid understanding of its unique sense of history. In so doing, crucial insights are gained into the community's specific concept of self-identity and purpose, as well as into the reasons for the intense abhorrence of miscegenation which will, of course, form the book's central dramatic conflict. Thus, the novel's action begins with Pieter catching the young Dick le Roux chasing a black girl, Stephanie, an incident which foreshadows Pieter's own future transgression. After warning Dick of the dire consequences of such behaviour, Pieter lets him go, and stands looking out over Venterspan:

The whole town was dark and silent, except for the barking of some dog, and the sound of ten o'clock striking from the tower of the church. The mist had gone, and the stars shone down on the grass country, on the farms of his nation and people, Buitenverwagting and Nooitgedacht, Weltevreden and Dankbaarheid, on the whole countryside that they had bought with years of blood and sacrifice; for they had trekked

from the British Government with its officials and its missionaries and its laws that made a black man as good as his master, and had trekked into a continent, dangerous and trackless, where wild beasts and savage men, grim and waterless plains had given way before their fierce will to be separate and survive. Then out of the harsh world of rock and stone they had come to the grass country, all green and smiling, and had given to it the names of peace and thankfulness. They had built their houses and their churches; and as God had chosen them for a people, so did they choose him for their God, cherishing their separateness that was now His Will. They set their conquered enemies apart, ruling them with unsmiling justice, declaring "no equality in Church or State", and making the iron law that no white man might touch a black woman, nor might any white woman be touched by a black man.

And to go against this law, of a people of rock and stone in a land of rock and stone, was to be broken and destroyed (p.18).

This fervent sense of purpose, indeed of divine purpose, is articulated with frightening passion by Pieter's father, Jakob van Vlaanderen, in wrathful repudiation of the drunken Flip van Vuuren, who had, at one of Jakob's parties, persisted with asking, "what's the point of living, what's the point of life?":

So Jakob van Vlaanderen stood up from his chair, and said in a voice of thunder, the point of living is to serve the Lord your God, and to uphold the honour of your Church and language and people, take him home (p.72).

Through Jakob's terse statement, Paton neatly summarises not only the central pillars of Afrikaner nationalism, but also their peculiar interconnectedness. The ideologues of Afrikaner nationalism would regard the Afrikaner volk, united by a common language, as chosen by God (in a way analogous to the Israelites of the Old Testament) to bring light into the heathen wilderness. The Churches, then, and particularly the Dutch Reformed Churches, are seen not just as places of worship, but as vital conduits for the carrying out of the Afrikaners' special mission in the world and form the foundation for the stringent code of moralistic conduct required of such a unique people. Hence, to remain sufficiently pure for such a mission, it is of cardinal importance that the volk remain separate, and it would thus be inconceivable that its pure blood as a nation could become "mixed" with that of other races. Thus, the absolute taboo against miscegenation, an endemically racist phenomenon, is rationalised as deriving from the essential conception of the Afrikaner nation's identity, purpose and destiny in the world.

Furthermore, the pure heritage of the van Vlaanderen family, in particular, is emphasised early on, as the narrator, Tant Sophie, relates how the family celebrates Pieter's first class pass in his Matriculation Examination:

After dinner when my brother had read from the great Bible that our ancestor Andries van Vlaanderen had brought from the Cape on the Great Trek of 1836, he prayed, and gave

thanks for the boy's success (p.27).  
The family's devout pride in the fact of their direct descent from the original Voortrekkers is, however, ironically undercut by the presence in the marginalised black community of the old woman Esther, who is

reputed to be a hundred, perhaps a hundred and twenty years old, and the only soul alive who had seen the first white trekkers to the grass country (p.22).

Her existence is a living reminder to the Afrikaners not so much that they had forcibly "subjugated" her people and put them in the "reserve" at Maduna (p.21), but, more importantly, that her people had long predated the Afrikaners in this land and so continue to exercise an ineradicable claim to it. It is precisely this ancient conflict which lies at the heart of the present-day political struggle in South Africa (see van Wyk Smith 1990). This fact, moreover, lends further piquancy to the main plot of the novel since the object of Pieter van Vlaanderen's lust, Stephanie, lives with and looks after Esther in the black people's location (p.13).

However, while Paton is clearly seeking to render the Venterspan community representative of Afrikanerdom in general at that time, it is important to appreciate that he does not allow his portrayal of that community in any way to lapse into stereotype or superficiality. On the contrary, part of Paton's achievement in this novel is to create a vivid and convincing sense of the divergent personalities, attitudes and beliefs of the different characters who make up this small town populace. Thus, the characters range from dour arch-conservatives like Nella's father to flirtatious free spirits like Pieter's cousin, Anna, and include ebullient jokers like Japie Grobler as well as fairly sympathetic figures like the young Dominee Vos. Even the van Vlaanderen family itself contains such different characters as the patriarchal Jakob, Pieter's loving mother, Mina, and the complex narrator of the tale, Tant Sophie, not to mention Pieter himself in all his enigmatic duality. The town also includes at the edges of the core community non-Afrikaners such as the police captain Massingham, and Matthew and Abraham Kaplan, the Jewish proprietors of the Southern Transvaal Trading Company and the Royal Hotel, respectively. Moreover, all around the white town like a silent but ever present shadow broods the "black nation", represented especially by the ancient Esther and the strangely magnetic Stephanie.

Indeed, even some of the least sympathetic characters are shown to have depth and complexity, which makes them, if not attractive as such, then certainly highly compelling. In particular, Jakob, stern and rigid though his autocratically moralistic family rule might be, is a fascinating character. Throughout the novel, Jakob is revealed to be deeply conservative in his religion and politics, and bitterly opposed to anything British, dismissing World War II as "an English war" (p.29) and disparaging his son's war medals as "uithemse kaf" (p.30). Yet despite all this, he turns out to have a ready and even at times wicked sense of humour and zest for life. He comments, for example, that Nella's father has a sense of humour that you could put "into a match-box

already full" (p.84), and he is the only one in the novel who manages to get the better of the irrepressible Japie Grobler by forcing him to repeat weakly his story of the hook in his office for pending matters (pp.142-143).

The tensions in Jakob's character, and particularly in his relations with his son, are handled with consummate skill in the novel. His sense of grievance at British imperialism in South Africa, which served, in fact, to increase the intensity of Afrikaner nationalism (see, for example, Lever 1978:18-19), emerges distinctly when Pieter gives him a book for his birthday, as Callan (1982:45-46) has shown. At first, Pieter jokes to Sophie that it is The Life of General Smuts, a man regarded as a traitor by many Afrikaners. It turns out instead to be The Birds of South Africa, almost certainly that by Austin Roberts. The old man is deeply touched and loves the book, because it is about the South African land and because the title, even in English, contains the "holy words", South Africa (p.74). Importantly, however, Jakob refuses to mention the author's name, not just because he is "an Englishman" (p.75), but because the name, "Roberts", is associated with the defeat and subsequent oppression of the Boers by the British general, Lord Roberts. Indeed, one of the first things the Nationalist government did when they came to power was to change the name of the military base at Pretoria from Roberts' Heights to Voortrekkerhoogte. The book, moreover, suggests the potential for reconciliation between father and son, and, indeed, the phalarope itself functions not so much as a general metaphor but rather as an appropriate ad hoc symbol for this reconciliation. Jakob is determined to prove that this English author has made a "mistake" about phalaropes being "birds of the coast", when they also appear inland, often being confused with the ruitertjie, and so he resolves to "show [Pieter] a phalarope" (p.89). Unfortunately, by the time that he does finally get the chance to show his son the bird, at the picnic, and so begin to repair their relationship, it will be too late. The phalarope, symbol of familial restoration in the novel, will be too late, for Pieter will already have committed his crime, not merely against his family, but against the volk itself.

(iii)

Paton goes to great lengths to emphasise just how terrible Pieter's crime is in the eyes of the Afrikaner community of Venterspan. He does so, firstly, by relating the case of "the man Smith", based apparently on a true story, in which a man with the aid of his wife killed and then beheaded his pregnant black mistress to prevent discovery of his relationship with her (pp.33-34). The account of the case adds to the sense of the actuality of racial obsession which extends beyond Venterspan itself to permeate the whole white society. The second way that Paton underlines the seriousness of Pieter's crime, as well as Pieter's own clear understanding of this, is by having Pieter explain in detail to Dick le Roux the extremely grave consequences of being caught in the act of miscegenation:

The police have had instructions to enforce the Immorality Act without fear or favour. Whether you're old or young, rich or poor, respected or nobody, whether you're a Cabinet Minister or a predikant or a headmaster or a tramp, if you touch a black woman and you're discovered nothing'll save you (p.15).

....

It's a thing that's never forgiven, never forgotten. The court may give you a year, two years. But outside it's a sentence for life (p.17).

In point of fact, the law which Paton uses as the basis for his story - the Immorality Act, Act 5, of 1927 - was indeed being tightened at the time in which the novel is set, shortly before 1948. And in the period immediately after 1948, when Paton was actually writing the novel, the new government set about making this law even more draconian, first through the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, and then through the Immorality Act Amendment Act of 1950 (see Davenport 1987:362), a subject to which Paton will return in his third novel, Ah But Your Land Is Beautiful.

The question to be addressed, then, is why Pieter, knowing only too well the consequences of his actions, chooses to break this law. The short answer could echo that of young Dick: "I don't know" (p.17). The long answer is far more complicated and is, perhaps, finally unobtainable, a fact attested to by the large amount of critical disagreement on this point. To begin with, it is important to see that Paton deliberately portrays Pieter throughout the novel as an enigmatic and elusive character. From the start of the tale, the narrator describes him as a deeply divided person, whom others, and especially his father, find odd and puzzling:

For the truth was that he had fathered a strange son, who had all his father's will and strength, and could outstride and outshoot them all, yet had all the gentleness of a girl, and strange unusual thoughts in his mind, and a passion for books and learning, and a passion for the flowers of the veld and kloof, so that he would bring them into the house and hold them in his hands, as though there were some deep meaning that he was finding in them .... He was always two men. The one was the soldier of the war, with all the English ribbons that his father hated; the lieutenant in the police, second only to the captain; the great rugby player hero to thousands of boys and men. The other was the dark and silent man, hiding from all men his secret knowledge of himself, with that hardness and coldness that made men afraid of him, afraid even to speak to him (p.8).

It is not too surprising, then, that such a variety of reasons have been forwarded for his behaviour, some rather less convincing than others. Nadine Gordimer (1973), for example, argues fairly crudely that the novel fits the paradigm of classical Greek tragedy, and that Pieter's attraction for the girl therefore constitutes some kind of fatal flaw which leads inevitably to his demise. Her reading of the novel is far too

schematic, however, and her argument not fully thought through, especially since in her interpretation one would have to conclude that Paton himself regarded miscegenation as a moral wrong. Edward Callan (1982) also sees the novel in terms of classical tragedy, and, although his analysis is much more subtle than Gordimer's, some wrenching is still involved, particularly his attempt to locate the fatal flaw not in Pieter but in the general community's "pride in Pure Race". Geoffrey Hutchings (1992), too, regards the novel as fitting the mode of tragedy, but of a kind more closely resembling that of Shakespeare than the classical Greeks. The crucial difference in Hutchings's critique is that he does not believe that Pieter is destroyed by ineluctable fate, but rather that he, like several of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, brings his ruin upon himself through his own free actions. Hutchings's argument falters slightly, however, when he claims (1992:196) that Pieter's submerged reason for "screwing" Stephanie is to express the dark, aggressive side of himself his father and his community had always demanded of him:

His brutal exploitation of a poor black woman is an assertion of his potency over the most vulnerable, most exploited class of human beings in South Africa.

There is little evidence in the text to support this assertion, and, indeed, a critic like John Thompson (1981) comes to exactly the opposite conclusion, suggesting that Pieter's real motive lies in an urge to rebel against his father and community in "a sort of blind irrational retaliation" (1981:40) for their failure to understand and appreciate him. Thompson is surely closer to the mark than John Cooke (1979), who argues most implausibly that Pieter is actually involved in a loving relationship with Stephanie. Cooke bases his view quite bizarrely upon a comment allegedly made in the 1780s by "a White South African farmer" to the traveller, Sparrman, that white men find the blackest women the most alluring (1979:37). Cooke then goes on to assert that Pieter is unable to end his relationship with Stephanie because its value "has come to be dearer to him than Afrikanerdom" and that this constitutes the "hunger in his soul" (1979:41).

From the above, it ought to be clear that no simple, final answers to the riddle that is Pieter van Vlaanderen are likely to be forthcoming. Nevertheless, some insight may be gained from applying what is known about his divided nature to the area of his psycho-sexuality. On the one side, he is a caring, loving man who wishes to express his love for his wife through normal sexual relations; but this side of him is thwarted by his wife's Calvinistic prudery which derives from some idea of purity, both racial and otherwise, that is "twisted in some small place" (p.70), and which causes her to shy away from even his most gentle ardour. As a result, his sexuality begins to find an outlet through his other, darker side. It takes the form of a strong urge, not for love-making, but for the forbidden, and what could be more forbidden in a society as puritanical and racist as his than crude extra-marital sex with a black woman who is a social outcast? Of course, he tries to resist this "mad sickness" (p.94), envying his father, who had never desired any other woman than his wife, and his fellow students, who had recoiled at the mere touch of a Malay woman's skin. One day, however,

circumstances conspire to lower his resistance to this temptation. He is injured by being blamed by the captain for Sergeant Steyn's mistake; he is galled and frustrated by Nella's obtuse letter in reply to his plea for improved sexual relations between them; and he is aroused by drinking and flirting with his cousin, Anna. (It is important to note, though, as Thompson (1981:40) does, that while Anna is something of a coquette there is little chance of her actually allowing Pieter to have sex with her, a point emphasised by their chaste parting kiss "over the gate" (p.115), and so the question of why Pieter chooses Stephanie rather than Anna for his sexual release does not arise.)

Nevertheless, and this is crucial, Pieter's final decision to have sex with Stephanie is ultimately his own, and cannot be ascribed merely to fate or social pressures or his family upbringing. It is made clear, for instance, that he prepares for his first sexual encounter with her in a self-aware and premeditated way, and that he uses her in a selfish and brutish way: "he possessed her" (p.116). Even the structure of this sentence used to describe their congress underlines that he is the agent and she the object of the encounter. Moreover, despite all his confused paranoia following this incident, he deliberately seeks her out again later when the black mood is once more upon him: he "went again to the vacant ground and the stinking weed, and he broke the law, of his own will and choice" (p.150).

This emphasis on the free and conscious nature of Pieter's decision raises the highly important question of free will. Paton has related in some detail in Towards the Mountain (1980:75-76) how as a student he was confronted by the theories of the Behaviourist school of psychology, founded by J.B. Watson, which challenged my notions of the self, of the possibility of its sovereignty, and therefore of the whole concept of using one's life, by conscious resolve, for the service of God and man.

These concepts are clearly of the utmost significance to a man like Paton, since they lie at the heart of both Christianity and liberalism, both of which view the individual as an autonomous moral agent responsible for his own actions. Paton's rejection of the theories of behaviourism and determinism may thus be seen as a confirmation of his belief in the core liberal value of individual freedom (1980:76):

I did not hold any extreme dogma of free will, but I felt that I, and I alone, was responsible for my actions. If I felt that I had done wrong, I would not have blamed my parents or my home or my school or my country, even though I would have acknowledged that all these agents had helped to make the self that is I. It was this conviction of my responsibility that finally made me reject the dogma of behaviourism.

By the same token, it may be argued that Paton's depiction of Pieter suggests that, even after all the external influences and psychological factors acting upon him have been taken into account, Pieter's actions are essentially voluntary, and he is

ultimately responsible for them. The wider implication of this conclusion would seem to be that Afrikaner nationalists in general must be held equally responsible for their views and actions, particularly those of a racist and discriminatory kind.

In contrast to Pieter's convoluted psychology, Stephanie has only one straightforward motive for her actions and that is to care for her child, whom she protects like a "tigress" (p.150). It is, indeed, for this same reason that she later helps Sergeant Steyn trap Pieter. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Pieter and Stephanie do have something in common with each other, and that is their "strangeness". Pieter, as already mentioned, is described early on in the novel as a "strange" man with "strange unusual thoughts in his mind" and a dark, "secret knowledge of himself" (p.8). A few pages later, Stephanie is described in very similar terms:

She was a strange creature, this girl Stephanie, with a secret embarrassed smile that was the mark of her strangeness (p.13).

This is not to suggest that their liaison is anything more than sexual, but it may help to explain why Pieter found himself attracted in the first place to this unlikely woman. In any event, Paton handles the initial meetings between Pieter and Stephanie with remarkable skill, creating the atmosphere of psychological and sexual intensity with a realism that is almost palpable. Paton has admitted in Towards the Mountain (1980:167-169) that he had at least two extra-marital affairs himself, and so, while by no means implying that these were of the kind depicted in the novel, it may be suggested that Paton's own experiences enabled him to convey a powerful sense of authenticity in these scenes. Similarly, indeed, as Peter Alexander (1994:266-267 especially) points out, Paton drew on his own unsatisfactory sexual relations with his first wife, Dorrie, as the basis for his insightful portrayal of Pieter's frustrated sexuality in his marriage.

In the course of the story, it is Stephanie, in fact, who emerges at times as the more sympathetic of the two characters. Whereas she cares for her child and is prepared to suffer for it, Pieter seems occasionally to care only for himself. As Thompson (1981:38) rather caustically remarks, Pieter most certainly does not act "in a spirit of heroic defiance of a law that would fetter love". After his first sexual meeting with Stephanie, he appears to be less repentant than afraid of getting caught, a fear brought on by his combined misunderstanding of Japie Grobler's joking note, Constable Vorster's depression about his debt, and Herman Geyer's contempt for the police after being warned to control his cattle more effectively. Similarly, though he tries to seek help in turn from Dominee Vos, Matthew Kaplan, Captain Massingham and even a Johannesburg psychiatrist, it is eventually his own pride and egotism, in addition to his sensitivity and strangeness, that prevents him from doing so. And finally, when he is eventually caught in Steyn's trap, he attempts to lie his way out of it in a way which, though obviously understandable, seems rather small of him, and which recalls young Dick le Roux's attempt at the beginning of the

novel. Unlike Dick, however, he is not let off so lightly.

(iv)

When Pieter is caught, the reaction of the other characters takes either of two very different forms, emphasising the fundamental dichotomy that exists within the Afrikaner community in general. This polarisation of response represents the two main worldviews or ideologies open to the Afrikaner. On the one hand, there is the outlook which later came to be called verkrampte: the conservative, racist, closed way of Old Testament judgement and retribution; on the other hand, there is the verligte, or enlightened, way of tolerance, compassion, love and New Testament mercy and forgiveness. This latter option approximates closely to the liberal perspective, but one must be cautious in applying the term, "liberal", indiscriminately to any group of Afrikaners, for the word in Afrikaans translation has negative connotations which it does not possess in English. As Paton pointed out in Hope For South Africa (1958a:7-9), the word, "liberal", contains for Afrikaner enemies of liberalism the further meaning of "liberalist" and "liberalistic", which "carries the stigma of 'loose', 'careless', 'promiscuous'", and which therefore means that liberalism is frequently seen "not as the espousal of racial justice, but rather as the philosophy of decadence" and, in religious matters, the liberal "is assumed to be atheist or agnostic or wholly indifferent" (see also Marquard 1965:20-22). For this reason, it is unusual for any Afrikaner, however progressive he may be, to define himself specifically as a liberal. Nevertheless, as long as these caveats are heeded, it is possible to identify the verligte response of the characters in Too Late the Phalarope with a broadly liberal position.

It would be useful to begin, however, with the kind of worldview evinced by Jakob and others like him in response to Pieter's transgression. Jakob, as his name implies, resembles an Old Testament patriarch, and his astringent moral code and fervid nationalism utterly dominate his thinking. Though he is nothing like as sour and humourless as Nella's father, he is still a man who understood the word obedience "better than he understood the word of love" (p.65), especially with regard to his son. As a result, he finds it almost impossible to comprehend his son's gentle, feminine side, sensitive to delicate things like flowers or stamps. By the time that his attitude towards his son begins to thaw, it is already too late, though the glimpse of what might have been lends an added poignancy to the story. The narrator makes clear, however, in suitably minatory tones, that once Pieter is found out there can be no averting the disastrous consequences:

So we drove back to Venterspan when the sun was almost down, and the world was filled with beauty and terror. And darkness came over the grass country, and over the continent of Africa, and over man's home and the earth, and over us all. And the sun went down, and never rose again (pp.161-162).

There may well be an intentional, serious pun on the name van Vlaanderen itself. As Callan (1982:48) has rightly pointed out, the name calls to mind the Afrikaner's "elemental Flemish roots". But it also plays on a word like "floundering", which suggests Pieter's painfully confused state of mind, as well as, in a deeply ironic sense, the word "philandering", since it is Pieter's transgression of the sexual colour bar which cuts at the very heart of his father's and community's sense of heritage and identity.

In this light, Jakob's reaction to the news of his son's crime may not, perhaps, be altogether surprising, but the sheer force of its ferocious intensity remains shocking. He literally annihilates all knowledge and memory of his son, and withdraws his family into utter isolation. He savagely crosses Pieter's name out of the ancestral family bible, as if denying him any link to cultural or religious salvation; he orders everything of Pieter's to be burned; and he expunges him from his will. For himself, he resigns from all the community's organisations to which he had belonged, shuts the blinds and locks the door of the house, and determines that neither he nor his family shall ever be part of the world again. Most disturbing of all, he invokes Psalm 109, "the most terrible words that man has ever written", as a ritual damning of his son, without realising, ironically, that the "judgement" of the psalm is delivered against the man who "remembered not to show mercy" (p.187). In following the course of retribution rather than mercy, Jakob is joined by other conservatives like Nella's father, Sergeant Steyn, Constable Vorster, and, one imagines, the majority of the rest of the community, either explicitly or implicitly, for, as Pieter himself well knows, this is the "the greatest and holiest of all the laws" (p.94) for Afrikaner society, and the one crime "that's never forgiven" (p.17).

The way of retribution followed by Jakob has certainly tended to typify the actions and attitudes of Afrikaner nationalism in general. However, it is not the only mode of response which is available, and, indeed, a central intention of the novel is to suggest an alternative way of thinking and course of action which is open to the Afrikaner and, in fact, to white South African society as a whole. This alternative mindset is introduced not at the end of the novel, but much earlier, in the first sermon delivered at Venterspan by the young Dominee Vos. The minister's text, in essence, is that God's mercy is "beyond all computation, abundant and healing, restoring, uplifting and just", and that it is therefore "a lie" that certain things cannot be forgiven. The message, which affects not just Pieter alone, but his whole community, is that through "repentance and mercy" it is possible that

a man might turn again, taking his part again in God's plan for the world, so that through a man, himself healed and refreshed, might flow a stream of living water to refresh us all, his home, his church, his town, his people, and the world (pp.57-58).

It is this way of thinking that is demonstrated not merely by some of the non-Afrikaner characters, like Massingham and Kappie,

but also by key Afrikaner figures, such as Pieter's mother and his aunt, Tant Sophie.

In fact, Paton's deployment of Sophie as a narrator is a technical masterstroke. Based, perhaps, on Paton's beloved spinster aunt, Elizabeth Paton (see Paton 1980:11), Sophie has remained maiden because of a severe facial disfigurement, and so has become a "watcher" of life:

I did not observe all these events. Yet because I am apart, being disfigured, and not like other women, yet because in my heart I am like any other woman, and because I am apart, so living apart and watching I have learned to know the meaning of unnoticed things, of a pulse that beats suddenly, and a glance that moves from here to there because it wishes to rest on some quite other place (p.9).

She has also known both Jakob, her brother, and Pieter all their lives, and so, being sympathetic and informed, is in a perfect position to narrate the tale. Her name, moreover, means "wisdom", and she does reveal herself to be perspicacious and sensitive to what she sees, especially the cumulative influence on Pieter of Nella's prudery, Anna's flirtatiousness, and Stephanie's "bold look" (p.92).

Sophie is no mere plaster saint, however. She too has her flaws and her eccentricities. Her social discomfiture is revealed in the way that she is rather too easily flustered by Japie Grobler's teasing, for example, and she blames herself too histrionically for failing to intervene timeously in Pieter's life, a little vainly over-estimating her own level of influence. To be sure, when she does try to warn Pieter, it becomes clear that he is rather repelled by her. Her physical disfigurement has meant that she has poured out all her maternal and, indeed, thwarted sexual love on Pieter, who responds to her attempted assistance at the picnic with coldness and bitterness:

That would please you, to know even what your favourite prayed. Then you could still more possess him. How you would love to possess him. Then you could say to his mother and father, to his wife and his children, it is I that possess him. For when he was a child, I desired to possess him. And now he is a man, I still desire to possess him. In God's name, have you no pride? Or must you be taught again? (p.161).

Despite this rebuke, when Pieter's crime is revealed she responds immediately with forgiveness, love and courage, standing up against her brother's wrath and the scorn of the community. When Jakob locks the house, it is she who is prepared to be cast out by him in order to go and minister to Pieter. She also disobeys her brother's stern instructions by not burning everything of Pieter's but saving a photograph which she gives to his mother and the book of birds which she keeps for herself. Moreover, her ministry to Pieter is successful, effectively helping him through the dark night of his soul, and thereby embodying a morally superior response to that of Jakob.

In this course of action, she is not alone. She is supported by Kappie, who, though he had merely suffered mutely with Pieter

before, now takes decisive action to talk him out of suicide. She is supported also by Captain Massingham, who understands well this kind of grief, having lost his own son through a shooting accident and later his wife through a broken heart. While Massingham is bound to uphold the law, he promises to "stand" by Pieter (p.182), and it is he who articulates some of the clearest lessons which the novel has to offer. He points out, for example, to Sophie that while "an offender must be punished, ...to punish and not to restore, that is the greatest of all offences" (p.195). Moreover, in response to Nella's father's assertion that Pieter deserves the harshest punishment since he has "offended against the race", he replies,

meneer, as a policeman I know an offence against the law, and as a Christian I know an offence against God; but I do not know an offence against the race (pp.195-196);

and he goes on to point out that

if a man takes unto himself God's right to punish, then he must also take upon himself God's promise to restore (p.196).

Most importantly, perhaps, he reminds Sophie:

There's a hard law, mejuffrou, that when a deep injury is done to us, we never recover until we forgive (p.196).

The person who best understands these lessons, however, and who acts upon them most effectively is Pieter's mother. Even when she is shut away in the house, she offers telling ministry to Pieter via Sophie:

And you will say to my son, she said, that though he may suffer under the law, there is no law that can cut him off from our love, nor from the love of his friends. His life is God's, and mine and yours, and his wife's and his children's, and all his friends'; and he will therefore cherish it and not despair (p.189).

Eight days later, when Jakob is discovered dead, bowed over the Book of Job in which he now found no answers to the drunken Flip van Vuuren's existential questions about the meaning of life, Pieter's mother takes charge of the situation. She throws open the blinds and front door of the house, and faces the world once more, even though she is spurned by the Woman's Welfare Committee which she could have continued to serve with distinction. More importantly, she shares Massingham's understanding of the healing power of forgiveness, and so she goes to Nella's parents' farm where she convinces the young woman to return with the children, to forgive her husband, and to stand by him at the trial:

The girl came back, silent but steadfast, borne on the strong deep river of this woman's love, that sustained us all (p.199).

In all this, then, she exemplifies the Christian ideal of love, as Sophie points out early in the novel: "if ever a woman was all love, it was she, all love and care" (p.9). She even condones Sophie's narration of the events, though Sophie herself wishes that it had been written by her,

for maybe of the power of her love that never sought itself, men would have turned to the holy task of pardon, that the body of the Lord might not be wounded twice, and virtue come of our offences (p.200).

Though these final words of the novel emphasise once more the potential power that exists in the kind of love shown by a person like Pieter's mother, the implication is that in actuality Pieter's offence was not pardoned by his society at large, and certainly not by the Afrikaner community in particular. It is important, then, not to lay too much stress on the relatively optimistic elements of the novel, and to consider carefully what kind of restoration does, in fact, take place at the end of the story.

(v)

Tant Sophie closes her narrative by suggesting tentatively what possible future awaits Pieter and his family after he has completed his sentence:

Now what is yet to come I do not know, except that they will go to some other country, far from us all. I trust they will find some peace there, even if he is to be for ever so silent and so grave. And I too, having lived this story in grief and passion, close it in some kind of peace, remembering God's mercy, Who gave us all such friends (pp.199-200).

From this it is clear that Pieter can never expect to be pardoned by his community, whose conservative and racist worldview seems, if anything, to have been hardened rather than softened by its experience of Pieter's difficulties. Whatever restoration takes place, then, does so at the level of Pieter as an individual, together with his immediate family. Nella stands by him through his trial, and this implies the hope that their troubled and damaged relationship may be regenerated. Moreover, there is the suggestion that, in an unintentional way, Pieter and his family achieve a form of liberation in that they are forced to leave their closed-minded community behind and start a new life in a different and, of necessity, more forgiving and tolerant society. It may further be argued that characters like Pieter's mother and Tant Sophie also experience some sort of personal liberation by being compelled to confront and then to oppose publicly the destructive prejudices of their society. From Sophie's perspective, for example, the lesson has been learnt that "it is not the judgement of God but that of men which is a stranger to compassion" (p.9).

As far as the Venterspan community is concerned, however, no liberation whatsoever is achieved. Their condemnation of Pieter for breaking the most powerful taboo of their society is final and absolute. No heed is taken of the young dominee's sermon on repentance and mercy, and so there is no possibility of Pieter's church, town or people being healed and refreshed through the act of forgiving him (pp.57-58). Instead, the community exacts its harsh retribution on the offender, jailing him and then expelling him from its midst, so that it may confirm its commitment to the "iron laws" (p.200) of nationalistic primacy and ethnic exclusivism. In this regard, therefore, the novel's ending seems very bleak indeed, especially since by the time the novel was written the Nationalist Party was politically victorious and

these "laws" of Afrikaner nationalism were being ruthlessly imposed on South African society as a whole.

It would seem, then, that this novel offers far less "comfort in desolation" than does Paton's first novel, Cry, the Beloved Country. Nevertheless, Too Late the Phalarope is not entirely gloomy, and there are certain aspects of the book which provide the basis for some hope for the future. In the first place, the novel presents a powerful and moving indictment of the narrow-minded bigotry of the Venterspan community in particular, and, by extension, of Afrikaner nationalism in general. As such, the novel fulfils what Paton regarded as one of the chief aims of South African liberal fiction, namely, "the painful laying bare of the truth" (1957b:157; and compare Paton 1959c). In this regard, it could be said that Paton's achievement in writing this novel closely resembles that of his narrator, Tant Sophie, who explicitly articulates her motivation for telling the story:

All these things I will write down, yet it is not only that they trouble my mind;... nor is it only that men may have more knowledge of compassion. For I also remember the voice that came to John in Patmos, saying, what thou seest, write it in a book, and though I do not dare to claim a knowledge of this voice, yet do I dare to claim a knowledge of some voice. Therefore I put aside my fears, and am obedient (p.10).

The novel does not function merely as a condemnation of Afrikaner nationalism, however. It moves beyond such social criticism to offer a compelling alternative to the racism and reactionary conservatism of traditional Afrikaner thinking, affirming that an approach to life founded upon the liberal principles of compassion, tolerance and individual liberty provides the basis for a far more just and moral society than that grounded in racial discrimination and segregation. Far more than a simple tale of one man's fall from grace, the story of Pieter van Vlaanderen served as a profound appeal to the ideologues of Afrikaner nationalism of the day to abandon the immoral, unjust and ultimately self-destructive policy of apartheid, and to seek instead a social programme consonant with the fundamental Christian and liberal principle of the essential equality of all persons, regardless of the colour of their skins. The real "South African tragedy" (see Paton 1965a), unfortunately, was that it took almost forty years for the Afrikaner nationalist Government to heed that appeal.

## Debbie Go Home and other short fiction

(i)

In Towards the Mountain (1980:304), Alan Paton recalls that, following the tremendous success of Cry, the Beloved Country, he made the earnest decision to become a full-time novelist:

On April 30, 1948, I resigned my principalship [of Diepkloof Reformatory] with the firm intention of devoting the rest of my life to writing. But the event of May 26, 1948, brought my intention to nothing, and condemned me to a struggle between literature and politics that has lasted until now.

The event to which Paton refers was the election victory of the Nationalist Party, and it led to his attention being so much absorbed by politics that thirty years elapsed between his second novel, Too Late the Phalarope, and his third, Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful. In that time, following a year working at the Toc H T.B. Settlement in Natal with Don McKenzie, Paton became actively involved in the founding of the South African Liberal Party, serving as chairman and then president until it was forced out of existence by the Prohibition of Political Interference Act in 1968. Despite his engagement with politics, Paton remained a highly prolific writer, though much of his energy went into the production of polemical and, often, ephemeral material. He wrote the renowned column known as "The Long View" for the liberal journal, Contact, regularly over many years (see Paton 1968a), as well as being a very frequent contributor to other organs of political opinion (his periodical publications number well over a hundred: see Alexander 1994). He also produced several political pamphlets, such as The People Wept (1958a) and The Charlestown Story (1960a), on urgent issues of the day, and delivered numerous speeches and lectures on a variety of topics. In addition, a great deal of his time went into the research and writing of his acclaimed biographies of two great South African liberals, Hofmeyr (1964a) and Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton (1973a). Finally, he turned his attention to autobiography, producing several volumes which offer a fascinating account of his own life and times.

In all this, Paton sought to promote and develop liberal ideas through direct political activity and non-fictional writing rather than through the medium of the novel. Indeed, the times were such that urgent political action of a specific nature seemed necessary. The Nationalists had defeated the weakening United Party again in the 1953 election and were set, therefore, to continue to entrench and extend the policy of apartheid. On the other hand, popular resistance, as manifested in the Defiance Campaign and the Congress of the People, was mounting and becoming ever more radicalised. Widespread conflict appeared imminent, with inevitably disastrous consequences. The peaceful alternative represented by the Liberal Party offered a powerful appeal, therefore, and Paton was prepared to devote himself to it, even at the temporary expense of his own novelistic career (though as Peter Alexander (1994) makes clear, Paton had in any

event experienced great difficulty in producing novels regularly). Nevertheless, the liberal values and ideas which lay at the heart of his first two novels formed the basis also for the constitution of the Liberal Party, so that Paton's career change could be seen as one of method rather than principle.

For those opponents of the Liberal Party, who regarded its policies as either nebulous or naive, it is instructive to note how the constitutional principles which it adopted at its inception have retained validity in the 1990s and even won general acceptance. In Journey Continued (1988:118), Paton quotes from The Policies of the Liberal Party, a handbook of the party's political beliefs published around 1954, and dating from a statement to the press of 9 May 1953 announcing the inauguration of the Party (see Robertson 1971:112); especially paragraph two of the constitution of the party:

#### Principles

- (i) The essential dignity of every human being irrespective of race, colour or creed, and the maintenance of his fundamental rights.
- (ii) The right of every human being to develop to the fullest extent of which he is capable consistent with the rights of others.
- (iii) The maintenance of the rule of law.
- (iv) That no person be debarred from participating in the government and democratic process of the country by reason only of race, colour or creed.

#### Objects

- (i) Equal political rights based on a common franchise roll.
- (ii) Freedom of worship, expression, movement, assembly and association.
- (iii) The right to acquire and use skills and to seek employment freely.
- (iv) Access to an independent judiciary.
- (v) The application equally to all sections of the population of the principle of compulsory, State-sponsored education.
- (vi) The right to own and acquire immovable property.
- (vii) The right to organise trade unions, and other economic groups and associations.

A central dilemma facing liberals like Paton at the time lay not in the policies of the Liberal Party, however, but in the methods which it was prepared to adopt in order to actualise its political vision. Paragraph two quoted above concludes with the following statement (in Paton 1988:118):

The Party will employ only democratic and constitutional means to achieve the foregoing objects, and is opposed to all forms of totalitarianism such as communism and fascism. This refusal to tolerate or endorse the use of violence as a political strategy has characterised liberalism in South Africa throughout the apartheid era. It has been a vital problem in liberal politics, as has already been seen in the discussion of Paton's early fiction, and it is an issue to which this study

will return in more detail later.

The point which needs to be emphasised here, however, is that Paton's work with the Liberal Party may be regarded in a sense as an extension of his work as a novelist. Thus, an examination of his explicit political writing helps to provide a concrete understanding of the values and ideas which inform his first two novels. Such an examination may similarly anticipate some of the central thematic issues which will be treated in his later fiction.

In addition, a consideration of Paton's writing, both fiction and non-fiction, is highly valuable in understanding the work of other liberal writers of the time. Although this study has chosen to focus on Alan Paton, it would be mistaken to suppose that he was the only liberal novelist in South Africa during the apartheid period. While he certainly may be regarded as ushering in a distinctively contemporary liberal outlook in South African literature, a number of other novelists in the 1950s, such as Jack Cope, Dan Jacobson and the early Nadine Gordimer, followed on from his lead and produced significant work.

Paton's influence on Cope is clear in a novel such as The Fair House (1955), for example, whose setting at the time of the Bambata Rebellion in 1906 enables Cope to explore the issue of inter-racial friendships in a situation, which, like that of the 1950s, is fraught with injustice and violence. Although Cope avoids offering a specific sense of historical closure, the novel confirms the potential for, and, indeed, the necessity of, achieving trust and co-operation across racial and ethnic boundaries, so that the unjust power of the "white house" may be supplanted by the equitability of a truly "fair house". This idea is explored through the complex web of cross-cultural relationships between the main characters: the white English-speaking soldier, Tom Erskine; his African boyhood friend, Kolombe Pela, who joins the rebellion; Tom's conservative Afrikaner lover, Linda, who supports the crushing of the rebellion, and whom he eventually leaves for the intellectual liberal, Margaret. It is Margaret who articulates most clearly the central vision of the novel:

There's room enough in this country for all of us but that's not good enough for some people. If we were children, white and black and brown children fighting over every inch of a garden, it would be sickening, but we are adults and it's criminal (p.45).

Paton's concern with moral responsibility in a situation of racial injustice exerts an influence also over the work of Dan Jacobson, especially in such early novels as A Dance in the Sun (1956). Once again, the idea of inter-racial relationships is central to this novel, except that here the pivotal relationship is that between a black servant, Joseph, and his white employer, Fletcher, whose moral weakness emerges in his powerlessness to counter his brother-in-law, Louw. Joseph uses this weakness to his advantage in avoiding dismissal, enlisting also the aid of two students who are hitch-hiking through the desolate rural

Karoo in which the story is set. The novel is, in fact, narrated by one of these students, who witness before they leave Joseph's final victory over Fletcher, left dancing a lone, grotesque dance of frustration and defeat beneath the blazing sun.

As in A Dance in the Sun, Nadine Gordimer's early novels, such as The Lying Days (1953) and A World of Strangers (1958), explore the potential for realising peacefully the fundamental liberal values of equality and justice in a context of deep-rooted racial prejudice and hatred. In both these novels, the main characters - Helen Shaw and Toby Hood respectively - strive to break down the artificial barriers of racial segregation to establish friendships across the colour-bar, and hence to assert the primacy of individual freedom in the face of state control. In moving away from this attention on the individual per se to a more radical social focus in her following novels, beginning with Occasion for Loving (1963) and especially The Late Bourgeois World (1966), Gordimer does seem to shift from a conventionally liberal perspective. Nevertheless, her claim to have documented "the decline of liberalism, black-and-white, that has proved itself hopelessly inadequate to an historical situation" (Gordimer 1973:51) cannot be accepted. While the scope of the present study precludes a detailed discussion of Gordimer's work, several points may be made against her supposedly anti-liberal stance. The issue in fact came to a head in a much publicised press debate in 1974 after Gordimer was reported to have stated in an interview with Michael Radcliffe of The Times (29 November 1974:21; see also The Star 29 November 1974): "I am a white South African radical. Please don't call me a liberal"; and that she despised South African liberalism. When Alan Paton himself then fiercely criticised her views, in the Sunday Times (12 December 1974), Gordimer replied in the same paper (22 December 1974) that the liberalism she was referring to was the ineffectual, posturing kind embodied in the United Party, and certainly not that of Paton's Liberal Party, an explanation which Paton readily accepted (Sunday Times 29 December 1974). Moreover, as Stephen Clingman (1986:245) points out, Gordimer's remarks of the early 1970s need to be seen in the context of the emerging Black Consciousness radicalism of that period and do not necessarily represent her considered opinion over time. Indeed, critics like Dorian Haarhoff (1982) have observed that Gordimer has more lately qualified her radical position, and that while her outlook has become complex, there is much in it that is fully consonant with contemporary liberal thinking.

From this brief discussion, it ought to be clear that the influence of the liberal values and ideas articulated by Paton in his novels and direct political writing was strongly felt in the work of other important novelists in the 1950s. However, it ought not to be supposed that Paton stopped writing fiction altogether during this period. Despite his commitment to the day-to-day running of the Liberal Party's political enterprise, which prohibited the writing of a full-length novel, Paton did manage to produce a good deal of short fiction, some of it amongst the best to emerge from this country at the time. Indeed, this short fiction, far from being tangential to Paton's literary canon, is

central to his achievement as a writer, extending and amplifying some of the most important themes of his novels, as well as developing new responses to the unfolding challenges and dilemmas confronting liberals in the later 1950s and 1960s.

Ten of these short stories are to be found in the volume, Debbie Go Home, while the majority of the miscellaneous pieces have been collected in Colin Gardner's selection of Paton's shorter writing, Knocking on the Door (1975), which also contains some of the best of Paton's verse (now supplemented by Paton's collected poems, Songs of Africa 1995). This section will begin with a detailed discussion of the stories published together in Debbie Go Home.

(ii)

The short stories collected in Debbie Go Home and published in 1961 were written over a period of time from shortly after the publication of Cry, the Beloved Country in 1948 up to the start of the 1960s. Only three of the stories - "The Divided House", "Life for a Life" and "The Elephant Shooter" - were appearing for the first time; the other seven had been published in various magazines and journals from 1951 to 1961. Their period of composition and publication thus covers the time of the primary implementation of grand apartheid, up to the establishment of the Republic itself in 1961. The stories do not, however, attempt to offer a comprehensive overview of the period in the form of either documentary exposition or synoptic social realism. Instead, the stories deal with the specific effects of race-based social and political injustice on the lives of ordinary human beings at the level of personal, everyday suffering and despair. The intimate detail and specific focus of the subject matter is therefore ideally suited to the short story form, and offers new and frequently unique insights into the actual consequences of apartheid legislation for individual lives.

Ernst Pereira (1970:21), in a lucid analysis of the stories, lists among their best qualities Paton's "self-effacing humanity, shrewd observation, and uncluttered, rhythmically compelling style", and he goes on to point out that the stories are comprised of

a series of confrontations, in which man's efforts to preserve his dignity or to find some acceptable means of reconciling his ideals and ambitions with the harsh exigencies of life find expressive, sometimes poignant utterance. But perhaps this is too grandiloquent a description of writing that is so unpretentious, so consistently compassionate in its reading of human nature.

Don Maclennan (1970:118) concurs in large part with this assessment, finding in the stories a sense of affirmation in the face of political evil or existential weariness, and responding favourably to what he perceives as the deliberate avoidance of facile resolution in many of the stories:

Their virtue is that they know their limits, and do not presume to judge beyond the capacity of the moment.

The stories themselves may be most fruitfully treated according to subject and theme. Six of the stories deal with Diepkloof Reformatory, two focusing on the warders and four on the boys. The other four tales concern experiences outside the reformatory, two of which - the title story and "A Life for a Life" - highlight the situation of the so-called Coloureds, a group whose identity and place in South African society had come under serious threat during the 1950s.

To begin with, then, two of the six pieces about Diepkloof Reformatory concentrate on the Afrikaner officials at the institution. Paton (1980:192) has elsewhere praised some of these men, such as "Lanky" de Lange, who served as the model for the Afrikaner official in Cry, the Beloved Country and also perhaps in "Death of a Tsotsi". It is, indeed, part of Paton's inclusive humanity that he felt at liberty to explore all sections of South African social life in his fiction and to seek to understand and even empathise with individuals from each of these groups, including that of the ruling minority.

In this regard, he anticipates some of the characteristic elements of Athol Fugard's dramatic work, especially, as will later be seen, in plays like Hello and Goodbye and A Lesson from Aloes. Paton's two stories, though similar in subject focus, differ in tone and mood. "The Elephant-Shooter", a light-hearted tale to close the collection, tells the story of a young man, Richard Coetzee, who had indeed been an elephant hunter for the Portuguese East Africa Company and who now has come in search of a job at Diepkloof Reformatory. Despite warnings from Coetzee's superiors about his irresponsibility, Paton finds himself subtly inveigled by Coetzee into hiring him, and ends up feeling just like "a big elephant" (p.124) who has been skilfully hunted and bagged. "The Worst Thing of His Life", on the other hand, is a far more serious text. One of the earliest of the stories, it deals with another official, Jonkers, who struggles to tell the Principal - a thinly disguised self-portrait - about some "great trouble" (p.75). The Principal, in his egotism and paranoia, immediately presumes that it has to do with the reformatory and his principalship. When the nature of the trouble is eventually disclosed, it turns out that the official's son has been arrested, with the result that he himself is both in a state of public disgrace and in fear of losing his job as a public servant. Although he is able to reassure and comfort the man, the Principal is inwardly ashamed of his secret, selfish fears and is candid enough to admit that when he realised the truth, the relief was so great that my whole self had to experience it, and for a moment, no, for some moments, I had no thought to spare for Jonkers and his son (p.77). His shame is compounded when Jonkers emotionally expresses not only his gratitude, but also his unwavering confidence in the Principal.

It is this honest self-awareness and ironic self-appraisal on the part of the narrator that lends a special flavour to many of the stories, moving beyond mere character analysis to a consideration of one's power to address the root problems of one's society.

Paton, as "principal" character in the Diepkloof stories, is forced to admit that he has no final solutions, no utopian schemes to eliminate all the pain and suffering in his world. Instead, the stories recount the small, though by no means unimportant, efforts of individuals like the Principal to reach out and help others, doing what they can to combat the wider social forces which threaten to hurt and destroy. This is not to suggest, of course, that liberalism in general is ineffectual in the face of political injustice or is limited to the fragmented efforts of unorganised individuals. The highly coherent and practicable objectives of the Liberal Party outlined above bear testimony to its potential power. But the purpose of the stories is to go beyond or beneath the sphere of rarefied political theory and strategy to explore the thoughts and feelings of actual human characters at an experiential and personal level.

This is especially true of the four stories which deal with the Principal's experiences with the boys at the reformatory, whom Pereira (1970:22) poignantly describes as "the half-formed and the ill-formed, the rejects of society that passed through his hands at Diepkloof". In "Death of a Tsotsi", for instance, the story is told of Spike, a former member of a tsotsi gang, who desperately wants to reform himself, leave the gang life behind him, and re-integrate himself into society. Despite the efforts of the Principal and Mr de Villiers - the official whose job it is to monitor those boys who are allowed out of the reformatory for certain periods - it soon becomes apparent that Spike's fears about the gang not letting him go are well-founded. With tragic resignation, Spike declares, "They'll get me" (p.65), and sure enough one day Spike is stabbed to death on his way home from his factory job to his mother, sister and young bride. The Principal knows that they did perhaps all do their "best" for him (p.68), given their limited resources, but this is cold comfort. The story thus expresses the unavoidable lesson that a "reformatory" such as Diepkloof can never be an adequate terminal solution, and that an essential part of any real "cure" is a fundamental re-ordering and amelioration of society at large:

And this death would go on too, for nothing less than the reform of a society would bring it to an end. It was the menace of the socially frustrated, strangers to mercy, striking like adders for the dark reasons of ancient minds at any who crossed their paths (p.69).

While Paton is aware that societal renewal (particularly in the South Africa of that time) is vital in the prevention of crime and the rehabilitation of offenders, he also makes it clear that an essential part of the responsibility for individual reform lies with the individual himself. This is the central theme in both "Sponono" and "The Divided House". The eponymous protagonist in "Sponono" is an absolute incorrigible who with charming hypocrisy manages consistently to see no fault whatsoever in himself - despite glaring evidence to the contrary - and blames all his problems on others. And Sponono does indeed have a habit of causing problems for himself: at the reformatory; in society, when he is released; at the Principal's house in Natal, where he is given a job after the Principal's resignation; and later at

the house of a friend of the Principal's in the Eastern Province, after the Principal is forced to ask him to leave his own employ. Yet, even after all these experiences, and even after his series of bouts in prison, Sponono is able insouciantly to appeal to the Principal for still further assistance. When he is at last politely refused, he turns on the Principal with righteous indignation to demand that he continue to forgive him, "even unto seventy times seven" (p.110) as "Jesus taught" (p.117). By this time the Principal's patience has worn thin, and he decides not to reply to a letter from Sponono during yet another spell in prison. To the last, however, Sponono's self-righteousness prevails, and he is able to exclaim, "Why is this change in you?" without seeing the mordant irony in his next statement: "There is no change in me" (p.116).

Despite its lightly humorous tone, "Sponono" makes a serious point about the centrality of individual responsibility, a point which features also in the much more sombre tale, "The Divided House". The main figure in this latter piece, Jackie, is torn between the two sides to his character, rather like Pieter in Too Late the Phalarope. On the one hand, he yearns, with apparent sincerity, to become a priest; on the other, he smokes dagga and commits a series of crimes, including theft, to finance his vice. His story is, in fact, based on an actual boy, who served also as the model for Gertrude in Cry, the Beloved Country. Like Gertrude, Jackie is finally lost. Despite being given a chance by the Principal, he one day attacks the head-boy of the Tailor's Shop where he was working at the reformatory, escapes, and is soon arrested for house-breaking in Pretoria. The letter he sends to the Principal from prison, expressing repentance and his continuing desire to be ordained, is pathetic and sad, for the Principal knows that it is a desire that will never reach fruition:

Yet I knew that the boy who wrote the letter would, so far as men knew, always be defeated, till one day he would give up both hope and ghost, and leave to his enemy the sole tenancy of the divided house (p.39).

The moral which informs both "Sponono" and "The Divided House" is that if a person does not take deliberate responsibility for his own life and actively work towards his own reform, then no amount of social reconstruction will avail. It is precisely this belief, in fact, which underpinned Paton's entire enterprise at Diepkloof Reformatory, and though these particular stories end unhappily, Paton's accounts of his time at Diepkloof contain many instances of the success of the project, such as that of Majohnnie (see Paton 1980:185f). Indeed, the lesson in these stories is similar to that which Pieter has to learn in Too Late the Phalarope, though in that novel Pieter does manage, unlike Sponono and Jackie, to overcome his darker impulses.

However, if the Principal seems to concede that cases like Sponono and Jackie lie beyond his power to help, then a story like "Ha'penny" brings home how much more can often be done in the assistance of others. Ha'penny is a small, apparently orphaned boy of about twelve who, desperate to find some sense of identity and belonging, invents for himself an imaginary

family. Or at least that is what the Principal thinks the boy is doing till he checks up and discovers that the family does exist although they have no knowledge of Ha'penny. Insensitively, the Principal confronts the boy with his lie, intending to spare him the pain of rejection when his time comes to be released. Unexpectedly, the Principal finds himself "shocked by the immediate and visible effect" which his action has on the boy:

His whole brave assurance died within him, and he stood there exposed, not as a liar, but as a homeless child who had surrounded himself with mother, brothers, and sisters, who did not exist. I had shattered the very foundations of his pride, and his sense of human significance (p.29).

The tactlessness of this course of action is underscored by Paton's own argument that the way to combat and cure crime was to make men feel "socially significant" because "to mean something in the world is the deepest hunger of the human soul" (1944a:24). The Principal tries to make some reparation for his folly by having the family come to see the boy, and, as it turns out, even adopt him, though he is close to death with tuberculosis. In the final analysis, however, the Principal knows that he has failed in his duty:

I felt judged in that I had sensed only the existence and not the measure of his desire (p.30).

And thus he takes it upon himself in future

to resolve to be more prodigal in the task that the State, though not in so many words, had enjoined on me (p.30).

This story serves to illustrate a fundamental liberal principle namely, that human beings are essentially individuals and must be treated as such. Though it is clearly important to take social forces and groupings into account in understanding human reality (as Paton does in "Death of a Tsotsi", for instance), one must never lose sight of the fact that the constituent members of a society are individual persons. Once the primacy of individuality is blurred or denied, the way is open for a State to treat persons merely as parts of a group rather than as individuals with inalienable rights, and then to enforce decisions based on group considerations which infringe those individual rights. It was, after all, as Paton well knew, precisely this kind of distorted thinking that formed the ideological basis for apartheid. The point made in "Ha'penny" is, therefore, a crucially important one, and is re-affirmed, for instance, in Paton's well-known poem, "For a Small Boy who Died at Diepkloof Reformatory" (Songs of Africa p.36). Echoing W.H. Auden's poem, "The Unknown Citizen", it bitterly excoriates a society in which the system of order and control is blind to the particular needs of the individual:

Small offender, small innocent child  
With no conception or comprehension  
Of the vast machinery set in motion  
By your trivial transgression,  
Of the great forces of authority,  
Of judges, magistrates, and lawyers,  
Psychologists, psychiatrists, and doctors,  
Principals, police, and sociologists,  
Kept moving and alive by your delinquency,  
This day, and under the shining sun  
Do I commit your body to the earth  
Oh child, oh lost and lonely one.

Clerks are moved to action by your dying;  
Your documents, all neatly put together,  
Are transferred from the living to the dead,  
Here is the document of birth  
Saying that you were born and where and when,  
But giving no hint of joy or sorrow,  
Or if the sun shone, or if the rain was falling,  
Or what bird flew singing over the roof  
Where your mother travailed. And here your name  
Meaning in white man's tongue, he is arrived,  
But to what end or purpose is not said.

Here is the certificate of Death;  
Forestalling authority he sets you free,  
You that did once arrive have now departed  
And are enfolded in the sole embrace  
Of kindness that earth ever gave to you.  
So negligent in life, in death belatedly  
She pours her generous abundance on you  
And rains her bounty on the quivering wood  
And swaddles you about, where neither hail nor tempest,  
Neither wind nor snow nor any heat of sun  
Shall now offend you, and the thin cold spears  
Of the highveld rain that once so pierced you  
In falling on your grave shall press you closer  
To the deep repentant heart.

Here is the warrant of committal,  
For this offence, oh small and lonely one,  
For this offence in whose commission  
Millions of men are in complicity  
You are committed. So do I commit you,  
Your frail body to the waiting ground,  
Your dust to the dust of the veld,-  
Fly home-bound soul to the great Judge-President  
Who unencumbered by the pressing need  
To give society protection, may pass on you  
The sentence of the indeterminate compassion.

The six Diepkloof stories are linked to the others by the story, "The Waste Land", which also deals with the subject of crime and violence, but from the perspective of the wider society rather

than the reformatory. The story is a brief but terrifying account of a man attacked by a gang of tsotsis on his way home from work. He desperately fights them off in the darkness, killing one in the process. As he hides from the rest, he discovers to his utter horror from the gang's departing conversation that the man he has killed is his own son, who had as part of the gang knowingly attacked his father. Though the father survives the assault, his entire existence is destroyed: "The world is dead", he cries in anguish. The story is, in fact, a "terrible account" of what Paton describes in Towards the Mountain (1980:164-165) as

the worst crime of all, murder for material gain, usually of some person unknown except as the possessor of desired goods. And worst of all no doubt the murder of some person well known, even a father or a mother, for these desired goods.

The "waste land" of the title, then, refers not merely to the derelict lot where the fight takes place, "full of wire and iron and the bodies of old cars" (p.81), but also, like T.S. Eliot's poem of the same name, to the horrifying corruption of moral and spiritual values at the very heart of society. Paton has used the metaphor of the waste land before, in Cry, the Beloved Country (p.188); but whereas there the restoration of the beloved land seemed possible, here the repetition of the phrase as the final words of the story seems to seal its permanence.

Despite the grimly realistic quality of some of Paton's short fiction, he is not by nature pessimistic, and by way of complete contrast, the next story in the collection, "A Drink in the Passage", is much lighter in tone and more hopeful in outlook. Based on an apparently factual incident recounted in Lewis Nkosi's Home and Exile (1968:58), it tells the story of a black sculptor, Edward Simelane, who, through an administrative error, is made the winner of a whites-only competition. The work continues to be displayed, however, and is praised in his presence by a young white man, who does not know who he is, but who invites him home for a drink in an attempt to build some bridge between black and white. In the event, however, the well-intentioned drink turns out to be more embarrassing than enjoyable, since, because of the law, it has to be taken out "in the passage" of the white man's flats. The gentle irony is heightened by the fact that the white man seems utterly unaware of the absurdity of the situation or of the black man's obvious discomfort. Nevertheless, despite the humour and social satire, the story provides an antidote to the devastatingly bleak outlook of "The Waste Land" and suggests, however tentatively, that the potential for creating a common, non-racial society exists, at least at the level of simple, ordinary people.

However, in those stories which move beyond the purely personal to the level of wider social debate, the mood darkens once more. "Debbie Go Home" and "A Life for a Life" may be regarded as companion pieces, since both deal with the dilemmas facing the so-called Coloured people of South Africa in the 1950s, though the setting is urban in the title story of the collection and rural in the other. In these pieces, then, Paton chooses to focus on a people neither black nor white (as were the main

protagonists in Cry, the Beloved Country), neither Afrikaner nor fully non-Afrikaner (as the characters in Too Late the Phalarope had been). Instead, he highlights the parlous position of a people who rapidly and increasingly found themselves becoming alienated and marginalised within their own country. Their plight serves trenchantly, therefore, to illustrate the true meaning of an apartheid society.

"Debbie Go Home" explores some of the painful decisions facing a Coloured family as the full weight of apartheid's racial laws begins to be felt. The story and its title contain an ironically punning reference to the traditional "Jim comes to Jo'burg" theme; here, however, the non-white is not being drawn to the big city, but is being forced out of it. More specifically, the title refers to the planned boycott of the Coloured debutantes' ball, a racially segregated evening held in the presence of the white Administrator of the Transvaal, to which the daughter of the de Villiers family has been invited. Her father, Jim de Villiers, is adamant that she should not attend, while her mother is equally insistent that she should be allowed to go and enlists the help of her son to persuade her husband. The son, who is, in fact, politically militant, agrees to help his mother, but remains committed to the boycott himself. What appears at first to be a rather dry and undramatic basis for a work of fiction soon develops into a riveting short story of ideas, alive to the very human problems and complexities inherent in a complicated and twisted situation.

The father's bitter opposition to his daughter's attendance arises out of his own ugly confrontation with apartheid legislation, which threatens virtually every aspect of his life:

With a law that took away my job, and a law that took away my vote, and a law that's going to take away my house, all because I've a coloured skin (p.14).

These laws - tabled as the Industrial Reconciliation Bill (job reservation for whites), the Coloured Vote Bill (the abrogation of Coloureds' right to vote), and the Group Areas Bill (forced removal of non-whites from "white" areas) - suggest through their chilling Orwellian names the horrifyingly totalitarian nature of apartheid rule, and the clear intention of the Nationalist government to intrude into the very core of individuals' lives. Despite all this, the mother insists that her daughter be given the chance to go to the ball, if only to sustain her in the difficult times ahead:

There's many a hard thing coming to her as well. I'd like her to have one night, in a nice dress and the coloured lights, dancing before the Administrator in the City Hall. We get kicks aplenty. I wanted her to have a boost (p.14).

When she turns to her son, Johnny, for assistance, it becomes evident that it is he who most sharply feels the tensions facing the new generation of Coloureds in an apartheid society. On the one hand, he agrees to help his mother because of his personal devotion to her; on the other hand, he refuses to compromise his political principles by abandoning his plans to picket the ball with placards that are wittily to the point, like "Debbie Go

Home" and the spoonerism, "Welcome, spick little lickspittle". He thus suffers from a severe rift between his personal, family life and his public, political convictions. It is Johnny, too, who reveals the change in outlook and expectations that has occurred between the generations. His father points out the difference between them:

I was brought up in a world where we always hoped for the best. But you live in a time when no false hopes are left. I was a Smuts man, don't forget (p.18).

Johnny's response is to ask contemptuously, "Who was Smuts?" (p.18), underlining the fact that the time of optimism about the liberalising of South African politics is over. In its place, Johnny expresses a dark, disturbingly nihilistic attitude:

I hope for nothing .... Nothing, nothing, nothing. I hope for nothing that I won't get my own way (p.15).

But this shift to a self-dependent, "militant" (p.15) and aggressive political stance does not go unquestioned in the story. Johnny's mother, for instance, calls to mind the question of basic human kindness and compassion which is all too often neglected and forgotten in the heat of ideological fervour:

Go your own way .... But let me teach you one thing about giving. When you give, give with your whole heart. Don't keep half of it back (p.21).

Indeed, Johnny's rigid stand is qualified by the fact that he agrees to help his father prepare "a fighting speech" for his union meeting, which will nevertheless not "blackguard the whites" (p.18). As such, the suggestion seems to be that the way forward at that time was not through violent confrontation but through the continued striving for reconciliation and by finding allies of all races against a common enemy. Any alternative based on racial exclusion and polarisation is by implication rejected: in fact, Johnny's "Unity Movement" (p.17) seems to be based on the anti-white Non-European Unity Movement which Paton (1957b:150) has elsewhere condemned as a "tragic and nihilistic movement". Ultimately, though, the story offers no formal resolution to the issues which it has raised, but rather leaves them in suspended debate, in a way reminiscent of the various medleys of voices in Cry, the Beloved Country. Such an openness of ending ought not be regarded as a weakness of the liberal text, however, but a strength, since it reveals an awareness of the complexity of the South African situation and a refusal to offer facile and reductive pseudo-solutions which do little to advance proper understanding.

If "Debbie Go Home" explores the painful dilemmas confronting an urban Coloured family living in Johannesburg in the 1950s, then "A Life for a Life" exposes the powerlessness and suffering of a Coloured family in the rural areas of South Africa during that period. The story, in fact, looks both backwards and forwards in time: backwards to the primitive doctrine of baasskap, or white supremacy, which had preceded the relatively more subtle policy of apartheid, but which persisted in many rural regions; and forwards to the emerging police state system of detention without trial, brutal interrogation methods, torture and even "accidental" deaths. Paton himself was to protest tirelessly against these atrocities, in, for example, articles such as "The

Abuse of Power" (1963), "The Ninety Days" (1964d) and "Defence and Aid" (1965c), and poems like "Death of a Priest" (Songs of Africa p.91) which arose out of the dubious circumstances surrounding the death in prison of the Muslim leader, the Imam Haron, in 1969. The poem ends with a stinging rebuke of the authorities:

Most Honourable do not bestir yourself  
The man is dead  
He fell down the stairs and died  
And all his wounds can be explained  
Except the holes in his hands and feet  
And the long deep thrust in his side.

"A Life for a Life" deals with the death while under police interrogation of Enoch Maarman, head shepherd at the farm, Kroon, in the Karoo. In the story, Maarman is depicted as a kind and loving Christian man

who had never hurt another in his long gentle life, a man who like the great Christ was a lover of sheep and of little children, and who had been a good husband and father ..." (p.52).

Nevertheless, he had offended the master of Kroon, Big Baas Flip, by sending his son away to "the white university" (p.47) and not teaching him to "know forever [his] station" (p.51) as a humble shepherd. In a sense, then, Maarman's name literally suggests a "but man", one who does not blindly conform and obey, but is capable of independent thought. In retaliation for this impudence, Big Baas Flip had barred Maarman's son from the farm for all time, and so it was believed that Maarman hated him. When Flip is found murdered one day, and his safe missing, Maarman is immediately suspected, though it is highly improbable that he is responsible. Nonetheless, the crude vengeance of baasskap demands "a life for a life":

Someone must pay for so terrible a crime, and if not the one who did it, then who better than the one who could not grieve? (p.44).

What follows is a harrowing anticipation of the future tactics of the security police in South Africa. Maarman is viciously interrogated in his own home by the "mad detective", Robbertse, whom even his colleagues fear and distrust. Later that day, Robbertse and the other policemen return and take Maarman out into the growing darkness, ostensibly to have him help them look for the safe. His wife, Sara, waits in vain for his return, and is finally informed much later by her brother that he is dead and already buried. When she tries to find out what happened to him, and to have him reburied closer to their home, she confronts, as Edward Callan (1982:72) has pointed out, a Kafkaesque world of malign and absurd official police bureaucracy. Each policeman she questions in turn sends her to another who cannot or will not answer her queries. Paton himself (1966:7) has provided an analysis of Kafka's The Trial, which seems apposite to this story:

Kafka's story The Trial gives a frightening picture of the insignificance of man when he is confronted with the power of a cruel State. A man believing himself to be innocent is

visited by the security police, taken to court, tried by a judge who thunders at him, all this in such an atmosphere of fantasy and inexplicability that one realizes that one needs much more than innocence to save one from malignant authority.

Sara is bound to be defeated because the authorities hold all the cards: if she consults a lawyer, the police will simply find some reason to revoke her brother's butchery licence so that there will be no money for her son's university education. The final wound is inflicted when she is callously informed that the new shepherd will be taking over her house and that she has to move out within three days. Ironically, she finds consolation in this since, as she thinks to herself,

three days is three days too many, to go on living in this land of stone, three days before she could leave it all for the Cape, where her son lived, where people lived, so he told her, softer and sweeter lives (p.57).

This story, then, and indeed many of the stories in this collection, provide a sombre enough outlook as they, like Paton's novels, lay bare the painful reality of a deeply and cruelly unjust society. In fact, in 1961, the year in which Debbie Go Home was published, the prospects for the creation of a freer and more equitable society in South Africa seemed worse than ever before. The absurdity of the Treason Trial was followed by the horror of Sharpeville, the banning of the liberation movements, and the beginning of the massive security clampdown which was to continue throughout the decade. In the face of such savage oppression, it became increasingly necessary, though increasingly difficult, for liberals like Paton to sustain the crucial ideals of a non-racial, common society brought about through peaceful, non-violent means. Though much of Paton's energy in keeping this hope alive went into the running of the beleaguered Liberal Party, he succeeded nevertheless in producing some fine literary work, which reflected the harsh complexities of this dark period in South African history.

(iii)

A minor though not insignificant part of Alan Paton's literary output during the late 1950s and early 1960s involved dramatic work. Both Paton's novels had been dramatised in various forms. Cry, the beloved Country had been made into a Broadway musical, Lost in the Stars, in 1949, by Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill; it had been filmed by Zoltan Korda in 1951; and had been adapted as a verse drama by Felicia Komai in 1954. (More recently, it has been made into a new film by Darryl Roodt in 1995.) Too Late the Phalarope, meanwhile, had been dramatised for the Broadway stage by Robert Yale Libott in 1956. Apart from these works, Paton also produced some new original plays, which, although not enjoying the same success as his fiction, nonetheless serve as valuable barometers of the political climate of their time.

The first of these plays was Last Journey, which deals with the endeavour of Dr Livingstone's two assistants, Susi and Chuma, to

transport his body across the African interior to the coast, and thence to England, to be buried in Westminster Abbey. Although the play is unpublished, its purport may be gleaned from Paton's "Author's Note" (1959b) to the programme of its first production in Lusaka in 1959. Paton's purpose in treating this strange and compelling story was once more to affirm the primacy of human compassion and devotion over notions of race and cultural background, and to explore from a new perspective the theme of restoration. In this play, the assistants' efforts to return Livingstone's body to his home country at first go ironically unrecognised and unrewarded, until at last reparation is made, and the extent of their courage and perseverance is acknowledged. Despite the dramatic potential of the play, its initial productions were evidently marred, however, by the alienating nature of its idiom and dramaturgical texture when performed outside South Africa (Fosbrooke 1959:98).

Similar problems attended the overseas productions of Sponono, which, after fairly successful runs in Durban and Johannesburg in 1962 and 1963, met with little favourable reaction when it transferred to New York in 1964. Though its failure has been blamed on the insensitivity of Broadway audiences (see Callan 1982:65), it must be borne in mind that another liberal South African playwright, Athol Fugard, was enjoying tremendous success there at the time with his first major play, The Blood Knot. Once more, the dramatic potential of Paton's play seems well established, since it is based on a combination of three of the short stories in Debbie Go Home: "Sponono", "Ha'penny" and "Death of a Tsotsi". Part of the problem may lie in the rather challenging and inaccessible dramatic techniques which the play employs, such as the impressionistic third and final act, which were possibly introduced by Paton's collaborator, Krishna Shah. At any rate, the play did enjoy a quite successful run when it was revived in Hull House, Chicago, though, as Callan (1982:65) notes, this may have had something to do with the fact that the audiences there were more integrated and conscious of colour issues, and therefore perhaps more in tune with Paton's themes, than those in New York.

However, perhaps the most interesting of Paton's dramatic work for an examination of liberal contextual concerns, was the musical, Mkhumbane, composed by Todd Matshikiza, for which Paton supplied the libretto. Although the song lyrics appear in Paton's Songs of Africa (pp.100-116), the text is unpublished and the score unavailable so it is difficult to judge the overall quality of the work. In general terms, the musical deals with a black South African village, Mkhumbane (actually Cato Manor), which Paton describes in a personal letter (in Alexander 1994:315) as "squalid" and "poor" but "full of life". The drama explores the attempts of the ordinary individuals who inhabit the village to make a decent life for themselves in this inauspicious environment. The real interest of the play, however, lies in the fact that it had its première, coincidentally, in the same week as the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960. Thus, while mass protest marches virtually took over the city centres of Durban and Cape Town, and while the dread of a full-scale race war

occupied the mind of the country, this musical played to capacity mixed audiences in Durban. In a letter to Edward Callan (in Callan 1982:76), Paton remembers that

during this momentous week, we played to full houses, people of all kinds and races, in Durban City Hall. It was indeed a moving experience to go into that hall and see the absence of all fear and hate.

Beyond any questions of intrinsic merit, therefore, the play underlined the importance of art in establishing common ground between people and in forming the basis for a united vision of society. Indeed, it might well be said that such a purpose has been a consistently characteristic feature of all Paton's art, whether fictional or dramatic.

(iv)

Although Paton's dramatic work is of value and interest for several reasons, it does not approach his fiction as his most notable achievement, in terms either of artistic skill or of social analysis and human insight. Paton's mastery of the short story form, already demonstrated in Debbie Go Home, is further evident in many of the previously uncollected stories which Colin Gardner gathered together in Knocking on the Door in 1975.

Several of the characteristic themes of his short fiction are explored in some of the earliest of these stories. In "Bulstrode's Daughter", for example, Paton exposes the fervent intensity of racial prejudice in the story of a man who insists on the colour bar even on board a non-racial ship and even between innocent young girls. In "The Gift", he relives a moment of shame from his childhood (told also in Towards the Mountain 1980:22-24) when he succumbed to the pressure of his peers and refused to claim ownership of a lunch basket from his mother brought to him by a puzzled young black servant. And in "Piet van der Merwe Goes to Heaven", he lampoons the total apartheid mentality of the Afrikaner by considering the hypothetical situation of a bigot who, finding himself in heaven, still insists on a racially segregated existence even at the expense of becoming one of God's "beloved".

But it is in his later stories, particularly those written in the 1960s, that Paton reveals an ability to respond in new and imaginative ways to the rapidly darkening social and political situation in South Africa. The 1960s, as has already been noted, was a decade of massive oppression on the part of the State, and of a polarisation and radicalisation of political thought generally. The period thus witnessed an unprecedented threat to liberalism, both through the government's flagrant disregard for human rights and civil liberties, and through the liberation movements' acceptance, under the influence of revolutionary socialist doctrine, of violence as a legitimate means of political struggle. In the face of this erosion of liberal tendencies, Paton in these stories courageously and resolutely confronts criticism from both the Right and the Left, and argues cogently for the continuing validity and relevance of liberal

principles and ideals.

In two of these stories, "Sunlight in Trebizond Street" and "The Perfidy of Maatland", Paton focuses his protest on the State's ever increasing totalitarian tendencies and violations of basic civil liberties. "Sunlight in Trebizond Street" recalls "A Life for a Life" in its bitter denunciation of police brutality. The difference is that here the story is not intended in part as a prediction of future atrocities, but is a chillingly realistic account of the actual current abrogation of "the rule of law" (p.187) through the system of detention without trial. Moreover, the fact that here the method of torture preferred by the security police is psychological rather than physical only adds to the sense of horror. The story is narrated in the first person by an old doctor who has been detained for his involvement with an underground movement known as the People's League. Though he does not crack under interrogation and the pressure of extended solitary confinement, his comrades, including his boss, are eventually caught. This occurs, at least in part, because the police discover and question the doctor's secret lover, to whom the doctor has revealed certain information, and who, not being a trained revolutionary, is easily persuaded to talk. Despite his efforts, then, the doctor has become known as a traitor, since the members of the League were forbidden to have any outside friendships. Moreover, as a final way of ensuring that the doctor is truly "broken" (p.190), the police tell his detained comrades that the doctor had brought them in. Having thus effected the doctor's destruction, the police set him free, though of course there can no longer be any real freedom for him, as he knows only too well:

Outside in the crowded street the sun is shining. The sunlight falls on the sooty trees in Trebizond Street, and the black leaves dance in the breeze. The city is full of noise and life, and laughter too, as though no one cared what might go on behind those barricaded walls. There is an illusion of freedom in the air (p.193).

The carefully selected details of this story ensure that it moves beyond a surface description of police detention to a consideration of the wider issues involved in such brutal State action. In particular, it exposes the way in which the "private self" (p.188) and private life of the individual have been invaded by the State on the pretext of maintaining the safety of the society at large. Such State action runs completely counter to the fundamental liberal value of individual freedom, especially when the State itself is not representative of the whole social community. As such, the story affirms that until individual rights under the rule of law are properly established in South Africa, there can be no real security or justice, and so freedom will indeed remain illusory.

"The Perfidy of Maatland" continues with this exploration of the increasingly totalitarian nature of the South African State in the 1960s by revealing how the tentacles of the State's security mechanism reached deep into the country's education system to undermine any notion of genuine academic freedom. The story deals

with the problems facing Professor Maasdorp, who has left his comfortable position at the exclusive white Afrikaans university of Maatland (Stellenbosch?), to take up an appointment as Principal of Mount Jerboa, a poor and troubled homeland university. Maasdorp is revealed in the story as an enlightened, well-intentioned and independent thinker, but his rather naive opening address to the students, in which he promises full vernacular education within ten years, antagonises the students, who reject the iniquitous homeland system and want an internationally recognised English-medium education. As a result, they paint protesting slogans above his office. When Maasdorp calls a disciplinary meeting of what he believes are the student leaders, he begins to glimpse the extent of the whole ugly situation. There is no Students' Representative Council, because all those students who have stood up for what they believed in, who "learned and spoke the truth" (p.220), have been summarily expelled. Maasdorp realises that his Vice-Principal and Disciplinary Officer, Van Riet, is in the service of the security police, especially the hated Captain Smith, a ruthless destroyer of "all enemies of authority" (p.223). Moreover, there is no one Maasdorp can turn to for assistance, for the Chairman of the University Council, Van Onselen, and, indeed, the Minister of Education himself, are themselves fully part of this same malign authority.

Maasdorp thus finds himself in an impossible situation. If he opposes the will of the students, he will be seen as an agent of the State, and will never gain their trust, respect or co-operation. On the other hand, if he opposes the will of the State, he will be dismissed. He understands, then, how his predecessor, Martens, came to be "broken" (p.223) in this clash of opposing forces. After much deliberation, he makes his decision. Earlier, he had told the students:

This university will be administered by me, and not by any external authority. But I shall not allow insubordination (p.222).

Now, he resolves to stand up to the State and its security apparatus by calling an emergency council where he would "tell them that he would never consent to any diminution of his authority" (p.225). Predictably, Maasdorp is dismissed, and the story ends with the Minister briefing the new Principal, who, it turns out, fully supports the oppressive status quo and is quite willing to take the necessary "firm action" (p.226) to quell any student protest. Though the story paints an extremely disturbing picture of the vast power which the State possessed, there is one slight note of hope: Maatland, to the Minister's intense annoyance, has taken Maasdorp back, thus supporting, by implication, his stand at Mount Jerboa. The title of the story is ironic, therefore, in that the supposed "perfidy of Maatland" is, in fact, a rejection of the Afrikaner-dominated government's abuse of power. The suggestion is that, even within Afrikanerdom, there are those who refuse to sacrifice such principles as freedom of thought and expression for the "security" of the State.

As a whole, the story explores the position in which many

liberal-minded people in contemporary South Africa have found themselves, standing up to the reactionary forces of apartheid on the Right, while refusing to condone the often violent and destructive methods of resistance of the Left. Paton's point is that such liberal-mindedness is by no means irrelevant or ineffectual, but has been vital in keeping alive the practical ideal of eventual reconciliation through such peaceful means as rational debate and negotiation.

This examination of one of the central dilemmas of liberalism over the apartheid period is extended and amplified in what is possibly one of Paton's most important literary expressions of contemporary liberal philosophy, "The Hero of Currie Road". In this short story, Paton turns his attention not only to the illiberal attitudes and practices of the apartheid Right, but also to those of the anti-apartheid Left. In so doing, he shows the courage to defend the principles and ideals of liberalism against its enemies, no matter what the background of these enemies may be. Indeed, in the 1960s a number of members of the so-called African liberation movements (as if this appellation could not equally apply to the Liberal Party) began to criticise liberalism in harsh if rather crude terms. Ezekiel Mphahlele, for example, in The African Image (1962:50-51), asserts that the terms "moderate" and "liberal" are

bad words in a situation of conflict. In any situation that requires nothing less than militancy to redress wrongs done to any section of a people.

He goes on to claim, moreover, that one has in effect to be white to be a liberal in South Africa, since it is the nature of liberalism to patronise "dumb Africans" by perpetuating the status quo through obedience to the law of the land. It is this sort of argument, which was becoming current at the time, especially amongst radical social commentators, that Paton addresses in "The Hero of Currie Road".

The "hero" of the title is Mr Thomson, "a gentle little man" (p.167), who is well known around the Currie Road area of Durban for his twice-daily walks, his love of trees, and his rather eccentric habit of wearing an overcoat at all times. He is also a member of the All-Races Party (a thinly veiled representation of the Liberal Party), which "believed in equal opportunity for all people" (p.167), and he is a prolific writer of letters to the morning and evening papers under various noms-de-plume, in which he argues the liberal cause against both right- and left-wing critics. As such, he is disliked both by those who "thought he was plotting a revolution" and by those who "thought he would be useless at it anyway" (p.167). Mr Thomson achieves unexpected fame one day when he manages somehow to repulse an armed African robber who has attacked his wife and him in their home. His fame accrues, however, not simply because of his courage, but because the incident in no way shakes his faith in the All-Races Party:

'Morally reprehensible but politically irrelevant', was his summing up of the incident (p.168).

As a result of this fame, he is invited to address the Annual Meeting of the South African Congress, a more militant

organisation than the All-Races Party, which included many members who had been named by the government as Communists. Undeterred, Mr Thomson gives a speech which turns out to be ridiculed by several of the younger delegates, who reject his argument (based closely on Paton's own views as a reformatory Principal) that personal relationships in childhood - which are unrelated to social conditions - are an important cause of crime. These young delegates instead applaud the response to Mr Thomson given by Mr Phumula who expresses the classic Marxist argument, rather lampooned by Paton, that all crime

was caused directly by capitalism, laissez-faire, exploitation of the worker, and the war in Korea (p.169). When Phumula proceeds to defend the Mau-Mau killings of white people in Kenya as the "natural acts of zealots who were determined to free their country" (p.170) from capitalism and so on, Mr Thomson can contain himself no longer, and, taking the floor again, stresses, before he is shouted down, that I, and the Party I have the honour to belong to, utterly condemn murder and violence, whether it be committed by Mau-Mau in Kenya, or the British in ... (p.170).

Mr Thomson leaves the hall in a state of despondency, feeling that his "vision of harmony and peace" between the various races in South Africa is "a futility" (p.171) and that perhaps the apartheid policies of the government have some merit after all. His depression deepens even more when the newspaper headlines report his being booed at the Congress, and he returns home to his wife quite inconsolable. However, his despondency proves to be temporary. He is restored by a visit from Mr Chetty, the Indian fruiterer, who reminds him that the godly values of brotherly love, compassion and peace will ultimately prevail, not just against the injustices of apartheid, but also against the extremist ideas of the "few hotheads" (p.173) at the Congress. With his belief that the pen is mightier than the sword refreshed, he once more launches himself into a series of vigorous letters to the newspapers, combatting all "that misguided company" (p.174) who do not share his views.

The story ends, therefore, on a fairly light note, but the issues which it has raised remain deeply serious ones. As John Conyngham (1992) has pointed out in a recent article, the story "has the quality of a fable", in which the central values of the liberal point of view are extolled. These values, as Conyngham rightly notes, were pithily summarised by Paton in a public lecture at Yale University in the early 1970s (see Paton 1988:294; also 1979:7-8) and they may serve as a fitting encapsulation of the main concerns of this short story in particular, as well as of his short fiction in general. Indeed, they provide as good a brief definition of liberalism as one is likely to get:

By liberalism I do not mean the creed of any party or of any country. I mean a generosity of spirit, a tolerance of others, an attempt to comprehend otherness, a love of liberty and therefore a commitment to the Rule of Law, a repugnance for authoritarianism, and a high ideal of the worth and dignity of man.

Paton's short fiction, despite its relative critical neglect, is a formidable achievement. The short story form enabled him to explore in close focus and intimate detail the hopes and fears, the suffering and courage, of ordinary individual human beings caught up in a system of cruelty and injustice. At the same time, stories such as "The Perfidy of Maatland" and "The Hero of Currie Road", for instance, do not shy away from raising and exploring issues of a wider social significance. It is, in fact, just this concern with the social and political history of his time that encouraged Paton, though in his late seventies, to attempt a fictional history of the Liberal Party. That novel, Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful, is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

## Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful

(i)

A central purpose of Alan Paton's fiction, both his full-length novels and his short stories, was to explore and express the ideas and principles of liberalism. This same purpose may be seen to obtain also in his non-fiction writing, including his biographical and autobiographical work, as well as his numerous books and articles on South African politics and political history. With Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful, Paton seemed to want to create a synthesis of fiction and non-fiction in order to give as whole a picture as possible of some of the most crucial years in South African history. This book was meant as the first in a proposed trilogy which would cover the years from the beginning of apartheid in 1948 to the time of the Soweto riots in 1976, that year after which "nothing would be the same again" (Paton 1980:293). Paton was unable to complete the trilogy, however, and Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful, its only part, concentrates on the years from 1952 to 1958, when Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of "separate development", took office. The book thus covers the period when apartheid was being fully implemented, and when various organisations committed themselves fully to its opposition, including, of course, Paton's Liberal Party. The subject matter of the book may further be regarded, therefore, as following on more or less chronologically from Paton's first two novels, and revisiting, though in rather different form, some of the concerns explored in his short fiction.

Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful is compelling for a variety of reasons, not least of all for some extraordinary insights which it provides into the era that is covered, both on a wide socio-political scale and at the level of the individual. Its merits as a strictly artistic achievement, however, are perhaps rather less impressive. While several critics have praised aspects of the book, none has defended it as a whole. Geoffrey Hutchings (1992:197), for example, believes the book is unsuccessful in that Paton is unable to liberate the characters from the "message" that is being propounded. Stephen Watson (1982:43), moreover, accurately sums up the book's intended format as "a mosaic of cameos and representative South African voices meant to convey the patterns of conflict in 1952-1958", but then suggests that the admixture of fiction and historical fact do not work well together:

Whilst the fictional portions of the book seem to trivialise the historical, the historical merely serves to empty out the imaginative substance of the fictional - with the result that the novel fails both as fiction and as social document.

Watson's judgement here is echoed by Martin Rubin (1982:152-156), who contends that the book falls between the two stools of fictive art and history, and hopes that Paton will continue to concentrate instead on straightforward autobiography. While such criticism is, perhaps, too harsh, it is clear that Ah, But Your

Land Is Beautiful cannot easily be compared to Paton's first two great novels, both of which are, in their different ways, highly crafted fictional constructions which have vividly clarified the fears and hopes of individuals in South Africa's uniquely complex social and political milieu. In Ah But Your Land Is Beautiful, for instance, there is none of the thematic density and pathos of Cry, the Beloved Country, none of the narratorial coherence and psychological insight of Too Late the Phalarope. In terms of such traditional concepts of fictional achievement, therefore, the calibre of Paton's third novel cannot be regarded as particularly high. This is not to say, however, that the book is a complete failure, or that there is not a good deal to recommend it. In particular, its specific strength lies in the unusually multifaceted understanding which it affords of South African liberalism at the time with which it deals. It is on this aspect of the book that this discussion will primarily focus, then, rather on the task of delineating in what ways the book does not match the quality of its illustrious predecessors.

Ah, But Your land Is Beautiful, then, is not a conventional novel with an imaginative plot sequence and fully rounded main characters. Instead, it comprises five sections which proceed in a generally chronological way, but in which the focus continually shifts from the particular dilemmas of individual persons to synoptic descriptions of the political protest campaigns at that time in reaction to the imposition of apartheid. As such, the "characters" include some purely imaginative people such as Prem Bodasingh, the young Indian Defiance Campaigner who joins the Liberal Party; and Gabriel van Onselen, a bureaucrat in the Department of Justice, who, in a series of letters to his aunt, reveals the aims and intentions of the apartheid ideologues. In contrast, the book also depicts some actual historical figures, including Patrick Duncan, Donald Molteno, Geoffrey Clayton, Albert Lutuli (preferred spelling: see Paton 1988:191) and Monty Naicker, as Paton acknowledges in his foreword. Moreover, there are many characters who may be identified as thinly disguised versions of actual people: for example, Robert Mansfield seems to be a partial portrait of the author; Philip Drummond is based on Peter Brown, chairman of the Liberal Party; Emmanuel Nene derives from Elliot Mngadi, Organiser of the Natal African Landowners Association; the nameless Minister of Justice is clearly founded upon Blackie Swart; and, hovering ominously in the background, is Dr Hendrik, who obviously represents Verwoerd himself. But perhaps most significantly, as Tony Morphet (1983:9) points out, "the collective hero" of the book is in actuality the Liberal Party as a whole, and so it is appropriate that the book be approached with the intention of understanding how Paton viewed the nature, role and potential influence of the South African Liberal Party at that time. Thus, rather than attempting the arduous and probably unrewarding task of attempting to deal with all the events and persons which the book depicts or refers to, this study will provide a broad overview of how the period in general is presented, and will then selectively discuss those issues most closely related to the concerns of liberalism in particular.

(ii)

Part One of the novel, as its title states, deals with the Defiance Campaign, launched in 1952, initially by the Indian and African Congresses, in response to the continuing implementation of the racist policies of the Nationalist Party. Though Paton places the campaign within its wider historical context and is concerned with its socio-political effects, he is at pains to relate it to the sphere of individual lives. This individual focus, which is a characteristic of all his fiction, is crucial to the liberal perspective, which maintains the essential primacy of the individual against the claims of any collective need or cause. Paton opens his novel, then, with the story of Prem Bodasingh, a talented young Indian girl who contributes to the campaign by defying the law that forbids her from using the "Whites Only" library for her studies (p.13f). Through this technique, Paton not only translates a political abstraction into human terms, but he is also able to highlight the specific consequences of apartheid on individual lives. This latter point is made horrifyingly manifest later in the novel when Prem, having joined the Liberal Party, is shot in the face through a window of Robert Mansfield's house by an unknown gunman. This episode is, in fact, based on an actual incident in which shots were fired through the window of Paton's own house, though no one was hurt (see Paton 1988). Incidents such as these give rise to the title of the book and its ironic unstated implications. "Ah, but your land is beautiful" say the overseas visitors as they look at the South African natural landscape; but what is frequently implied is that the social and political landscape is far from beautiful (pp.35-36), and that it never will be until the ruling whites finally answer the "knocking on the door" of people like Chief Albert Lutuli (pp.32-33) and his followers.

This opening section thus raises a number of acute dilemmas which have faced those in South Africa committed to change. The first of these is the question of how much people may be asked to sacrifice and suffer for a cause. In this case, the Defiance Campaign is called off when the government drastically increases the penalties for participation:

Parliament has passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which now makes it a serious offence to break any law however trivial, if it is broken by way of protest. For this offence a person may be fined three hundred pounds or go to jail for three years or receive ten lashes or any two of these. It is even more serious to incite any person to break any law by way of protest. For this a person may be fined five hundred pounds or go to jail for five years or receive ten lashes, or any two of these (p.39).

The second dilemma involves the question of what means may legitimately be used to oppose the government. Previously, liberals in South Africa had believed that only constitutional means had legitimacy, but now, faced with a system of government that seemed bent on violating every acceptable liberal constitutional principle, many liberals began to feel that other methods were not merely legitimate, but necessary. The issue is highlighted by the actions of Patrick Duncan, son of a famous

former Governor-General, who joined with the Defiance Campaigners at Germiston location, where he announced:

Today South African people of all kinds have come among you. They have come with love for you and with peace. We have not come to make trouble. I ask you on the long road that lies ahead not to make trouble but to do what you have to do with love (p.38).

The problem which Duncan's words raise is whether it is possible to do what has to be done to oppose and ultimately defeat an evil political system without "making trouble" of some kind. And if this is not possible, then it is necessary to ask how much trouble and what sort of trouble is acceptable. It was this question in particular which exercised leading liberal minds of the day. As a first step towards addressing this question, many liberals who had stayed with the United Party in the hope of defeating the Nationalist Party in the 1953 election, now decided in the light of the Nationalists' increased majority in that election to launch their own party, to be known as the Liberal Party.

Part Two, entitled "The Cleft Stick", focuses on the problems encountered by those liberals who wished to join the newly formed Liberal Party, and thus serves to illustrate the kind of difficulty faced by the Party in the South African situation of that time. In particular, this section highlights the classic scenario of liberals finding themselves occupying the middle ground between two opposing nationalistic forces, the right-wing Afrikaner nationalists on the one hand, and the increasingly polarised left-wing African nationalists on the other. Such a position means that liberals have been opposed on two flanks, and have had to defend their beliefs and ideals from two different adversaries. Paton explores this problem through a number of characters from different backgrounds who find their decision to join the Liberal Party under attack from both sides. These characters include Prem Bodasingh, Robert Mansfield, and perhaps most acutely, a black headmaster, Wilberforce Nhlapo, who is condemned and even threatened both by his conservative education department superiors and by the radical black teachers and pupils at his school. The hostility of the reaction - from both sides - to the launching of the Liberal Party is summed up tersely:

The Liberal Party has had a contemptuous reception from the ruling National Party. Indeed some Nationalists are implacably hostile, and want it made a criminal offence to oppose the policies of separate coexistence. They regard the establishment of a nonracial party as a flagrant defiance of the powers-that-be. Most other white South Africans are hostile also, because, while they reject certain forms of racial discrimination, they really cannot approve of cooperating with other races to fight it. The African Congress, and still more the Indian Congress, accuse the new party of undermining the Congress front. Most hostile of all is the white Congress, which is strongly Marxist, and regards concern about civil rights as almost irrelevant in a war situation. Their hostility is understandable, because the Liberal Party has expressed its condemnation of all forms of totalitarianism, including

communism and fascism (p.68).

The particularly vicious reaction of the Afrikaner nationalists towards the Liberal Party is given at least a partial explanation through an explication of the Afrikaners' understanding of the underlying meaning of "liberalism":

It is hard to describe the detestation in which the words liberal, liberalism, and liberalist are held .... Liberalism denotes moral looseness and degeneracy. White liberals are people who will hop into bed with blacks at the drop of a hat. Language, culture, pride, the sense of personal identity, mean nothing to them .... Furthermore, the Liberal Party has no Christian foundation. It does not open its congresses with prayer, nor does its constitution acknowledge the sovereignty of Almighty God. It has no firm faith or belief, and welcomes Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, agnostics and atheists into its ranks. Its very formlessness and shapelessness and degeneracy are in total contrast to the discipline and order of the National Party (pp.79-80).

This intense hostility is then given specific expression through the comments of Gabriel van Onselen; the obscenely racist letters of the "Proud White Christian Woman" directed at Robert Mansfield (for example, pp.84-85); and the death threats issued against Mansfield by "The Preservation of White South Africa League" (for example, pp.85-86), which eventually turns out to consist of a single neo-Nazi from "New Germany", Heinrich Rohrs, who ultimately blows himself up accidentally with a home-made bomb in a telling image of self-destructiveness.

This section is also concerned to expose the hostility of the left-wing, however. Such hostility is given focus through the issue of the Natal African Landowners Association, formed to protest the removal of the traditional "blackspots" by the government. The efforts of the N.A.L.A., and particularly its Organiser, Emmanuel Nene, are viewed with suspicion and contempt by the African Congress, especially because the Liberal Party membership of the N.A.L.A. undermines the African nationalist ethos of the Congress. Indeed, the burgeoning black support for the Liberal Party throughout its existence (see Irvine 1987:119) stood in direct refutation of those African nationalists like Ezekiel Mphahlele (1962:50-51) who claimed that

to be a liberal you have to be white. Which is why liberals in South Africa, both as an informal group and later as a political party ... looked ridiculous when they canvassed African support and membership. A black liberal is a chimera.

As is made clear in Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful, the Liberal Party represented the proof that the liberal ideal, particularly in South Africa, was one which could utterly transcend the narrow barriers of race and culture, and which, by its very nature, appealed to people from every kind of background in the country.

Despite the potentially universal appeal of liberal ideals, however, Paton is punctilious in discussing the practical

tensions facing those who wished to implement these ideals in the South African context. Such tensions are dealt with squarely in Part Three, whose title, "Come Back, Africa", is a translation of the traditional liberation cry, "Mayibuye Afrika". For example, while there was general agreement within the Liberal Party on the overall aim of establishing democratic government in South Africa, there was often heated debate about how best to achieve that objective. In particular, the debate swung between the party's right-wing liberals, led by Donald Molteno, who wanted to attract moderate and conservative white voters so that it could contest a (white) election competitively, and the party's left-wing liberals, or "evangelicals", headed by Patrick Duncan, who wished to forge closer contact with extra-parliamentary groups in order to undermine the Nationalist Party from outside whites-only politics (see pp.105-106; pp.225-226). Paton does not make light of this perennial debate or pretend that the Liberal Party ever fully solved it, but he does observe that through the diplomatic leadership of those like Philip Drummond (Peter Brown) the debate was contained and party unity salvaged, and, furthermore, that the essential liberal ideals of the party remained intact.

A further source of tension within the party concerned the Congress of the People in 1955, and the subsequent drawing up of the Freedom Charter. The Liberal Party, after much debate, eventually chose not to participate in the Congress, largely because it perceived the Congress to be masterminded by the communist Congress of Democrats, as indeed appears to have been the case (see Sampson 1958; Ngubane 1963). Nevertheless, in retrospect, the decision seems to have been the wrong one; and Paton makes this apparent through a fascinating (imaginative?) discussion between Robert Mansfield and Lutuli (pp.129-132). In particular, as Paton (1988:143) elsewhere points out, given the "legendary" status of the Freedom Charter, the Liberals' refusal to participate meant that they effectively removed themselves from a fundamental expression of the aspirations of the South African people at large. It could also be argued, perhaps, as Lutuli does (p.131), that they lost the opportunity to reject or at least qualify some of the strident socialist economic clauses of the Charter. In any event, it seems, as Janet Robertson (1971:172-175) notes, that the Liberals' concerns with the specifics of the Charter (for example, its vagueness and impracticability; the incompatibility between a Bill of Rights and a centralised economy) blinded them to the general symbolic value of the document, and the status that it would attain.

This is not to say, however, that Paton suggests that the Liberal Party should simply have accepted the socialist elements in the Charter in particular, or have compromised on its opposition to communism in general. The central criticisms of communism in the book are given added weight by being voiced by Edward Roos (a character based on the actual Eddie Roux), who defected from the South African Communist Party to join the Liberal Party (pp.124-126). Chief among these criticisms are the fact that communist theory, such as the notion of the inevitable withering away of the State, has not proved accurate in practice; that the

communists seem prepared to employ any means to attain their aims, even if this means the elimination of their enemies, as demonstrated on a grand scale in Stalinist Russia, and supported by the likes of Eve Briscoe and "Max" (Vernon Berrange - see Paton 1988:105); and that communists, in stark contrast to liberals, reject the primacy of individual freedom in favour of the primacy of the party itself. As Roos points out,

[the communists] regard the sanctity of home and family, the rule of law, the freedom of the press, the speaking of the truth, as bourgeois values that liberals have exalted to the rank of absolutes, whereas the only true absolute is the party .... If the white Congress ever came to power it would not hesitate to abrogate the rule of law, and to make the press an instrument of the party (p.125).

It is instructive to note that Paton's opposition to communism remained unshaken right to the end of his life. Writing in Journey Continued (1988:68), his last volume of autobiography completed shortly before his death, Paton expresses sentiments similar both to those of Roos above and to his own many years earlier (see, for example, "Liberalism and Communism", 1964c:2):

Between communists and liberals - even if they cooperated on certain well-defined projects - there is a fundamental incompatibility .... A liberal cannot accept that the use of any means is justifiable if the end is good; a communist can. A liberal shrinks from the idea of a centrally controlled society; a communist does not. The liberal belief in the separation of powers is not acceptable to communists. A liberal believes that a centrally controlled economy kills private initiative and drive, and leads to a drab and dreary existence. A liberal believes in the rule of law, the communist believes in the rule of the party. The communist believes that the party should control almost every human activity, including literature, music, art, religion - the list is endless.

Importantly, it is necessary to see that Paton's rejection of communism does not derive from blind irrational fear, but is based on a clear understanding of the irreconcilable differences between communism and liberalism. By contrast, the anti-communism of the Afrikaner nationalists seemed more often than not to be founded on xenophobia and expedience, so much so that liberals like Paton were ironically conflated with the very communists they themselves so deliberately rejected. As the nameless "Minister" of Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful asserts:

Communists masquerading as liberals and defenders of freedom must be rooted out. Liberals would be closely watched. They were the ones who led you into ambush so that the communists could kill you. There was no difference between liberals and communists except in the names they gave themselves (p.173).

As the book recounts, it is this sort of ruthless expediency on the part of the government which led to the ludicrous Treason Trial of the later 1950s, as well as to the following of the disastrous utopian vision of Dr Hendrik (Verwoerd), who, as Gabriel van Onselen notes with pride, predicted that the final victory of separate development would be won by 1976 (p.139) -

ironically the year which affirmed the inevitable demise of apartheid rule.

Part Four of the book expands upon this idea of the intrinsic impossibility of total apartheid by focusing upon an issue already explored in Too Late the Phalarope, the Immorality Act of 1927. This Act had been amended and considerably tightened by the Nationalists in 1950 as a way of ensuring the complete separation of the races and the elimination of all racial mixing. The issue is given an ironic twist in this section of the book, however, as its title, "Death of a Traitor", suggests: the law is transgressed by Dr Jan Woltemade Fischer, himself the most heartless and relentless proselyte of apartheid of the time. In the light of this, and under the liberal influence of both Fischer's mother and his own aunt, Gabriel van Onselen begins to show signs of doubting the efficacy of the apartheid vision and of becoming more moderate in his views. Nevertheless, like that of many of his compatriots, his faith in the ability of the likely next Prime Minister, Dr Hendrik, to save the Afrikaner people remains undimmed.

Part of the capacity of ideologues like Dr Hendrik (Verwoerd) to maintain the support of their followers lies in their ability to provide an ethical and religious foundation for apartheid. For Paton, who remained a staunch Christian all his life, this Nationalist exploitation and distortion of the Christian message for political purposes constituted a fundamentally important theme, and it is not surprising that he gives it close attention in this book. The specific issue on which he focuses is the Bill which prohibited racial mixing in the churches:

Now Dr Hendrik is absolutely determined to stop the abuses of mixed worship. He has submitted a Native Laws Amendment Bill to Parliament, and one of the clauses, 29(c), provides that no church in a white area will be able to admit Africans to worship without the permission of the Minister of Native Affairs, given with the concurrence of the local authority. This will apply not only to worship but to any meeting held on Church premises. It will apply also to schools, hospitals, and clubs in all areas zoned for white occupation under the Group Areas Act (p.159).

The casuistical reasoning behind such a measure is given through the words of one Dr P.J. Meyer, representative of any number of theologian "prophets" of apartheid:

The Gospel is not directed to the human being as an absolutely autonomous and isolated entity, but to the human being as creature and therefore as a member of a specific nation ... Not only the individual, but also the nation, as part of the Creation, has been called by God ... The Afrikaner accepts his national task as a divine task, in which his individual life-task, and his personal service to God has been absorbed in a wider, organic context (p.180).

However, when the Bill became law on 24 April 1957, Paton notes that the following message from the Archbishop of Cape Town was read out in all Anglican churches in South Africa:

Before God and with you as my witnesses, I solemnly state that not only shall I not obey any direction of the

Minister of Native Affairs in this regard, but I solemnly counsel you, both clergy and people, to do likewise (p.182).

This declaration was followed by similar messages from most of the English-speaking churches, as well as from many cultural and other organisations. This defiance sets the scene for the final part of the book, in which the issue of the confrontation of religion and politics forms the central action.

In Part Five, entitled "The Holy Church of Zion", Paton gives his religious theme specific focus through the story of Justice Jan Olivier, the Acting Chief Justice. The Reverend Isaiah Buti, pastor of the Holy Church of Zion at Bochabela outside Bloemfontein (which gives this section its title), invites the judge to a Maundy Thursday foot-washing ceremony in which the judge, a renowned friend of the African people, will be called upon to wash the feet of his old family retainer, Martha Fortuin. The judge readily agrees, and, indeed, when the time comes, he does not merely wash her feet, but kisses them. The incident is coincidentally witnessed by a reporter, whose story leads to a national scandal, and to the effective end of the judge's career. The story is clearly intended to show up the hypocrisy of the Afrikaner nationalist version of Christianity and the racist pathology which underlies it. More than this, however, the story functions on a symbolic level to suggest the possibility of salvation, political as well as religious, which is still open to South Africa. It is no accident, for instance, that the event takes place at Easter, with its celebration of Christ's resurrection after suffering and death, and hence its promise of ultimate redemption. Furthermore, the story of the foot-washing service recalls once more T.S. Eliot's poem, The Waste Land (1922; in Eliot 1963:61-86) to which Paton has frequently referred in his fiction. In this poem, Eliot alludes to the Grail legend, and particularly Percival's successful participation in the foot-washing ceremony which is the final step towards attaining the grail (see III. "The Fire Sermon" ll.201-202, in Eliot 1963:71), in order to hint at the potential at least for restoration of the waste land of post World War I Europe. By the same token, then, Paton's reference here suggests that the waste land of contemporary South Africa remains potentially redeemable, both through the spirit of Christ as well as through the actions of men like Justice Olivier.

Paton's book recounts three reactions to the Bochabela incident, which correspond to the broad positions of conservative, liberal and radical on South Africa's political spectrum. In the first place, the Nationalist mouthpiece, Noordelig, finds Olivier's actions "repugnant to most white Christian opinion, and certainly to most Afrikaner Christian opinion (p.251). At the other extreme, the communist publication, New Guard, expresses its contempt for the judge's deeds, and declares that it

will certainly not encourage white people to entertain the delusion that what happened at Bochabela is a solution to something, or that it is an indication of the way "things are moving". The episode is totally meaningless and irrelevant, and it shows once more how unrelated to our

realities are the bourgeois values of goodwill and sporadic benevolence in our South African situation (p.250). The liberal position, by contrast, is represented not by any propagandistic party newspaper, but rather by three separate individuals who write personal letters to the judge expressing their admiration for his courageous actions and their support for his beliefs: Prem Bodasingh, the young Indian girl who was shot in the face after joining the Liberal Party; Gabriel van Onselen's liberal-minded aunt, Trina de Lange; and the equally enlightened mother of the disgraced Dr Fischer, Alida Fischer.

Unfortunately, such liberal views remained in the minority during the 1950s in South Africa as apartheid became increasingly entrenched in the country's social system and more and more individual lives were damaged in the process. Thus the story of Justice Olivier's courage is counterbalanced by the appalling story of Mr Lodewyk Prinsloo, a happily married and successful employee of South African Railways and Harbours, who is exposed one day as a "non-white", and as a result loses his job and his house, as well as his wife, who leaves him in disgust taking his children with her. The nightmarish Kafkaesque quality of the story (p.243) recalls both "Debbie Go Home" and "A Life for a Life", and underlines once more the horrifyingly, intrusively destructive effects of apartheid legislation on the personal lives of ordinary people. In the light of such miseries, it is no wonder that so many South Africans chose during the dark years of apartheid to emigrate or go into exile. In this book, it is Robert Mansfield who finally decides to leave, having suffered intimidation, the destruction of his property, death threats to himself and to his family. The decision is a painful one, but is ultimately made out of fear for his family's safety, though it means removing himself from any positive sphere of influence within the country. In this regard, Paton differed from Mansfield in that he chose not to leave despite receiving similar kinds of harassment and intimidation (see Paton 1969; 1988). The point, though, is that while the courage of those who chose to remain and to continue to oppose the government is to be applauded, there ought to be no blame or shame attached to the decision to leave, despite the taunts of those like the "Proud White Christian Woman" (pp.223-224).

This part of the book ends on a slightly optimistic note, however. The continuing efforts of liberal organisations like N.A.L.A. under the leadership of Emmanuel Nene provide some consolation, especially as, at the end, the once intimidated headmaster, Wilberforce Nhlapo, joins the N.A.L.A. despite the threats of the Security Police. Moreover, some of the most conservative characters in the book begin to mellow in their outlook: the "Proud White Christian Woman", now dying of cancer, writes to Mansfield not to apologise but at least to wish him luck in his new life; the Minister of Justice's views seem to have become less hard and rigid, especially following the embarrassment of Dr Fischer and the Treason Trial; and even Gabriel van Onselen himself suffers "a crisis of confidence" as he starts to doubt the absolute rightness of apartheid.

Paton is careful, as always, not to end his novel on a note of facile optimism, however. In this case, the final words are van Onselen's as he looks forward to the Prime Ministership of Dr Hendrik in a short sixth part to the book, entitled "Into the Golden Age", which functions as an epilogue to this first part of the proposed trilogy. Intended also, of course, as a prologue to the second part of the trilogy, this short section ominously anticipates what many Afrikaner nationalists indeed believed would be a golden age of secure, prosperous Afrikaner rule. The very term, "golden age", is taken, in fact, from Dr Hendrik (Verwoerd)'s address to the nation on having been elected to succeed the late J.G. Strijdom as Prime Minister. In it, he reassures those like van Onselen who had begun to have doubts about apartheid that the policy of "separate development" will be to the benefit of all the races of South Africa, and that the new era will see the fulfilment of the country's true and unique destiny. In bitter contrast to this utopian vision, Paton has the novel end with a poem of his own, entitled "We mean nothing evil towards you", which he originally composed in 1952 (Songs of Africa pp.71-72). Having earlier quoted the first stanza of the poem (pp.140-141), he ends the book with the second stanza, which employs mordant irony to express the disjunction between the rosy promises, and the barren reality, of "separate development":

Black man, we are going to shut you off  
We are going to set you apart, now and forever.  
We mean nothing evil towards you.  
A fresh new wind shall blow through your territory.  
Under your hands freed from our commandment  
You shall build what shall astonish you.  
The ravished land shall take on virginity  
The rocks and shales of the desolate country  
Shall acquire the fertility of the fruitful earth.  
Chance-gotten children shall return to the womb  
To re-emerge with sanctions and lead pattern lives  
Of due obedience to authority and age.  
Morality shall be recovered, the grave  
And fearless bearing, the strange innocence  
Of the tribal eyes, and all the sorrows  
Of these hundred years shall pass away.  
This is our reparation, our repayment  
Of the incomputable debt.  
We mean nothing evil towards you.

(iii)

As the novel ends in 1958 with a grim foreboding of the future, its dual time frame is brought into sharp relief. On the one hand, the novel deals with the events of the years 1952-1958 in a way which is immediate and dramatic. On the other hand, these events are in reality being viewed from the perspective of a quarter of a century later in 1981. A central purpose of this technique is to emphasise not how much but rather how little things have changed in the intervening years. In one sense, many events have occurred which have radically changed the face of

South African history: the Sharpeville shootings; the banning of the liberation movements and the imprisonment of their leaders; the taking up of the armed struggle, not least by ex-Liberal Party members in the abortive ARM organisation; the enforced disbanding of the Liberal Party in 1968; the Soweto riots of 1976. In another sense, however, the main outline of the political battle to destroy apartheid and establish a democratic form of government in the country has remained the same since 1948.

Certainly, in 1981, and even in the year of Paton's death in 1988, the change in the political situation of the country was one of degree rather than principle. This is not to deny, however, that the political struggle had become increasingly radicalised and polarised, or that the outlook for a peaceful solution seemed to have become ever bleaker. But the major problems and dilemmas facing opponents of apartheid, and especially liberals, appeared largely unchanged. For example, the question of whether violence could ever be accepted as a legitimate means of political change was as intractable a problem in 1981 as in 1958. Similarly, there had not been much essential advance in the debate about the irreconcilability of liberalism and communism, or in the question of the relationship between liberal values and principles and those of, for instance, the Christian or Jewish traditions.

In essence, then, although Ah, But Your land Is Beautiful is set firmly in the 1950s, many of its central themes and concerns remained highly relevant in the early 1980s, both as background to contemporary dilemmas and for their own sake. While it is a pity, therefore, that Paton was unable to complete his proposed trilogy, what he managed to achieve in this last novel was a lucid and penetrating insight into some of the chief problems facing liberals and others during the overall period of apartheid. In particular, by focusing on the specific dilemmas confronting the Liberal Party, he was able to highlight the actual and potential role and value - as well as tensions and limitations - of an authentically liberal political party in the South African context. Tony Morphet (1983:8-9) has described the politics of the Liberal Party as "the politics of innocence", by which he means not so much that its members were naive or misinformed, but rather that they were willing to embark on the "extraordinary endeavour" of attempting to establish a genuinely liberal party "within the fear-ridden destructive" South African situation. And indeed, as Morphet points out, the Liberal Party "did demonstrate, for a time, that it was possible to live fully within the terms of South African life". In an important sense, in any event, as Paton (1953b:156) revealed at the time of the its inauguration, the ultimate aim of the Liberal Party was not necessarily to win party-political power:

We had to come out because we thought it was the right thing to do, and the sensible one. We hope to accustom to the language of justice and common sense thousands of ears that are accustomed to that of fear and prejudice. We believe that we speak the language of sanity, that it is our view alone that can save our country from a future of

tragedy and violence.

This view was supported, moreover, by the then president of the A.N.C, Albert Lutuli, who identified the true value of the Liberal Party in his autobiography, Let my People Go (1962:139): their effectiveness is not to be measured in votes, but in the appraisal they have forced on whites. The Liberal Party has been able to speak with a far greater authority than other parties with white members because of the quality of the people at its head - such as Alan Paton, Senator Rubin, Margaret Ballinger, Peter Brown, Patrick Duncan and others. Moreover it has tried to take its stand on principles and not on expediency - a new thing in South African politics. Not least of the achievements of Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful, therefore, is Paton's lasting chronicle of at least part of this remarkable chapter in South African political history.

## Conclusion

It is unfortunate that Alan Paton did not live to see the establishment in the 1990s of a non-racial democratic South Africa through peaceful multiparty negotiations. He would have recognised the new order, based as it is upon such fundamental liberal principles as constitutional government, a bill of rights, the rule of law, and a universal franchise exercised in regular elections, as a vindication of the beliefs he held onto so vigorously throughout the apartheid era. In particular, he would have welcomed the means by which the new dispensation was achieved as a triumph of non-violent, rationally conducted liberal politics over both the violently oppressive conservatism of the ruling forces as well as the revolutionary violence of the radical opposition. The entire process of the negotiated settlement may in truth be seen as a confirmation of the validity and efficacy of the liberal democratic system, especially in terms of the capacity of liberalism to provide a way out of a situation of protracted conflictual deadlock. Beyond any sense of personal satisfaction, however, as John Conyngham (1992) has recently observed, Paton's "clarity of vision and outspokenness" would have proved invaluable in ensuring that the negotiation process and the new government did not deviate from the basic tenets of liberal democracy.

The fact that the liberal vision remained so manifestly alive in South Africa is due in large measure to individuals like Alan Paton who refused to compromise their beliefs during the darkest days of apartheid rule. The pressure on Paton to abandon his liberal stance in this polarised and radicalised context was at times intense, both from the right, who scorned his ideals as impractically futile, and from the left, who dismissed his methods of achieving his ideals as simply inadequate. At times, indeed, Paton seemed to be able to sustain his beliefs through little more than a gritty stoicism, frequently quoting the words of William the Silent to defend his position (1988:294, for example):

It is not necessary to hope in order to undertake, and it is not necessary to succeed in order to persevere. It is especially ironic, therefore, that Paton's life should have ended in 1988 at a time when the possibility of a just, peaceful solution to South Africa's problems seemed most remote, and when violent political apocalypse seemed inevitable. Nevertheless, Paton's fortitude and compassion endured to the end, and is given poignant expression in his final published words, a deeply moving prayer for his beloved country (1988:301):

God bless Africa  
Guard her children  
Guide her rulers  
And give her peace  
Amen.

The ideals which Paton upheld throughout his life are deeply embedded in his fictional writing, which constitutes a crucially important articulation of the values and principles of liberalism

in South Africa. More than that, however, Paton's fiction helped to establish and inspire a rich tradition of liberal novel writing which continued throughout the apartheid era and which, as a body of work, has provided a vital alternative vision to the injustice and immorality of the apartheid ideology. Important contemporary writers who would fall into this tradition include Christopher Hope, Sheila Roberts, Michael Cope, Jenny Hobbs, John Conyngham and Mike Nicol. Despite the differences in temperament, style and technique of these writers, each of them displays in his or her work a fundamental commitment to the core liberal values of justice, freedom and tolerance, as well as a solid belief in the equal moral worth of all persons and the essential primacy of the individual over the claims or interests of any collective group or societal aggregate. While a detailed consideration of their work lies beyond the scope of this study, it may simply be observed that the quantity and quality of fiction currently being produced by these writers suggests that the South African liberal novel remains very much alive.

However, the writer who has most successfully continued the tradition of liberal political literature developed by Paton is not a novelist at all, but a playwright. If it is to be conceded that the main focus of Paton's oeuvre falls most concentratedly in the 1940s and 1950s - even in later texts like Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful - then the work of Athol Fugard may be regarded as following on almost directly from that period and continuing into the present time of the 1990s. This is not to suggest, of course, that Fugard's work is simply an extension of Paton's, or that the two writers are temperamentally or technically similar. But it does mean that Fugard's major plays broach subjects and issues of the sixties, seventies and eighties in a direct and specific way that Paton's novels did not, so that together these two writers cover the entire era of apartheid and thereby maintain a continuous liberal perspective on and understanding of this dark period in South African history. The next chapter of this study will therefore undertake a detailed examination of the liberal basis of Athol Fugard's drama.

**ATHOL FUGARD**

## Introduction

Athol Fugard has been acclaimed by Time magazine (Henry 1985:65; 1989:56) as "the greatest active playwright in the English-speaking world". Mel Gussow (1982:48), moreover, maintains that Fugard's "body of work is unmatched as political theatre in our century". It is probable, in fact, that he is, after Shakespeare, "the English-language playwright most frequently performed", certainly in South Africa and the United States of America (Battersby 1992:10). And he is credited with having created, virtually single-handed, "significant South African drama in English" in the contemporary period (Gordimer 1976:114).

At the same time, there is no question about his political affiliation. From the very outset of his career in the late 1950s to the present day he has unequivocally declared his belief in the values and principles of liberalism. He has, for example, described his early Sophiatown plays as the efforts of "a liberally-informed white" writer (in Benson 1972:137); he portrayed himself in a 1974 interview in the Observer in rather wryly self-deprecating terms as a "classic example of the impotent white liberal" (Smith 1974:8); in a conversation with Dennis Walder in 1982 he stated that if "the old Liberal Party of South Africa still existed, I'd feel obliged to identify with it" (in Walder 1982:16); more latterly, in an interview on SABC TV in 1992, he declared, "I unashamedly describe myself as a liberal" (SABC TV 1992); and in an interview which I conducted with Fugard in 1994, he offered an explicit definition of his political identity (in Foley 1994:63):

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 that 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".

It would seem, then, that these two aspects of Fugard's work are not in dispute: his greatness as a dramatist - even a fairly antagonistic critic like Walder (1984:2) acknowledges him as "a major modern playwright"; and his liberal politics - both Munro (1982:13) and Holloway (1993:38) emphasize the obvious and well-established nature of Fugard's political stance. Given these two factors, it seems rather strange that no detailed critical effort at all has been directed towards a proper and sympathetic understanding of the precise nature of Fugard's liberalism, especially in terms of how this is expressed in and through his dramatic work. It would appear difficult, after all, to come to a full appreciation of Fugard's worth and significance as a writer, particularly in the context of contemporary South Africa, without a fairly clear and explicit grasp of his politics.

Instead, criticism of Fugard's work tends either to be dismissive of his politics, ignoring it altogether or relegating it to a position of secondary importance in his plays, or to be highly

critical of his political views, from both a right- and left-wing perspective. Common to all these critical approaches, however, is a generally ill-defined and inadequate comprehension of Fugard's politics. Thus, part of the purpose of this chapter - a purpose which it shares with the preceding chapter on Alan Paton - is to provide an accurate and detailed account of the way in which Fugard's dramatic work is centred on and informed by the fundamental values of liberalism.

As a way of introducing this study of the liberal nature of Fugard's theatre, it may be useful to outline very briefly each of these main critical positions, though, of course, more stringent attention will be paid to them at later points in the chapter. In the first place, Fugard's liberal attitudes have come under attack from conservative critics such as Woodrow (1972) and Rae (1971). Woodrow, for example, while elsewhere (1970:410) praising Fugard as one of "the first fine fruits" of a renaissance in South African drama, nevertheless bemoans Fugard's political focus (1972:82-83):

Fugard succeeds in spite of himself .... I am convinced that Fugard's root motivation is political, that his intention is to create propaganda in favour of the "victims of a social order" .... It is a pity that Fugard, by confining his attention to the lowest social order of mankind and to misfits and derelicts within that order, thereby excluding a large section of mankind, is at the same disadvantage as all other writers of propaganda plays. With the best will in the world many of us simply cannot identify with the majority of his characters.

More broadly, however, conservative disapproval of Fugard's liberalism has taken the form of government harassment and intimidation, most notably in the withdrawal of his passport from 23 June 1967 until 29 May 1971 when it was reinstated after a public petition which collected 4000 signatures (see Fugard 1978:xix-xx; Gray 1982b:8-9; Vandenbroucke 1986:124).

From the opposite end of the political continuum, Fugard's liberal outlook has come under attack also from a succession of critics espousing a Marxist viewpoint (at least at the time when they wrote), including Gala (1974), Seymour (1980), Mshengu (1982), Michael Green (1984), Walder (1984), Orkin (1991) and Visser (1993). Walder, for instance, displays a recurring tendency in such criticism to attempt not to explain Fugard's liberalism, but to explain it away. At the end of a full-length study of Fugard, he reveals (1984:125) that he regards the writer's liberalism not as an important core ingredient in his work, but rather as some kind of unfortunate aberration which vitiates its best moments:

No South African can escape the corrupting influence of their situation, and [Fugard] is no exception. He sees things from the white liberal point of view, and is unable to avoid that.

Concomitantly, there is a tendency among Marxist critics who do directly address Fugard's liberalism to criticise it in highly reductive ways. Michael Green, for example, bases his critique upon a very limited and indeed quite inaccurate "definition" of

liberalism provided by another South African Marxist scholar, Michael Vaughan (1982:14; see Green 1984:45), who claims "the essential components of the liberal outlook" are "universalism, humanism, individualism, and non-politicism" (my emphasis). Clearly, to define a political philosophy such as liberalism as "non-political" is nonsensical and does nothing to advance understanding of Fugard's work.

A by-product of the Marxists' reductive definitions of liberalism is that they have tended, as Green does, to label as "liberal" a group of critics who have no specific ties with liberalism as such. A large number of these critics may more properly be termed "apolitical" since they do not concern themselves with Fugard's politics at all except to relegate it to subordinate status below other issues such as existentialism, ethnicity, dramaturgy, artistic merit, and so on. Such critics have rightly been taken to task by their radical counterparts for seeking to depoliticise Fugard's plays, yet in so far as such critics are apolitical, they cannot be categorised as liberals.

Nevertheless, some blame must be apportioned to those critics who are indeed liberal, or at least liberal-minded, for not themselves providing a clear and explicit account of Fugard's liberalism and its function in his dramatic writing. For some overseas critics, living in stable liberal democratic societies, such an endeavour may perhaps have seemed unnecessary; within the ideologically conflictual context of South African society, however, this scholarly velleity has led to a great deal of confusion and misapprehension about Fugard's work.

Such confusion has to some extent also been fuelled by some misinterpretations of comments made by Fugard himself about politics in various articles and interviews throughout his career. For example, in a letter to Port Elizabeth's Evening Post in 1958 or 1959, entitled, "Must S.A. Plays Protest?" (National English Literary Museum, henceforth NELM; see also Vandenbroucke 1986:194), Fugard replied to an article in the newspaper which had suggested that local drama should concern itself mainly with "social protest":

To start a witchhunt for these qualities in indigenous drama will only mean warping a struggling art to the same extent that our lives have already been twisted by ideologies .... My point is that playwrights must be left to write about subjects of their choice, and not feel obliged to wave a social banner every time they start writing .... I do not deny that a good play can have a strong measure of social comment. What I do object to is making this a yardstick of good theatre ... and the danger of expecting it every time we go to the theatre.

Elsewhere he has claimed that "I myself do not consider my plays to be necessarily political" (in Rae 1971; in Gray 1982a:51), and recently he has reiterated that "I find myself very frustrated by the label 'political playwright' which I have ended up with" (Fugard 1992a:72).

In the absence of an adequate critical understanding of Fugard's

liberal political vision, comments such as these of his have led some critics to feel justified in treating the socio-political dimension of his work as if it merely formed an arbitrary background for the exploration of universal themes about the human condition (see, for example, Vandenbroucke 1986:198-200; Maclennan 1981:59f), while other critics have regarded such comments of his as evidence of a political naivety characteristic of "white liberal unawareness" (Walder 1984:113). Both sets of interpretation are mistaken. Instead, it is necessary to see that Fugard differentiates between a narrow, doctrinaire meaning of the word, "politics", on the one hand, and a broader, more inclusive idea of politics, on the other. It is the former meaning of the word that he resists as a label for his work, or as a category for meaningful literary activity. Thus, in my interview with him in 1994 (in Foley 1994:63), he reacted to the radical criticism that his work was insufficiently explicit politically:

I'll accept those criticisms, and I'll tell you why. Because what those critics were demanding was something that I wasn't prepared to deliver, namely, a didactic, propagandistic literature that toed the party line and that thumped a particular political drum or tried to advance a particular, narrow political cause.

Similarly, in a lecture delivered at New York University in 1990 (Fugard 1993a:384), he warned that

if anybody in an audience for one of my plays sits there expecting that I am going to make a political statement, or give a message, or lay out a blueprint for a better and juster South Africa, they are going to be disappointed.

And in a talk given at Rhodes University in 1991 (Fugard 1992b:73), he stated bluntly, "I am a storyteller, not a political pamphleteer".

None of this betokens political callowness or ignorance, however. On the contrary, Fugard is deeply conscious of the political import of his plays, but this he understands in terms of an open and sophisticated delineation of the concept. He spelled out his position in some detail at the NYU lecture (Fugard 1993a:385):

I don't want to be naive about the business of storytelling. I'm not fighting shy of the fact that politics is in a sense part of the substance of the stories that I tell. The notion that there could be a South African story that doesn't have political resonance is laughable. When it comes down to it, any story, from any time in history, from any society, is political - if you take the word "political" in its broadest and most meaningful sense. Every act of storytelling is in a sense a political action. Certainly this is so in South Africa, which is unbelievably politicized. As I experience that country, living there day to day, there is no area of my life, even my most private moments, which does not have a political resonance. Politics is there in everything we do in South Africa. So the notion of telling a story in South Africa and not being political is naive. I know, particularly as I have an interest in the dispossessed of my country, with whom I identify very strongly, it is inevitable that there is

going to be a political byproduct to what I make. But that is not my focus as I start out.

Fugard made plain what the essence of his "focus" was at his talk at Rhodes University (Fugard 1992b:75):

What I am talking about is the genesis of new work on my side and for me that has always been an image of a particular individual or a group of individuals, something that they had done or something that was done to them.

And what is more, they are usually desperate individuals - human desperation is the real substance of theatre....- and in South Africa if you have found a desperate individual, nine times out of ten you have also found a desperate political situation.

This, then, is the crux of Fugard's politics, and the key to the kind of political playwright that he is. His dramatic work is not concerned in the first instance with abstract political theory; it is not made up of generalised models of the South African political macrocosm; and it is not peopled with stereotyped representatives of any narrow group or cause. Instead, his central concern is with individual human beings, with particular individual characters and their particular stories. Almost inevitably, however, these characters have been maimed in some way and are suffering as a direct or indirect result of the injustices of the political system of their society. And thus a wider political resonance emerges in the plays from the specific details of the individual characters' experiences. As such, Fugard's political vision is an essentially liberal one, for at the very core of the liberal political philosophy is the individual human being, and his/her rights and liberties over against any social or political collective. Inasmuch as the principle of individual freedom was utterly transgressed by the apartheid system, Fugard's plays may justly be seen as a powerful condemnation of that system and a call for its replacement by a free and open society.

In this light, it is clear that Fugard's political vision is essentially similar to that of Alan Paton. Both writers are concerned primarily with the dignity and worth of the individual; both emphasise freedom as the key component of the just society; and neither is prepared to regard the individual human being as subordinate to any social or political programme, however apparently noble. In addition, as will be seen, Fugard, like Paton, utterly rejects violence as a means of political change, and consistently stresses the role of compassion, reason and education as truly effective determinants of political reform and real social amelioration.

Nevertheless, as the introduction to this thesis suggested, there are several differences between them. Fugard himself observed to me in a conversation we had at the Market Theatre on 22 May 1994 that he and Paton were "two very different liberals". Where Paton was a committed Christian, Fugard is a non-believer; where Paton became an active political leader, Fugard has never been a member of any political organisation; and where Paton sacrificed some of his imaginative energies in favour of other forms of political

expression, Fugard has never deviated from his chosen path as a creative writer. Furthermore, if Paton was essentially a novelist who dabbled, not very successfully, in drama, Fugard is first and foremost a playwright, who has not, apart from one early effort, published any novels. Moreover, while Paton's creative output was small, and remains severely under-researched, Fugard's literary canon is large and growing, and has received a great amount of critical attention (John Read's 1991 bibliography on Fugard runs to 336 pages and contains 3733 entries). Finally, where Paton's most important work extended from 1948 to the early 1960s, Fugard's began in the late 1950s and has continued to the present day. Thus, while I do not by any means suggest that they are the only two liberal writers of any importance during this period, their work, taken together, does usefully cover the whole era of apartheid, and offers a valuable insight into the responses of two different kinds of liberal to apartheid. Fugard has himself recognised this function of his work; in an interview with Mary Benson (in Benson 1977:80), he was referring specifically to the proposed publication of his notebooks, but his comments are validly relevant to his plays as well:

They cover an important personal experience, and reflect one man's reaction to an important period in South African history.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to focus on Athol Fugard's dramatic work as one liberal writer's response to the dilemmas, conflicts and difficulties of his personal and social milieu. The chapter will attempt to chart his development as a writer and as a political thinker in reaction to the changing demands of the South African situation over the period of his career. At all times, cognizance will be taken of the specific context of the plays, while also seeking to identify and clarify continuous trends and recurring themes in his work. Most importantly, this chapter will attempt to define and illuminate the specifically liberal perspective in Fugard's plays, and to demonstrate that, far from being politically naive or unaware, these plays express an acute and forceful political vision, which stands as testimony to the resilience and strength of liberal democratic values and ideas.

## Background

The biographical details of Fugard's early life have been fairly extensively covered and are readily available (Fugard 1978, 1994; Gussow 1982; Walder 1984; Vandenbroucke 1986), so there is no reason unnecessarily to duplicate such material. Nevertheless, a brief adumbration of Fugard's background may be useful in identifying some of the early indications of what was to become Fugard's mature literary and political temperament, as well as some important influences which led to the development of that temperament.

Fugard was born on 11 June 1932 in the small Karoo town of Middelberg, though when he was three years old the family moved to Port Elizabeth, where he grew up and where he has subsequently lived virtually all his life. Fugard has consistently acknowledged the hold which Port Elizabeth exercises over him, maintaining that "I cannot conceive of myself as separate from it" (Fugard 1978:vii). What he calls this "one little corner of the world" (in Benson 1972:135) has, indeed, been the characteristic setting for most of his work. More recently, Fugard has in a sense returned to the Karoo, having bought a second house there and having set some of his recent plays in and around that region. Together, Port Elizabeth and the Karoo, it is true to say, have provided Fugard with the fundamental inspiration for much of his best work, which has derived a good deal of its dramatic immediacy from the authenticity of its location in place and time.

Of his upbringing, Fugard notes that "in terms of white South African social categories, my background would be described as lower middle class", though "judged by the considerable degree of affluence enjoyed by white South Africa, both in my childhood and still to this day, it was a relatively poor situation" (in Raine 1980:9). He calls himself "a mongrel son of white South Africa's two dominant cultures ... Afrikaans and English-speaking" (1994:9), whose mother was a Potgieter of rather earthy Afrikaner stock, while his father was a somewhat more genteel English-speaker of Anglo-Irish descent. Although he is thoroughly English-speaking himself, Fugard claims to continue to feel that his "English tongue is speaking for an Afrikaner psyche" (1994:9-10). It is no doubt in part due to his mixed heritage and comparatively poor upbringing that Fugard has been able to relate to and effectively portray such a wide variety of characters from different social and economic backgrounds in his work. Perhaps ironically, however, his earliest "liberal" instincts stem not from his English South African father, whom Fugard remembers, sadly, as being "full of pointless, unthought-out prejudices" (in Gussow 1982:52) despite remaining "a perfect gentleman" (Fugard 1994:39) all his life. Instead, it was his mother who provided Fugard with a positive model of political morality, revealing what he (in Gussow 1982:52) regarded as a capacity for rising above the South African situation and seeing people as people .... she had this set of ideas and human values that put her in radical opposition to the

system. She never got involved in politics, but as early as I can remember she had an understanding of the injustice. I think that all the faith I have in life and in people - in the sheer fact that growth doesn't stop until the moment you die - comes to me from my mother .... Two separate individuals - one with six years of schooling, the other with twelve years of schooling and a university education - arrived at the same sense of outrage and anger over the injustice of that society.

From his father, on the other hand, Fugard developed a love of reading, of stories, and, indeed, of storytelling. His father had been a professional musician, and his piano playing in Fugard's youth filled the young boy's imagination with images and ideas for stories. This musical inspiration was continued with his cousin, Johnny, who would extemporise on the piano while the teenage Hally (as Fugard was then known) would regale whatever audience he could round up with vivid and exotic tales, often presented dramatically with props and lighting. In fact, Fugard seems from his earliest years to have had a feel for the dramatic; he recalls how as an eight year old he, together with his sister, Glenda, then ten, put on a memorable performance of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: "My sister was Snow White - I was everything else" (Fugard 1994:15).

Fugard continued to be a voracious reader, and soon displayed a talent for writing at Port Elizabeth's Marist Brothers College and Albert Jackson school, where a Standard Six essay earned Fugard a scholarship at the Port Elizabeth Technical College. Unfortunately, the technical curriculum and the motor mechanics course he was to follow offered little of interest to Fugard, though he did participate in school plays and excelled at English. His evident abilities secured him a place at the University of Cape Town where he studied not literature but the social sciences, including Social Anthropology and Political Philosophy, and was taught by the famous existentialist Martin Versveld, whose continuing influence may be clearly detected in a number of Fugard's plays. Fugard's friendship with the poet, Perseus Adams, then a fellow student, kept alive his literary interests, however, and it was with Adams that Fugard, in his final year of study, decided on an extraordinary course of action: to abandon his studies and hitch-hike through Africa. He had been a very good student, as his academic transcript reveals (Fugard 1994:80), but he had come to believe that taking the degree and entering into post-graduate study and perhaps an academic career would be "a trap" (Fugard 1994:79) that would prevent him from fulfilling what he now saw as his destiny as a writer. Even more surprising, perhaps, was the fact that at a time - 1953 - when most white English-speaking South Africans regarded their cultural identity to be almost exclusively British or American, Fugard's focus and interest was on Africa, an orientation which he carried through to his writing career. Remarkably, Fugard's mother, who had scrimped and saved to send him to university (his father being an invalid), accepted his decision, and he set off with sixty pounds and ten tins of sardines.

The journey through Africa proved to be a disaster, however, and he and Adams parted company, after having been arrested in the Sudan, on very bad terms. Fugard then signed on as the captain's "tiger" aboard the British tramp steamer, SS Graigaur, on which he sailed for over a year. During this period, he found himself with plenty of time for writing, as his letters home reveal (NELM; Vandenbroucke 1986:20-22), and he completed at least one novel. This did not survive his own critical judgement, however, and he ended up throwing it overboard into a lagoon in Fiji. He eventually came home, therefore, with nothing to show for his travels in terms of worthwhile writing; but he recounts that his time aboard the ship, living and working with black and Malay sailors, helped to rid him of any racial prejudice he may have had (in Smith 1974:8).

Back in Port Elizabeth, Fugard became a freelance journalist, revealing in his articles once more clear preliminary evidence of the kinds of concerns and topics which would later become recurrent thematic preoccupations in his plays. In one particular article, entitled, "Drama of P.E.'s Night School for Adults", published in the Evening Post of 18 June 1954 (1954:4; NELM; see Walder 1993:409), the young Fugard focuses upon the attempts of men and women from New Brighton township to learn to read and write. In order to convey some real sense of their endeavour, Fugard dramatises a few of their stories, suggesting how literacy for "Philip" or "Lena" meant being able to read apartheid warning signs like "Europeans Only", or to write letters home, or to read cooking instructions on a tin of food. As Walder (1993:409) points out,

the article demonstrates how, from his earliest published writings, Fugard was concerned to acknowledge the lives, indeed the very existence, of those of his compatriots excluded in one way or another from the centers of privilege and power in his society.

Articles such as this also suggested that Fugard's true vocation lay in the telling of stories, rather than in reportage, and helps to explain why he was not particularly successful as a print or radio journalist, first in Port Elizabeth, and then in Cape Town where he was transferred shortly after his return to South Africa. As he himself notes, "my work was always too coloured by emotion" (in Gussow 1982:59).

In Cape Town, Fugard re-established contact with his old university friends, especially those interested in working across the colour bar, and it was in Cape Town that he met Sheila Meiring, whom he later married in 1956. She had been a fellow student at university but the two had never met. She recalls (Sheila Fugard 1993:395) that he was doing a lot of writing even then (though no work of that period has survived), and that Fugard

was totally different from the somewhat inarticulate students I had met at university. He was intense, volatile, and even a little dangerous, with bright, inquiring eyes, a shock of dark hair, and a beard. A sense of enormous energy radiated about him, but his outgoing manner failed to mask a precarious sensitivity.

They had met at a mutual friend's flat, "a gathering place of young liberal intellectuals", and found that they shared not only a similar political outlook but also "the same vision of a truly South African theatre" (Sheila Fugard 1993:395).

To this end they formed a dramatic group, "The Circle Players", with some other young actors. Fugard maintains that Sheila "was totally responsible for my interest in the theatre" (in Benson 1977:77), though Sheila remembers having seen some realistic dramatic dialogue written by him which predates their meeting (Sheila Fugard 1993:395). At any rate, the group's first production was an evening of one-act plays, one by a local writer and member of the group, Wilhelm Grütter, one by Sheila, and one by Fugard himself, entitled, The Cell. Fugard is dismissive of this work, wryly quipping, "It was in blank verse - very blank" (in Gussow 1982:59). Despite the arty and pretentious style of the writing and direction, however, the subject matter again serves as an index of the kind of theme which would continue to preoccupy Fugard throughout his career. Although no script of the play has been published, Sheila Fugard recalls (1993:396) the incident which gave rise to the play, a newspaper article which "moved and outraged" Fugard:

A black woman had been arrested for not carrying a passbook, the identity document which blacks were forced to have with them at all times. She was jailed and when in prison, gave birth prematurely. She screamed over and over for assistance, but her cries were ignored. The brutal warders left her in her cell to wail over her dead infant. Finally, the next day, they removed the bleeding, stinking thing.

The play had three main characters: the young black woman (played by Erica Rogers, later to become a successful professional actress), an older black woman (played by Sheila, who also directed), and a male militant black activist (played by Fugard). The cast also included a small chorus who offered comments on the events.

The play met with a bemused response from the audience, who were completely unprepared for its explosive subject matter and message, and no interest whatsoever was shown in the play by any theatre groups in Cape Town. A similar fate met another of Fugard's early efforts, Klaas and the Devil (also unpublished), which was entered in a drama festival, and about which the judges were generally critical. Fugard, who played the leading role, describes this play as "an attempt, a bad one, to set Synge's Riders to the Sea in South Africa" (in Vandenbroucke 1986:25). Fugard's negative assessment of the play was shared by a former professor of Sheila's at the University of Cape Town who judged the play to be "absolutely hopeless" (in Gussow 1982:63). Indeed, Sheila recalls that no one regarded Fugard, on the strength of these plays, to have the potential to succeed as a writer, let alone become one of the world's finest dramatists (in Vandenbroucke 1986:25). Wilhelm Grütter (in Vandenbroucke 1986:26), the member of the Circle Players whose play had been produced with The Cell, remembers Fugard at that time as being incredibly enthusiastic, naive, and consumed with a pretty

forlorn passion. I didn't think he had the slightest chance of becoming a serious playwright. Some years later, having become a theatre critic, Grütter went to see, though not to review, The Blood Knot when it toured Cape Town, and was stunned by Fugard's progress (in Vandembroucke 1986:26):

It was something akin to a blinding explosion to realise that he had mastered stage technique so well- quite apart from the tremendous significance and intrinsic meaning of the play - and I came away somewhat dazed at the thought that perseverance could bring one so far.

It was, of course, more than merely perseverance which led to Fugard's eventual success. Nevertheless, it is testimony to Fugard's faith in his own abilities and vision that he did keep going in the face of so discouraging a beginning. Of those early works, however, Sheila (1993:398) observes,

in a strange way Athol was empowered by the sheer effort of getting [plays like] The Cell staged. He perceived the immediacy of theatre.

Fugard's creative sense of this immediacy was to become one of the hallmarks of his achievement as a dramatist, and it was precisely this immediacy which Fugard sought to capture and convey when he and Sheila moved up to Johannesburg early in 1958, and discovered Sophiatown.

Sophiatown: No-Good Friday, Nonqogo, Tsotsi

(i)

In December 1957, Fugard was working as a journalist in Cape Town, when he met a friend from his university days, Benjamin Pogrand, who had moved to Johannesburg earlier that year. During lunch at the OK Bazaars restaurant overlooking Adderley Street, Pogrand (1980:9)

enthused to him about Johannesburg: it was vital, exciting, I told him; compared with staid Cape Town there was activity which stimulated the mind and the senses. And there was Sophiatown, approaching the sentence of death imposed by Nationalist apartheid, but still raucously alive and like nothing else in South Africa. Come to Johannesburg, I urged him; your writing needs it.

Energised by Pogrand's exhortation, Fugard decided to resign from his position as a journalist, commit himself to full-time writing, and move to Johannesburg. He struggled to find employment, however, losing out on an attractive copy-writing post at Lindsay-Smithers, ironically to a man destined to become a great friend and colleague, Barney Simon. Eventually, Fugard turned to the civil service and secured a job as a clerk at the Native Commissioner's Court in Fordsburg, which served mainly to try pass law offenders. He lasted only six months at the Court, as he came to apprehend fully the appalling reality of apartheid:

I knew that the system was evil, but until then I had no idea of just how systematically evil it was. That was my revelation. As I think back, nothing that has happened to me has eclipsed the horror of those few months (Fugard in Benson 1977:78).

During this time, Fugard discovered also a more constructive dimension to black urban life. Pogrand, together with Alan Paton's eldest son, David, introduced him to Sophiatown. In 1958, Sophiatown had already been zoned under the Group Areas Act for demolition, and was due to be replaced by a white suburb, crassly named "Triomf"; but it still exuded vibrancy and life, and offered, as Fugard (1958) put it,

the most stimulating and promising field for a young playwright ... tremendous poverty, a capacity for humour that is almost proverbial, bitterness and hope.

It was also one of the few townships which whites could enter freely. As Sheila Fugard (1993:399) recalls,

a whole other culture of authentic black life, with a kind of fast American influence, was spawned in Sophiatown in the fifties, and we were eager to experience it.

Pogrand and David Paton were both staunch members of the South African Liberal Party, and were among those whites who actively sought to establish and foster friendships and working relationships across the colour line. Many of their contacts were of an overtly political nature, and Sheila Fugard (1993:400) notes that it was meeting militant township politicians like Joe Matlou, Robert Resha and Temba Mqota that "marked the moment that Athol and I were drawn into the struggle against apartheid".

Fugard also made contact with a number of artists, including Bloke Modisane, Casey Motsisi, Can Themba, Nat Nakasa and Lewis Nkosi, who later came to be recognised by writers like Sipho Sepamla (1981) as part of a "Cultural Golden Age" in Sophiatown. Fugard (in Vandenbroucke 1986:28) describes his relationship with his township associates as

the classic one of the whole South African story - generous, warm, accepting. There were no problems. My job with the Court didn't poison my relationships. In fact, I became an important contact at the Court for those trying to organize resistance and prevent the removals then taking place with nightly raids on Sophiatown. Related cases were tried in my court and I would slow up the process a bit so the lawyers could arrive in time to present a defence. My superiors never caught on.

More specifically, as Sheila Fugard (1993:400) observes, "these encounters convinced Athol that he could find men and women in the township who had the makings of actors", and so he set about the attempt to create plays which would harness the creative potential of Sophiatown, and which would tell some of the stories which were being played out every day in its streets.

(ii)

Fugard's first effort was entitled No-Good Friday, a play set specifically and directly in "Sophia Town" [sic] (p.119). His inspiration for the play came from a Johannesburg newspaper story:

The Sunday Times carried a weekly column by an experienced journalist, James Ambrose Brown. One of his columns immediately caught Athol's eye for it concerned the township. Brown's subject was not a political issue, but rather extortion by small-time township gangsters, a theme especially prevalent in American films. The topic allowed Athol to explore with excitement the different characters he had observed in Sophiatown (Sheila Fugard 1993:401).

No-Good Friday concerns the dilemma facing Willie Seopela, a Sophiatown man in his thirties, of choosing between meekly accepting the protection racket run by gangsters in the township or standing up to them even though it might cost him his life. When the play opens, it seems that Willie, together with his lover, Rebecca, and his musician friend, Guy, have been living happily, if modestly, in the township. But the fact that Willie is studying for a B.A. degree by correspondence suggests that he is not satisfied with his present lot and craves, as Rebecca notes, "his ideal" of being "independent" (p.123); as well as of answering the question, "where does he fit in?" (p.135) Things are brought to a head one day when Father Higgins, a liberal white priest (based loosely on Father Trevor Huddleston), arrives with a rural migrant labourer, Tobias Masala, and asks Willie to help find him a job. Willie at first reacts angrily because he knows that in "Goli" naive migrants like Tobias "flounder, go wrong, and I don't like to see it" (p.127). He reluctantly agrees at last, however, and Guy assists, firstly,

by showing Tobias, in a vignette which anticipates Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, how to "act" in front of the white man, and then by helping him to write a letter home to his wife, Maxulu, a scene which in turn prefigures one both in Tsotsi as well as in Sizwe Bansi Is Dead again. No sooner is the letter finished, however, than Shark arrives with his thugs to collect his weekly Friday night protection money, and, when Tobias fails to understand quickly enough what is being demanded of him, Shark has him killed. Willie's inaction leads him to feel tormented by "shame" (p.154), and at last he decides to take Father Higgins's advice and go to the police, even though he is aware of their corruption and collusion with the gangsters. Inevitably, Shark hears about what Willie has done, and returns, offering Willie one last chance to toe the line. Willie refuses, despite Shark's threat to come back in two hours' time to kill him, and the play ends with Willie, left alone apart from an old blind man, Moses, waiting for the final confrontation.

The central idea of the play, then, involves Willie's resolution to stand up and take responsibility for his own life, no matter what the price. Father Higgins had suggested that the crime and violence of the township were not unavoidable: "It doesn't have to be like that if only someone will do something about it" (p.146); and by the end of the play, Willie has come to concur:

The world I live in is the way it is not in spite of me but because of me. You think we're just poor suffering come-to-Jesus-at-the-end-of-it-all black men and that the world's all wrong and against us so what the hell. Well, I'm not so sure of that any more. I'm not so sure because I think we helped to make it, the way it is .... There's nothing that says we must surrender to what we don't like. There's no excuse like saying the world's a big place and I'm just a small little man. My world's as big as I am. Just big enough for me to do something about it. If I can't believe that, there's no point in living (p.165).

As he explains to Guy, his decision has less to do with "a one-man crusade against crime" (p.162) than with an attempt to find "peace of mind ... peace of heart" (p.163) by asserting his sense of personal identity and integrity against those forces which would crush it.

No-Good Friday has come in for a good deal of criticism, most notably, perhaps, from Lewis Nkosi (1968:1-8), who acted in some of its earliest performances. According to Nkosi, the play

posed the wrong questions and provided the wrong answers. The problem that Fugard has set his hero - an educated African who must provide some sense of leadership in the community - whether to defy the thugs and refuse to pay up his share or live forever in fear of the gangs, was predicated upon the assumption that the choice was between co-operation with the forces of law and order and submitting to the lawless tyranny of the tsotsi elements.

Instead, Nkosi argues, the play should have concerned itself "with the politics behind the chronic violence and gangsterism in the ghetto". On the other hand, Russell Vandenbroucke (1986:32) retorts that the play was never intended to be "some

imagined polemic for political action" and that Nkosi misconceives the choices facing Willie:

His alternative to paying Shark is not fear of facing the gangs. Rather, Willie would have to confront his own personal weakness thus revealed. The pressures impinging on his consciousness are created more by Willie himself than by Sophiatown or South Africa.

In a sense, Nkosi and Vandenbroucke are both equally right and wrong in propounding positions which are, respectively, too narrowly political, and not political enough. While Vandenbroucke is correct in his view that Fugard was not attempting to present a political blueprint but rather to explore a story about an individual's struggle to affirm his sense of integrity, Nkosi is nevertheless justified in noting that the play fails to incorporate the very pertinent underlying political factors into its story-line. Thus, a number of relevant political issues are raised in the play, but these seem to remain peripheral and unrelated to the main action of the plot. For example, although Fugard has included the character of the township politician, Watson, his decision to make him cowardly and ineffectual means that the idea of political activism never becomes part of the dialectic of Willie's inner debate. Similarly, the play depicts the dilemma facing Pinkie (which in some ways mirrors Willie's) about whether to apologise unfairly to his white bosses, Mr van Rensburg and Mr Cornell, and keep his job, or whether to stand up for his "rights" (p.133), but this sub-plot reaches no resolution and so fails either to clarify or be clarified by Willie's decision. Most importantly, the ending of the play seems strangely self-contradictory in both a personal and a socio-political sense. Having decried the vulnerability of the rural innocent as well as the self-sacrificial attitudes of the religious Africans, Willie then seems to emulate them. As Dennis Walder (1984:41-2) points out,

Willie's subsequent action, reporting the murder of Tobias, and then passively waiting for Shark to take his revenge, hardly suggests an alternative to the black Christian martyrdom he so vehemently rejects. Fugard makes him behave in the end as if he believes what he has rejected.

Ultimately, the play fails to do what Fugard's later plays so successfully accomplish, namely, to illuminate the intersection of political issues and personal choices in the lives of individual human beings through a specific focus on their particular fears, hopes and dreams. The play seems to be straining towards a liberal vision of individual freedom and responsibility in a localised context, but cannot find an authentic way of embodying that vision within the complex specifics of the South African political situation.

Fugard today readily concedes the play's limitations, as does Sheila Fugard, though she maintains (1993:401) that the work is not totally without value:

Athol wrote No-Good Friday in three weeks, but was so anxious to cast the play that he did not finish it. Perhaps the ending needed more thought than he was capable of

giving the material at the time. In my opinion, No-Good Friday is a fluid script, an inner dialogue between Athol and his fascinating experience of the township.

She goes on in her article about Fugard's "apprenticeship years" (1993) to provide an enthralling account of the play's early production history, detailing their efforts to audition, cast and direct men and women who had no experience of the theatre whatsoever. She describes how they built their own sets, transported the cast and crew, and even had to sell their furniture and move to a cheaper studio flat to finance the project. The play opened at the Bantu Men's Social Centre, next to Dorkay House, on 30 August 1958, and was then taken on a township tour, playing to dismally small audiences, before being presented in a single Sunday night performance for a white Johannesburg audience at the Brian Brooke Theatre. Despite a full house, and some fairly favourable reviews, no management made an offer for the play and no amateur theatre group requested the rights. Indeed, the play was professionally produced again only in November 1974 at the British Crucible Studio in Sheffield (though a performance did take place in 1970 in Soweto; see Read 1991:132).

Undaunted by No-Good Friday's lack of commercial success, Fugard continued with his devotion to play-writing. By this time, however, he had become friends with several people who would have a decisive influence on his career, including Barney Simon and Tone Brulin. Brulin was a Belgian director who had been brought out to South Africa by the National Theatre Organisation (NTO) to establish a Kamertoneel (Chamber Theatre) in Pretoria. Brulin had been impressed by the potential Fugard had shown as a playwright in No-Good Friday, and, to enable him to gain further experience in professional theatre, got him a job as stage manager with the NTO. This post represented a means of getting away from the Native Commissioner's Court, but, more than that, gave Fugard a crash-course in theatre, both in terms of technical expertise and in terms of introducing him to mainstream European drama. It also placed Fugard in the company of professional actors such as Andre Huceunet, Bill Brewer and Peter Gildenhuis. Not surprisingly, his next play turned out to be a far more accomplished piece of theatre than its predecessor.

(iii)

For the setting for this play, entitled Nongogo, Fugard turned once more to Sophiatown. In an inscription on the back of one of the original prints for the first production (NELM), Fugard wrote:

Nongogo was the story of a prostitute's ill-fated attempts to turn respectable. Like No-Good Friday the setting was an Johannesburg non-white township - an overcrowded, impoverished and violent world.

A "nongogo", according to a note preceding the text (p.58), was "a woman for two-and-six, a term especially used of prostitutes soliciting amongst the lines of gold-mine workers queuing for their pay". The former "nongogo" in this play is Queeny, who has,

by the time the play opens, made herself into a shebeen queen, though she is far from content with her present status. Into the shebeen one day comes Johnny, not as a customer, but as a prospective table-cloth salesman. They are immediately drawn to each other, and that evening when Johnny returns, having missed his bus, they decide to go into business together selling material for interior decorating. The next morning Johnny goes out and with ten pounds from Queeny buys a whole stock of bright rainbow-coloured material. He confides to Queeny, knowing nothing of her past, that he longs to "Live and think clean", having "touched real filth once" (p.90-91), when he was forced at 17 to act as a homosexual plaything for the miners in the all-male compounds. His budding friendship with Queeny threatens Sam, Queeny's former pimp, and so, when Johnny goes out again to sell the material, Sam plots with Patrick, a drunken customer, and Blackie, a hunchback shebeen servant, to leak Queeny's past to Johnny. Sam's plan proves successful and Johnny is horrified, drinking himself into a state of tortured anxiety. When Queeny returns to the shebeen after shopping for a new dress for herself, chicken and champagne for a celebratory dinner, and an expensive wrist-watch as a gift for Johnny, the mood darkens inexorably. At last, Queeny tells Johnny the truth about herself that he insists on knowing, and then, seeing the look of disgust on his face, she sarcastically plays up to him like a tart. He flees into the night, leaving her to re-open the shebeen which she had planned closing, and to return to her empty, bitter life.

Nongogo is virtually unique in Fugard's canon for the degree to which it suggests that one's fate is unalterable and that any attempt to oppose this immutability is essentially worthless. Though a number of characters in Fugard's early work, such as Willie in No-Good Friday, Hester in Hello and Goodbye and Boesman and Lena in the play of that name, come up against a fate over which they seemingly have little control, at least they are permitted to challenge that fate and to affirm their humanity in the process. In Nongogo, neither Queeny nor Johnny seems to derive any benefit from their endeavour to escape the causal determination of their past and to create a new future of their own choosing. Early in the play, Queeny looks at Blackie, the hunchback, and remarks that it is not his "fault" that he is the way he is:

And the same for me. I don't suppose it's my fault, or even Sam's. [Pause.] Then who ... who the hell do you swear at and hate? (p.64).

Then, when she meets Johnny, she begins to dream of changing her life, "taking it apart and putting it back together again, with a few improvements. But where do you start?" (p.79) Johnny responds to her question with spirited optimism, revealing a like desire for personal amelioration:

You see, it's important, Queeny ... trying to make life better. I'm not saying my idea is going to change the world, but maybe it will give us a bit more guts, and make waking up tomorrow a little bit easier. You said you were getting sick of life the way it is .... so why don't you start changing things? You could start with this room (p.80).

Fired with Johnny's passion, not even Sam's cynical call to "wake up" can dampen Queeny's excitement:

I have! And for the first time in my life. I've woken up to something that looks like it might be fun and nice and clean (p.84).

In the end, their hopes are wrecked by the vindictiveness of Sam, who realises that Johnny is "a fancy boy", "the fastidious kind, that don't like chewing on a bone after all the other dogs taken the meat off" (p.99). As Sam rightly supposes, Johnny is appalled by the "filth" (p.112) of Queeny's personal history, which drags him back into the "filth" and "trash" (p.114) of his own past. As he tries to extract Queeny's confession, Johnny articulates the most bleakly mechanistic outlook in all of Fugard's work:

Then don't blame yourself either. Let's blame the stinking bloody world out there that makes us what we are. Let's blame what sent us into this world because nobody with any sense would choose to come .... The only difference is that sometimes I get the crazy idea that a man can change the world he lives in. Hell! You can't even change yourself (p.109).

At the play's caustic conclusion, Queeny acknowledges the futility of trying "to crawl out of ... the gutter" (p.114), and resigns herself to the fact that no one will ever give her "a chance" to be "decent" (pp.113-114). With Johnny's departure, she sinks back into her life as the owner of a dingy little shebeen, Sam's unintentionally ironic remark mordantly summing up her future: "It's like old times again" (p.115).

With such a fatalistic worldview underpinning the dramatic structure of the play, little room is left for any notion of meaningful change at the level of the social and the political. And, indeed, Nongogo offers scant hope for any liberalising of the political context in which the characters' lives are played out. The work as a whole makes hardly any direct reference to this socio-political dimension, and where it does, the content of that reference seems to support the idea of a world governed by an implacable fate. Patrick, a customer who gets drunk at the shebeen instead of being with his wife during the birth of yet another child, expounds the pessimistic nature of the play's political sub-text:

It's hell. In every way it's hell. You know they should make it that we blacks can't have babies ... 'cause hell they made it so we can't give them no chances when they come. They just about made it so we can't live. But with babies it's hell! (p.76).

Even if one follows Walder's suggestion (1984:50) that behind Queeny's and Johnny's exploited past lies the man-made reality of the gold-mines, the overall experience of the play still upholds the notion that the human will to exploit is part of a larger and ineluctable design that is beyond corrigibility.

Nongogo may thus be seen to represent possibly the bleakest perspective in all of Fugard's plays. Perhaps at this point in his development, Fugard had begun to appreciate the full force of the dark implications of the existential outlook, and had

found an effective medium for presenting those implications, but without being able, as yet, to formulate any plausibly constructive response at the level of the personal or the social. Later, however, in his plays of the 1960s, he would, indeed, identify and begin to explore some authentic responses to these existential quandaries. Thus, although the problems posed by the existential position would continue to exert an influence on his thinking in his later work, he would never again present quite so hopeless an outlook as he does in this early play.

Nongogo had its first performance, like its predecessor, at the Bantu Men's Social Centre, on 8 June 1959, and then transferred to the Darragh Hall of Johannesburg's Anglican Cathedral from 15 to 27 June 1959. In one sense, Nongogo represented a great step forward from No-Good Friday in terms not only of stagecraft, set and lighting design and so on, but also in terms of general theatre professionalism. But the play still made no profits, was not taken up by any theatre group, and, like No-Good Friday, was not performed again until 1974 in Sheffield.

Looking back, Fugard refers to both No-Good Friday and Nongogo as "inflated verse dramas by a liberally-informed white" (in Benson 1973:58), though they are written in prose and are not specifically liberal in outlook. Still, it is perhaps best to view them as "apprenticeship work" (Walder 1984:33) and "minor plays" (Vandenbroucke 1986:39), especially in comparison with his later drama. Nevertheless, they have both enjoyed successful revivals from time to time (see Read 1991:132-137); indeed, as recently as 1994, Nongogo was effectively mounted at the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg and at the Grahamstown Festival by Jerry Mofokeng. Moreover, apart from their thematic content, these plays represented a theatrical vision years ahead of their time in the sense that Fugard used black actors, took the plays to black audiences, and tried to give voice to black South African concerns and ideas. At a time when, as Siphso Sepamla (1981) notes, "the very word 'theatre' was not part of our vocabulary", Fugard literally created an African theatre out of nothing. Despite the existence of some South African orientated plays by the likes of James Ambrose Brown and Guy Butler, as well as some scattered examples of early black drama (see Martin Orkin 1991), the fact remains that Fugard's concerted endeavour to develop an authentic indigenous theatre was unprecedented in this country at that time. In fact, asked once what South African dramatists had influenced his early work, he sincerely replied, "There were none around" (in Ford 1971:8) As such, Sheila Fugard (1993:408) is justified in commenting that one important value of the township plays is that they allowed poor, struggling black men and women "to find a voice, speak, make theatre" at a time when there were no other outlets for them to do so. "For Athol", she goes on to remark, "they were a beginning".

Following the relative success of Nongogo, Fugard was offered the position of resident stage manager at the Cape Town branch of the NTO, but he and Sheila decided instead to broaden their horizons and travel to London. The move turned out to be something of a disaster, however. Fugard was unable to get work, even as a

stage-hand at the Royal Court, and eventually ended up doing menial labour through an agency for out-of-work actors, while Sheila worked as a typist. Moreover, Fugard was unable to find acceptance for a new play he had sent ahead of him to Joan Littlewood, entitled, A Place with the Pigs:

It was the first of my attempts at an Immorality Act story. It centred on the reaction of a little Afrikaans community to a man who had a love relationship with a coloured woman.

I eventually tore it up (Fugard in Vandenbroucke 1986:40). Fugard would later deal more successfully with this theme in Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act, and he would use the title for a very different sort of play. At the time, however, the future looked bleak.

At last, the Fugards, together with another South African actor, David Herbert and his wife, Jonne, teamed up with Tone Brulin to form a small South African theatre company called the New Africa group, which would take productions to the Continent. Fugard and Herbert each wrote a play, the better of which would be chosen to tour. Fugard offered a modern version of the Nativity story, in which one magus was black, another coloured, and the third Indian. In retrospect, Fugard (in Vandenbroucke 1986:40) rates the play very low, and the group wisely chose Herbert's play, A Kakamas Greek, on the try-for-white theme, which received very favourable reviews with Fugard himself excelling in one of the leading roles. Despite this small success, the group broke up, as Tone Brulin (1979; in Gray 1982a:35) recalls, because of homesickness. Fugard lingered on a while, directing Brulin's play, De Honden (The Dogs), in November 1960, but eventually a number of events coalesced to prompt his return, including Sheila's pregnancy, their lack of prospects, and, particularly, the Sharpeville massacre which suggested to Fugard that to be relevant as a writer he needed to be close to the events unfolding in his own country.

(iv)

At around this time, Fugard began making notes for what was to be his breakthrough play, The Blood Knot, as well as for a novel, Tsotsi. It was to be the only time that he worked on two pieces simultaneously. It may be useful to deal with Tsotsi here, because, despite its strange, delayed publication, it, like No-Good Friday and Nongogo, is set in Sophiatown and shares with those plays much common imagery and language, if not outlook.

Tsotsi, Fugard's only novel to date, deals with the awakening to consciousness and conscience of a Sophiatown gang member, "Tsotsi", a rebirth signalled by his caring for a baby he accidentally finds and by his sparing of an intended victim, a legless cripple named Morris Tshabalala. The novel traces Tsotsi's development from knowing nothing and wanting to know nothing about himself (not even his real name), to confronting his own fear of "nothingness" and the problem of how "to affirm his existence in the face of this nullity" (p.32), to realising that he "wanted to know everything" (p.47). His search leads him

to recall his past and his name, David Madondo, and to recognise, as another gang member, Boston, points out, that his questions are ultimately "about God" (p.152). In bluntest terms, then, the novel plays out "the idea for a story" which Fugard had outlined in his Notebooks (December 1960, p.11):

- criminal: completely shrouded in darkness. At a moment - a stab of light and pain. This followed, developed, in the span of a short time leads to the full Christian experience....

The novel is not quite that simplistic, however. For instance, Tsotsi's attempts to comprehend the Christian experience never reach fulfilment, and are hardly helped by the confused account of the Biblical story provided by the gardener, Isaiah, outside the Reverend Ransome's "Church of Christ the Dreamer" (pp.159-161). Moreover, it is not made clear how the Christian message is to be reconciled in the novel with what Boston refers to as "the philosophy of error", the idea that "the whole bloody thing, from beginning to end, from Adam to Walter Boston Nguza, is one big mistake. No kidding" (p.143). Nor is it made clear how, if at all, Tsotsi's enlightenment will affect the other two members of his gang, Butcher and Die Aap. And finally, the ending of the novel, with Tsotsi dying under the slum clearance bulldozers in an attempt to save the baby, leaves hanging the question of how his new-found self-knowledge would have enabled him to survive and even prosper in the kind of world depicted in the novel.

Perhaps the novel may best be viewed as an incomplete attempt by Fugard to find a positive response to the grim questions and apparently hopeless situation portrayed in Nongogo. This was, of course, a problem with which Fugard was to grapple throughout his career, not only from a philosophical standpoint but also at the level of the political. In this novel, however, as in the township plays, political issues constantly impinge on the surface texture of the main plot without ever being adequately addressed or resolved in terms of the main plot action. To take some scattered examples: migrant labour, forced removals, gangsterism, the poverty and deprivation of Sophiatown, the brutal police raids, even Morris Tshabalala's life and body being "destroyed" digging the white man's gold - all of these issues permeate the text without ever being taken into proper account in relation to the solutions and answers (such as they are) which the text provides.

Nevertheless, the novel, despite its flaws, contains some moments of genuine worth and quality. As Geoffrey Hughes (1980:92-94) points out, Fugard in this novel is able to evoke "the squalor and grind of Sophiatown with ... gripping accuracy" and to take us "fearlessly into the skull, the reflexes and thought-patterns of his characters and the undergrowth of the horrific jungle in which they live". Hughes goes on to point out, however, that "Fugard tends to use the shorthand character development of drama rather than the more elaborate analysis typical of fiction", and Vandenbroucke (1986:48-49) notes that Fugard is better at creating dramatic tension than in constructing an integrated fictional plot. All of this suggests that the writing of this novel served, if nothing else, to confirm Fugard as a dramatist

rather than a novelist. David Hogg (1978:76) sums it up adroitly in commenting that in Tsotsi, "Fugard's prose-narrative is dramatic, in that it offers, or strains towards offering, the tale without the teller". The question of Fugard's true medium was settled finally when he tried to write a prose version of The Blood Knot for Andre Deutsch, only to tear it up and conclude in his Notebooks (May 1956, p.51):

This business of writing "prose" because a publisher is interested is fundamentally wrong.

I am a playwright.

Tsotsi was not, in fact, published at all to begin with, but ended up in a suitcase of manuscripts handed over to the National English Literary Museum at Rhodes University for safe-keeping. After discovering the manuscript, Stephen Gray set about editing the work (and then re-editing it when a later draft turned up) under the supervision of Sheila Fugard and Ross Devenish, and the work was finally published in 1980. Although the novel remains a minor work in Fugard's oeuvre, it nevertheless retained a certain freshness and contemporary relevance on publication, despite its long hibernation. Apart from its own intrinsic merits, it provides a fascinating insight into Fugard's ideas at the time, into his style as a prose-writer, and into certain thematic preoccupations which were going to remain crucially important for Fugard in the years to come. One of the most pressing of these themes was the need for human beings to find and affirm some kind of individual identity and self-worth even in the face of a brutal political system and a seemingly dark, absurd universe. It is this concern, in particular, which Fugard would explore in harrowing detail in his Port Elizabeth plays of the 1960s.

Port Elizabeth: The Blood Knot, Hello and Goodbye, Boesman and Lena

(i)

From the very outset of his writing career, Athol Fugard has sought to explore specifically South African themes, to develop "a truly South African theatre" (see Sheila Fugard 1993:395). However, having "received very little provocation from theatre inside this country itself" (Fugard in Hough 1980:38), he turned to overseas playwrights to provide stimulation and guidance. Early on, John Osborne's Look Back in Anger made him "aware of how many bloody good South African stories there were to be told" (Fugard in Gussow 1982:62), prompting him to try to tell "a uniquely South African story" (Fugard in Hough 1980:39), though his Sophiatown plays were most strongly and most obviously influenced by the tough neorealistic drama of American writers like Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill. Even at this time, however, Fugard was acutely conscious of how imitative and derivative his plays were and that he needed to find some authentically indigenous form or style "to move in on the South African experience as such" (Fugard in Hough 1980:39). A number of events occurred in the first years of the 1960s, both in Fugard's personal life and in a wider social sense, which enabled Fugard to discover his material and his own particular dramatic style, and so produce plays that would touch not only his compatriots but audiences throughout the world.

At a political level, the Sharpeville shootings of 21 March 1960, in which 69 pass law protesters were killed by the police, signalled a drastic shift in South Africa away from the politics of gradualism and peaceful protest to those of violence and seemingly inevitable cataclysmic confrontation. With the African nationalist movements taking up the armed struggle, and the Nationalist Party government reacting with a massive and ruthless security clampdown which effectively silenced the voices of legitimate mass opposition, the prospects for a peaceful resolution to the South African situation began to look very remote. Fugard himself recognised the explosive potential in this increasingly polarised and radicalised social context, referring to South Africa in his Notebooks (May 1961, p.33) as "a country on the brink of revolution and violence". In this volatile context, the need for such characteristically liberal values as rational understanding, negotiation and reconciliation came to seem more urgent than ever before as a means of avoiding wholesale civil conflict and bringing about a peaceful, just political settlement. From a literary perspective, Fugard's plays of the 1960s may be seen to represent an attempt to formulate an authentically liberal response to an alarmingly extreme and unstable political situation.

In this regard, his response was informed and vitalised on an intellectual level by his detailed reading of the existentialists. As an undergraduate student, Fugard had studied under the renowned Catholic existentialist philosopher, Professor

Martin Versveld, but now he embarked on a renewed and extensive reading of Kiekegaard, Sartre and especially Albert Camus, as well as the highly influential Irish playwright, Samuel Beckett. At first glance, there might seem to be little common ground between the meliorist and progressive aims of liberalism and the radical pessimism of existentialism. In fact, a good deal of commonality exists between the two, particularly through the way in which Fugard interpreted and expounded the existentialist position. Both philosophies focus primarily on the individual as the fundamental source of value, and emphasise the notions of individual freedom and responsibility, especially in relation to the threat posed by forces inimical to the individual: in liberalism this threat is presented by the totalitarian/authoritarian State; in existentialism the threat takes the form of a hostile or indifferent fate. Both systems of thought seek to explore ways of affirming the individual's capacity for dignity and happiness in the face of such antagonism. Thus, while the dramaturgical outline of Fugard's Port Elizabeth plays is clearly suggested by Beckett, his philosophical outlook is far closer to that of Camus, specifically, as Werner Huber (1989:50) points out, in Camus's "turnabout from the absurd to a more optimistic position beyond nihilism". Fugard moves beyond Beckett's blankly despairing worldview to assert what Craig Raine (1980:10) terms "the possibility of a dignity in the face of nothing". As Huber (1989:53) comments,

it is this philosophy of "courageous pessimism" which turns the negation of despair into a kind of hope and contributes the qualities of liberalism and humanism to the world of Fugard's plays.

As a number of critics have noted, it is the liberal political element in Fugard's thought which lends his brand of existential drama its distinctive flavour. Gerald Weales (in Raymer 1975:327), for instance, stresses that Fugard

is able to use a closed Beckett-like situation and transform it into a context in which the stage game finds its relevance in the social world (South Africa today) as well as in whatever existential universe;

and Craig W. McLuckie (1993:428-429) comments further that both Beckett and Fugard follow Camus's path into the absurd. In his deliberate omission of spatial and temporal data, Beckett creates a stark world that becomes a universal metaphor for the absurd nature of existence in both the physical and metaphysical realms. Fugard, less rooted in the metaphysical, provides exact information on his characters' spatial locale and thus defines absurdity as a condition resulting from the human power structures that govern life, not as the condition of life itself.

This is not to imply, of course, that Fugard simply disregards metaphysical issues in his plays, or that he believes that all of human existence can be reduced to political terms. It does mean, however, that Fugard's liberal political understanding enabled him to recognise that while absurdity is a perfectly appropriate concept to express the insanity of apartheid, for him the condition of absurdity in a political sense is the starting point and not the conclusion of his plays. The underlying purpose

of his work, then, is in the first instance to call attention to the plight of individuals suffering as a consequence of this absurd political system. The essence of his endeavour is encapsulated in a telling comment in his Notebooks (August 1968, p.172), which, appropriately enough, echoes the opening entry in Camus's own notebooks (Camus 1970:235; see Walder 1984:5-6):

Then, tonight, talking to Sheila - telling her that the idea had come to me yesterday at this table, that 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.

More broadly, it is plain that Fugard's intention, as was the case with Camus, is that such "witnessing" will help to bring about meaningful change in his society. As such, his work may be seen as containing a clear social purpose which places it in opposition to texts whose vision is unremittingly nihilistic in nature.

In a way similar to Camus also, Fugard found himself drawn to "one little corner of the world": for Camus, it was French North Africa; for Fugard, it was Port Elizabeth and its environs in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Although Fugard's earlier plays had had South African settings, these had tended to be ones which he had recently encountered, such as Johannesburg or Sophiatown, rather than ones in which he had grown up. As Chris Wortham (1983:166) observes,

in Johannesburg Fugard was a sojourner; Port Elizabeth has always been his home .... Johannesburg he has known as a stranger in adulthood; Port Elizabeth he has experienced with his whole being.

But Port Elizabeth seemed provincial and parochial compared with the metropolitan bustle of Johannesburg, and so Fugard needed to be given the confidence to explore this regional world. This he received, ironically perhaps, not from a South African writer, but from the American novelist, William Faulkner, who set his stories in a corner of rural Mississippi (to which he gave the mythical name of Yoknapatawpha County) and created out of that little world and its simple people a profound and universal literature. According to Fugard (in Hough 1980:43), Faulkner

gave me total security to turn around and look at the specifics, the humble specifics of an Eastern Cape world - well, made me secure in my love of those specifics, made me hand myself over to my love, love of a region, of a place, of my passion for it. And to say, look, if you're going to be a good storyteller, there's enough here for you. He gave me a total sense of security in the specifics of my place and time.

So completely, indeed, did Fugard embrace Port Elizabeth as his home and as the source of his creativity that he has remarked (1978:vii) that "I cannot conceive of myself as separate from it". An early confirmation of this specific literary focus and responsibility is recalled in his memoir, Cousins (1994:59; see also his letter of 1962 to Mary Benson, quoted in Benson 1989:190-191): having returned home from an exciting overseas trip, he found himself depressingly confronted by "drab and ugly and uninteresting" Port Elizabeth, but then

walking down Jetty Street one night shortly after my return, I passed a drunk bleary-eyed coloured woman, her face swollen and bruised from recent beatings. The top half of her dress was torn open, revealing a pair of flabby breasts. In an instant, in all her ugliness, she became a symbol of the world that had claimed me. An inner voice spoke out in protest: "And I must love you?" In an instant another voice replied simply: "Yes. You must love her. She is all you've got, all you will ever have". Those were my orders. I have tried to obey them.

In Port Elizabeth Fugard found a world where he could "master the code" (Weales 1978; 1993) to be able validly to "witness" the unique lives of the marginalised and forgotten poor whites and coloureds and Africans of Valley Road and Korsten and New Brighton. Port Elizabeth provided Fugard with the material to focus on recognisably localised settings in a graphic and literal sense while simultaneously presenting a microcosm of South Africa generally. And it enabled him to create unmistakably regional characters whose specific and individual stories nevertheless resonated powerfully at the level of the social and the political.

(ii)

The first play that Fugard chose to set in the world of Port Elizabeth was The Blood Knot, a play which he had begun in London in 1960, and which he continued writing on his return to Port Elizabeth later that year. Undoubtedly, the most instantly striking feature of the play is the very specificity of its setting. Fugard's opening entry in his Notebooks (1960, p.9) details the planned location in depth:

Korsten in Port Elizabeth: up the road past the big motor assembly and rubber factories, turn right down a dirt road, pot-holed, full of stones. Donkeys wandering loose. Chinese and Indian grocery shops. Down this road until you come to the lake - the dumping ground for waste products from the factories - a terrible smell. On the far side - like a scab on the hill rising from the water - is Korsten location: a collection of shanties, pondoks and mud huts. No streets, no numbers. A world where anything goes - any race, any creed. When the wind blows in the wrong direction, the inhabitants of Korsten live with the stink of the lake.

And, indeed, as the preliminary stage direction indicates, "All the action takes place in a one-room shack in the Non-White location of Korsten" (p.2). Moreover, the stifling poverty of the scene, emphasised most immediately by the rotten lake, is continually reinforced in the play's dialogue; as Morris tells Zach,

You should have been here this afternoon. The wind was blowing again. Coming this way it was, right across the lake. You should have smelt it. I'm telling you that water has gone bad. Really rotten! And what about all those factories there on the other side? Hey? And the lavatories all around us? They've left no room for a man to breathe.

In these degrading and disgusting surroundings, Fugard places two highly individuated characters, Morris and Zachariah Pietersen, two half-brothers of the same mother. Although the brothers are "coloured", Morris is "light-skinned" whereas Zach is "dark-skinned" (p.2), "almost an African", according to the notebooks entry (1960, p.9). They are different in other respects, too: Morris is Calvinistically fastidious, cerebral, sensitive, and stays at home keeping house, while Zach, whose presence is all unreflecting physicality, works as a guard of some sort at a factory. Much of the action of the play concerns Morris's efforts to control Zach - through an alarm-clock, through the Bible, and through insisting that they plan and save for their farm of the "future" - and to prevent him from pursuing the spontaneous, sensual life he desires. When Zach demands to find a woman, Morris placates him by arranging "a corresponding pen-pal of the opposite sex" (p.17), Ethel Lange of Oudtshoorn. Ethel turns out to be white, however, and when she writes to say that she intends to visit, Morris panics and succeeds in frightening Zach, too, warning him that "They don't like these games with their whiteness" (p.58). Their solution is to have Morris pretend to be white, and to dress in an outfit "for a gentleman" (p.70) which Zach buys with their savings. Ethel writes that she has become engaged and will therefore not be coming after all, but the brothers continue to rehearse Morris in his role as a white man, teaching him to treat Zach abusively as a "Swartgat" (p.87), until as dusk falls Zach rises up and "stands over Morris on the point of violence" (p.95), when the alarm-clock rings and brings them back to themselves.

At this literal level, the play explores the tensions between two brothers, both of whom are, in differing ways, victims of racial discrimination. Morris, it turns out, did, indeed, once "try for white", but, unable to live with his sense of shame and betrayal, has returned to his brother's shack in the coloured township. Zach, on the other hand, has had no such opportunity, given his significantly darker complexion, but is tormented by his suspicion of being racially inferior to his "whiter" sibling: hence their violently charged emotional reactions to the insults, "swartgat kaffer" and "hotnot", which are applied at a number of points in the play to Zach (p.26; p.78; p.87). In this regard, the play ends on an equivocal note: on the one hand, the brothers end up as people "without futures" (p.96) and without the means to escape their poverty-stricken circumstances or the racial system which oppresses them; on the other hand, they discover the bond between themselves as brothers. At several moments they recall happy memories from their childhood together - such as their imaginary car ride speeding away into a flock of butterflies (pp.49-51) - and at the curtain they reaffirm their indissoluble ties to each other:

ZACHARIAH. What is it, Morrie? The two of us ... you know ... in here?

MORRIS. Home.

ZACHARIAH. Is there no other way?

MORRIS. No. You see, we're tied together, Zach. It's what they call the blood knot ... the bond between brothers.

The play may thus be read as a story of the difficult

interpersonal relationship between two brothers with very different personalities: Fugard and his brother, Royal, did resemble Morris and Zach, respectively, in terms of temperament and abilities (see Fugard in Gussow 1982:66). The play may also be seen as an indictment of the living conditions of coloured people under apartheid. And it may be regarded as a study of how political racism enters into and infects even the closest and most intimate relationships.

The play operates, however, in a much wider sense at the level of the symbolic and the metaphorical. Although the play is by no means to be viewed as some kind of political fable or allegory, nevertheless the text reverberates with political import in a way which has profound implications for the South African situation, particularly at the time of the play's first production. Margaret Munro (1982:14,16) points out, for instance, that the impact which Fugard achieved in The Blood Knot (as opposed to his earlier plays) derives from his discovery of the need to "set up that basic dramatic opposition" of black and white in order to reflect the essence of apartheid society:

The concept "Coloured" with its associated descriptions of "trying for white" exists only in the dialogue; what the audience sees is black and white.

(In actual fact, the play's first performers were a white man, Athol Fugard, and a black man, Zakes Mokae). Anna Rutherford (1976; in Gray 1982a:151-162), similarly, sees the play functioning on "a realistic level" or "in historical time" as the tale of two coloured brothers, but also on "a symbolic level" or "in suspended time" as a representation of the black and white races in South Africa. Rutherford's discussion is reductive in places, particularly in its treatment of liberalism, but effectively makes the point that these different levels are not to be regarded as completely separate, but rather as part of "a constant interweaving of themes and interchange of symbolic levels" in the play. One is reminded here of Fugard's suggestion (in Coveney 1973:37; and in Hodgins 1967:28) about the contrapuntal, fugue-like composition of his plays:

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.

In this reading, Morris may be interpreted as an image of the white colonist who has entered unbidden into the home of the black man in Africa, and has imposed his idea of order and control upon that environment. The play succeeds also in throwing up uneasy stereotypes of the "civilised", Apollonian white man and the "savage", Dionysian black, though without itself supporting such stereotypes (see Fugard's comment in his notebooks (May 1967, p.54) in reaction to criticisms in this regard by Lewis Nkosi (1968:5-8) and Mshengu (1982:173), for instance). And the climax of the action presents a horrifying image of the pending racial apocalypse in South Africa if the white man continues to oppress and abuse his black "brother". Though the alarm-clock halts the imminent violence, the image of potential bloodshed remains fixed in the audience's mind and

underscores the fact that current white political control is fatally unsustainable. Rutherford (1976: in Gray 1982a:162) draws the conclusion of the play's final scene incisively:

Here we have the true meaning of the blood knot. The reality lies not in Morris's sentimental idea but in the mutual dependence of one on the other ...; polarised as they are now into black and white roles, they would both deny the connection. But this is not possible; they are bound to one another and they are forced to work out their future, if there is to be a future, within the spatial confines of South Africa.

The play warns, therefore, about the inevitability of revolutionary violence if political change does not take place. Written in an atmosphere of seething tension and anxiety in the early 1960s, the play tapped into the intense fears of a violent black uprising which were prevalent in the country at that time; as Fugard himself (Notebooks, April 1963, p.79) noted,

not a day passes now without me reading in the paper, almost as a commonplace, of some fresh outbreak of violence, another outrage to justice and decency. I turn with fear from the thought of the final reckoning. We will have to pay and with lives and hope and dignity for all of these that we destroyed.

The play asserts, however, that violent confrontation can be, and must be, avoided. Far from lending its support to the notion of armed rebellion, the play calls out instead from a resolutely liberal position for mutual dialogue and reconciliation between the opposing political forces, however difficult such an option might seem. But the play makes clear that such reconciliation must be based on a recognition on the part of the whites of the common humanity and interdependence of the races in South Africa. The implication, moreover, is that a peaceful settlement can only take place if the rulers accede to the legitimate demands of the majority of the population for a shared country, or "Home" (p.97). Such protests and such warnings went unheeded by the Nationalist government, however, who embarked instead on a course of unprecedentedly brutal repression, and set back the possibility of a democratic outcome in South Africa by over thirty years.

The Blood Knot was the opening production on 23 October 1961 of the African Music and Drama Association in the Rehearsal Room at Dorkay House in Johannesburg (although "previews" had been held during September) and rivetted the first audiences to see it (see, for example, Benson 1989). It then transferred, in a revised and shortened version, to the YMCA Intimate Theatre on 8 November 1961, where it received rapturous acclaim from the critics; James Ambrose Brown's review in the Sunday Times (12 November 1961; in Gray 1982a:71) is representative:

As a theatre critic who has watched the indigenous theatre grow over many years (and as a playwright), I say emphatically that Fugard's The Blood Knot has given the South African play international status.

The play then toured for over six months, firmly establishing Fugard's reputation throughout South Africa. But when the play

was produced in Britain in 1963, a poisonous review by Kenneth Tynan, who utterly misconceived the play's racial concerns (see Gussow 1982:66), condemned the play to failure. The play was later acclaimed overseas, however; never more so than in 1985 when the play's 25th anniversary was celebrated with an American production (at Yale and then on Broadway) of a new version of the play, in which it was cut by a third and significantly revised (see Walder (ed.) 1987).

As Fugard (in Khan 1971:27) has acknowledged, The Blood Knot "marks my discovery of myself as a writer". Despite being overlong, wordy, and at times somewhat incohesive in terms of plot and characterisation, the play nevertheless had a tremendous impact and confirmed Fugard's acuity and insight as a dramatist. Moreover, the play's first production cemented two lasting friendships: one with Barney Simon, who served as the "third eye" for Fugard's direction of the play; and one with Zakes Mokae, for whom Fugard had written the part of Zach and whom he unhesitatingly cast in that role. At that time, although blacks and whites were still ostensibly allowed to perform together on the same stage, it was highly unusual, and so The Blood Knot, in its very staging, challenged the racial status quo of the country. Indeed, the fact that most white theatre managements refused to allow mixed audiences then, even though no law had as yet been promulgated in this regard, prompted Fugard to write "an open letter to British playwrights asking them to make it a condition in granting the rights to their plays that all audiences be non-segregated" (see Fugard 1978:xi). A furious debate ensued, both in the South African and the overseas press, but the upshot was that the playwrights' boycott was duly set in place in 1963.

Some years later, however, in 1968, Fugard reversed his decision and called for the lifting of the boycott. For one thing, the Group Areas Act prohibiting racial mixing had been extended in 1965 to include theatre audiences, so that managements now had no choice in the matter anyway. For another, the Copyright Act of 1965 allowed for the pirating of texts when performing rights were "withheld on 'ideological' or 'unreasonable' grounds" (see Vandenbroucke 1977a:44-46; 1977b:46-54), so that British plays were being performed in any event, though not ones which could have had a progressive political effect. The debate was again heated, with Fugard being severely criticised by writers such as Pinter, Osborne, Bolt, Mortimer and Lessing, all of whom supported the continuation of the boycott, as well as by an old friend, Mary Benson, who asked how he could justify plays (including his own) being performed to segregated audiences. Fugard's public reply in the media (quoted in his Notebooks, May 1968, pp.159-160) argued on the basis that "virtually all significant opposition has been silenced" in South Africa, and that the very ideas and values of liberal democratic thought were being stifled:

Anything that will get people to think and feel for themselves, that will stop them delegating these functions to the politicians, is important to our survival. Theatre can help do this. There is nothing John Balthazar Vorster

and his Cabinet would like more than to keep us isolated from the ideas and values which are current in the free Western world. These ideas and values find an expression in the plays of contemporary writers. I would like South Africa to see these plays.

His reply in a letter to Mary Benson (quoted in his Notebooks, May 1968, pp.161-162) expresses his own personal anxiety about his actions at the time:

I can't think of any moral dilemma more crucifying than this one - to destroy the evil at the cost of what little good there is, or to seemingly accommodate the evil by sustaining the good. I am not sure. I do not know. I don't think I ever will. But to sit in moral paralysis while the days of my one life - my one chance to discover the brotherhood of other men - pass, is so obviously futile and pointless it is not worth talking about. So without the support of reason, or a clear conviction as to the consequences - relying only on instinct (blind as it is) at the core of my life, I choose and act ....

In this decision, Fugard was supported by a number of leading liberal thinkers in Britain, including Frank Marcus, who argued that the progressive ideas contained in plays could have an "infectious" impact on people in South Africa, as well as Lord Beaumont, who wrote that

the history of almost any totalitarian regime shows instances of "liberal" plays, books, etc. which have helped keep hope alive among those struggling to maintain their standards and beliefs (both quoted in Fugard Notebooks, May 1968, p.160).

Such, indeed, was the cumulative effect of Fugard's Port Elizabeth plays, which helped to maintain the values and ideas of liberalism during the "silent decade" of the 1960s in South Africa, and to help keep alive the hope of the just and peaceful political settlement which was, ultimately, to be achieved in the 1990s. With hindsight, it may be argued that Fugard's decision proved, despite his misgivings, to be the correct one.

(iii)

Following the breakthrough of The Blood Knot, Fugard was to wait another four years before repeating that success. In the interim, several projects aborted at various stages of writing, while the two pieces that were completed, a play called People Are Living There and a screenplay entitled The Occupation, found no sponsor. People Are Living There was eventually produced in 1968, but it remains a play of a rather different order from the Port Elizabeth plays, "an aberrant play" as Fugard refers to it (1978:xi), and it will therefore be discussed, along with The Occupation, at a later point in this study. Fugard continued working during this time as a stage manager, and was involved, interestingly enough, in setting up Alan Paton's play, Sponono, for its world première in Durban at the end of 1962. His regard for this play, however, was low:

Opening was apparently a success - ovation - good notices. Nothing happened in those three weeks to change my opinion

that it is an indifferent play and that the production was bad. My association with this venture was a mistake. Never again (Fugard, Notebooks, December 1962, p.66). He felt, moreover, that when it came to the theatre, Paton was "an amateur":

I could not really talk to him about theatre because he knows nothing about the medium. Incredibly naive - a naivety at the level of tools, craftsmanship, of realising what can be done on a stage, of what has been done. Ignorant even of what is possible with his own plays, like Sponono (Notebooks, January 1963, pp.68-69).

It might be said, then, that if Fugard, the one major writer with which this study is concerned, discovered himself to be a playwright rather than a novelist, then Paton, the other major writer under consideration, was found to be a novelist rather than a playwright. Fugard's criticism of Paton's dramatic abilities was tempered, however, by a deep appreciation of his qualities as a human being, noting that "over and above that there is the man's staggering compassion, rock-bottom sincerity and Christianity" (p.68), and observing further that in this regard Paton towered above a "professional" dramatist like Uys Krige:

Uys does not measure up to Paton's compassion and Christianity. Paton really loves. He writes because he loves (p.69).

Fugard, by contrast, has never been a Christian believer and his rejection of Christian dogma is total. While his daughter, Lisa, was still very young, she referred to him in a highly apposite malapropism as an "agnoceros" (see Gussow 1982:80). And he has discussed his lack of faith candidly in his notebooks (June 1962, p.56):

How is it that 'God' remains the most artificial word and thought in my life? Can I in all honesty translate my attitude into the words: I don't know whether he is or he isn't. The small "h" came off my pen without thought. It is a good example of what I feel in this respect.

I cannot get vehement about something that leaves me indifferent. Let me put it this way: I have felt no need - for Him - for an affirmation of Him, or a denial.

Despite this agnosticism, however, Fugard has proved himself to be, like Paton, a writer of great compassion, who has taken up the duty of being a "witness" to the poor and the oppressed people of his time and place. In this, Fugard shares with Paton an essentially liberal perspective both as a writer and as a social critic, suggesting that liberalism, as a system of thought, is able to attract and accommodate people of very different backgrounds and temperaments, and bring them together in a common vision of man and society.

The bounds of this common outlook were tested in Fugard's next Port Elizabeth play, Hello and Goodbye, which deals explicitly with the implications of a world in which God is absent, and in which the possibilities for the discovery of ultimate meaning and salvation seem very distant. In a way similar to Cry, the Beloved Country, this play questions what basis there can be for survival

and life in such a world of desolation, though Fugard does this not, as Paton would, through the filter of Christian faith, but rather from the perspective of a Camusian existential humanism.

As was the case with The Blood Knot, this play is set in a very specific locale, the poor white Valley Road area of Port Elizabeth, and focuses on two highly individual characters, whose attitudes, speech patterns and behaviour embody a remarkable verisimilitude. Moreover, Hello and Goodbye, despite its local specificity, resonates at a wider philosophical level and raises issues of the most fundamental kind. As such, Fugard was concerned that the play was too similar to its predecessor; but, apart from being a far more accomplished play in terms of its formal dramaturgy, it also moves beyond the earlier work in the scope of its thematic concerns and the complexity with which it treats those concerns.

The play opens on a scene of a kitchen, poorly furnished with a "table and four chairs, lit by a solitary electric light hanging above" (p.173). At the table sits Johnnie Smit in a state of shock over the recent death of his father. In a long monologue, Johnnie talks in a feverish and seemingly incoherent way as he tries desperately to ward off the madness which his grief threatens to provoke. Yet his speech reflects in an unconscious way the basic and universal human attempts to invest life with meaning and order in the face of destruction and confusion: by fixing one's location in place and time; by structuring one's past through memory; and by the organisational properties of language. His expletive, "Jesus!" (p.173), seems to confirm, however, the futility of any appeal to a divinity for salvation from nullity. Indeed, the very notion of the dead father calls to mind Nietzsche's concept of the death of God, with its attendant implications of the loss of meaningfulness and purpose.

Into Johnnie's world suddenly and unexpectedly appears Hester, his sister, returned after many years away in Johannesburg. Whereas Johnnie is morbidly introspective and timid, Hester seems brash, sensual and direct (the contrast between the two characters forming another point of comparison with The Blood Knot). Hester, it turns out, is unaware of their father's death, but, having heard that he is ill, has returned to claim her share of the "compensation" money which she believes he was awarded after losing a leg in a railways accident some years previously. Realising that Hester believes their father to be alive, Johnnie takes up the pretence and begins macabrely to bring him back to life, imaginatively at least, warning Hester not to disturb him. She agrees to leave as soon as she finds the money, and begins rummaging through the family's boxes: what emerges instead as the contents of the boxes spill chaotically onto the stage is a pitiful disclosure of the family's materially and emotionally impoverished lives as well as the absurd disorder of their existence. In fact, when Hester becomes distracted by the smell of one of her late mother's dresses and the few good memories that it evokes, Johnnie and the audience recognise that Hester has forgotten about the money and is engaged in a search for some compensation of a quite different and less tangible kind. As the

two siblings confront the emptiness of their lives, their secrets begin to emerge: Hester confesses bitterly to being a "hoer" in Johannesburg, while Johnnie, it transpires, did once have the opportunity to make a life for himself, having been accepted by the South African Railways as a learner-stoker, but lost courage and returned to his crippled father, to whom he has been a companion and servant ever since. At this point Hester tries to get Johnnie to abandon the father, whose crutches Johnnie has found amidst the debris on the floor, and which he is beginning to practise using. Johnnie reacts with "anguish" to Hester's suggestion, crying, "I NEED SOMETHING! LOOK AT ME!" and calling on God to forgive her. Hester in turn is provoked by this into uttering her own desperate cri de coeur, "THERE IS NO GOD! THERE NEVER WAS!" (all p.227) and rushes into her father's room to confront him about the money. Finding the room empty, she attacks Johnnie, whose words echo those he imagines his father to have used at the time of his accident: "More! Explode! Swallow me up. Let the mountain fall! This is the end of the world" (p.230). When she calms down, Hester implores Johnnie to go back with her to Johannesburg, but he refuses, and after she leaves, he drags himself up onto the crutches and in a moment of chilling psychological aberration brings his dead father back to life by taking over his identity and story:

Why not? It solves problems. Let's face it - a man on his own two legs is a shaky proposition ....

They can look at me now. Shine their lights in my face, stare as hard as they like. I've got a reason. I'm a man with a story. 'I was eating prickly pears, Mister, leaning on my spade having a rest, minding my own business, when suddenly the earth opened and the mountain fell on me ....' They'll say shame, buy me a beer, help me on buses, stop the traffic when I cross the street ... slowly ....

Yes! Everything slower now. Everything changed. The time it takes. Leave at sunset, arrive in the dark, twilight on the bridge. The shadow on the wall different ... but me ... a different me!

What's the word? Birth. Death. Both. Jesus did it in the Bible.

[Pause.]

Resurrection (pp.234-235).

At its most fundamental level, then, the play examines Hamlet's question, "to be or not to be?" particularly in a dark and godless universe which seems to allow of no real meaning or value. Johnnie clearly chooses "not to be", extinguishing his own personality and substituting for it that of his father. In a symbolic sense, this act can be read as the attempt to create a Father God for oneself in order to provide life with an ultimate ground for meaningfulness. Throughout, the play continually emphasises Johnnie's Calvinistic fear and need of such a Father, suggested even by such details as the light hanging over Johnnie's head; Hester, by contrast, temporarily steps into this light but removes herself from it at the end, implying her final emancipation from the puritanical oppression of her upbringing. Robert Green, in his article, "The Cripple and the Prostitute" (1970) has argued interestingly but unconvincingly that Johnnie's

actions in fact constitute existential heroism in that they represent an effort to create strength and value for himself out of his own weakness, loneliness and alienation. Ultimately, however, Johnnie's behaviour must be seen as an exemplification of what Jean-Paul Sartre in Being and Nothingness (1943:48) called "bad faith": the "lie to oneself" or the "inner negation" of one's consciousness. Fugard himself (in Rae 1971; in Gray 1982a:44) has referred to Johnnie at the end as "morbid" and "mentally unbalanced".

Hester, on the other hand, chooses "to be", even though her life has been one characterised by pain and unhappiness. Fugard comments in his notes for the play (1978:xiv): "Her past fifteen years in Joburg - an experience that has taken her to the limits of physical violence and cruelty. Carnal reality"; a reality comprising "her bruises, her physical self. Flesh that has said fuck-you to the spirit". Moreover, her return to Port Elizabeth proves, on the surface, to be unsuccessful: she finds compensation in terms neither of money nor emotional redemption, and returns at the end to her empty flat in Johannesburg. Nonetheless, she does achieve something worthwhile, and in this regard goes as a character beyond Morris and Zach in The Blood Knot, as Fugard (1978:xv) makes clear:

Far from leaping, Morrie and Zach wake up heavy and hopeless, almost prostrate on the earth [whereas Hester really] "wakes up". Three experiences: loss of hope, knowledge of death, and finally the only certainty, the flesh ... "truths the hand can touch".

This last phrase, and indeed the whole tenor of Fugard's comments, derives from Fugard's intensive reading of Albert Camus at that time: "What could be more obvious", he asked, "than that I should be drawn to, overwhelmed by Camus" (1978:xv). And Hester represents the perfect vehicle for expressing this Camusian movement from despair to the recognition of man's basic carnality and finally to some kind of affirmation of life, if only in the capacity of the human spirit to endure bravely and without illusion in the face of a blank and indifferent universe. Hester, surviving to say hello and then goodbye to any lingering illusions she may have had, is the totally valid dramatic embodiment of what Camus termed, in a famous phrase, "courageous pessimism" (in Fugard 1978:xvi).

At the centre of the play, Hester expresses the utter desolation and purposelessness of her life in Johannesburg, in which the very notion of self and identity has lost all sense:

Then I started waking in the middle of the night wondering which one it was, which room ... lie there in the dark not knowing. And later still, who it was. Just like that. Who was it lying there wondering where she was? Who was where? Me. And I'm Hester. But what does that mean? What does Hester Smit mean? ....

In the meantime, just wait, listen to the questions and have no answers ... no danger or pain or anything like that, just something missing, the meaning of your name (p.200).

She realises, furthermore, on her return to Port Elizabeth that

she will not find "Home" (p.199) there either, because "nothing matters ... Being born? Being dead? They're mistakes. All we unpacked here tonight is mistakes" (p.223). And yet, despite everything, when Johnnie dares her to commit suicide as a way of ending the absurdity of her life, she refuses, determined to survive, confronting her life and challenging her fate with what Fugard, borrowing a phrase from William Faulkner, calls "ruthless honesty" (1978:xvi). She thus achieves a heroic status, living life, in Heidegger's term, with "authenticity", and so comes to take her place as one of the strong and courageous female characters in Fugard's work, beginning with Milly in People Are Living There (whom Fugard (in Rae 1971; in Gray 1982a:43)) saw as a "preparation" for Hester), and continuing with Gladys in A Lesson From Aloes, Miss Helen in The Road to Mecca, and, most notably of all, perhaps, Lena in Fugard's next play, Boesman and Lena. As Fugard (in Gussow 1982:90) has noted, "for some reason that I don't understand, I lodge the affirmative note, the ostensible acts of courage, with the women". This is especially true of Hester, who, while by no means a conventional feminist heroine, nevertheless stands out as a powerful example of the woman's ability to bear hardship and endure.

In Hello and Goodbye, there is a deep concern, again synchronous with Camus's thought, with the problem of poverty. The facts of material poverty pervade the play: in Hester and Johnnie's shame at being "the second-hand Smits of Valley Road" (p.211); in Hester's pathetic yearnings for the respectability which she thinks money can buy; and in the over-arching framework in the play of the even more intense poverty and hardship of black South Africans. Johnnie, for example, recalls the "Bad Years" of the Depression in South Africa in the 1930s, when there were "no jobs, no money":

And all the time the kaffirs sit and watch the white man doing kaffir work - hungry for the work. They are dying by the dozen (pp.216-217).

The play makes it quite clear, if it were not evident already, that such poverty degrades and diminishes life, and that it is the duty of any society to try to ameliorate the plight of the poor. But the play as a whole is more concerned with the question of the emotional and spiritual poverty at the heart of human existence, and the alienation and isolation attendant upon such privation. The play explores the possibility of finding some source of genuine value and meaning and belief in the world, but, while not lapsing into total despair, nevertheless refuses to compromise its vision by offering glib or facile solutions to problems which are complex and fundamental. As such, Robert Green (1970:155) accurately summarises Fugard's achievement:

There is no easy optimism in Fugard: as in Blood Knot, the characters of Hello and Goodbye find no miraculous cures for their own shortcomings; there is no deus ex machina in the Fugard world. What we do admire, however, in both these plays is Athol Fugard's astringent toughmindedness, his refusal to romanticise Man, and his very searching but sympathetic analysis of universal human problems - the need to depend on somebody, struggling with the desire for independence; the importance of answering the question,

"Where do you belong?" And from the harsh accents of urban South Africa, Fugard has distilled poetry and meaning; from his low-pitched characters he has extracted the full tragedy and comedy of everyday life, everywhere.

Hello and Goodbye opened on 26 October 1965 at the Library Theatre in Johannesburg, with Fugard and Molly Seftel in the lead roles, and Barney Simon directing. Its success was immediate and unequivocal: Lionel Abrahams (1966:72) asserted that "Fugard stands in virtual isolation as a native master of the medium" in South Africa; and Robert Hodgins (1967:24) claimed that "Athol Fugard is, flatly, the best playwright South Africa has". The production was not without its controversy, however. In the year that the play opened, the Group Areas Act was tightened, and mixed casts and audiences in the theatres were expressly forbidden. After much soul-searching, Fugard eventually allowed Hello and Goodbye to be performed before a whites-only audience, though, as with all his subsequent plays, "on the condition that whenever staged both white and non-white audiences be given a chance to see them" (Fugard 1978:xvii). Fugard's decision was criticised, most stridently by the writer, Dennis Brutus (under the nom de plume, Cicero) in the Port Elizabeth newspaper, the Evening Post. Brutus, who had earlier shown a tolerance for Fugard's dilemma, now accused him of being an "ally of apartheid" who had contributed to the "erosion of human decency" in South Africa (see Fugard Notebooks, December 1965, pp.128-129). Fugard's reply (p.129), like that on the issue of the lifting of the playwright's boycott, was one which tried to rise above mere political points-scoring, and which was based on the necessity of critical engagement, rational dialogue, and, in its widest sense, love:

My only answer - if there is any - lies with Johnnie and Hester.

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?

Not even a question of efficacy but the meaning and content of my life. "I am ..." Choosing to be me, I can't escape talking to South Africa - even under the compromising conditions of segregated performances.

What am I trying to say? That a man can't ever escape the need to talk to his brother? (Himself?) And this involves love - not politics, or morals, or slogans. Love ... Hate.

(iv)

Although the initial production of The Blood Knot in Britain in 1963 was unsuccessful, a second production in 1966, directed by Fugard himself this time, was well received. Its success led to a BBC-2 television production of the play, which was screened in the Theatre 625 series on 12 June 1967. A few days later, on 23 June 1967, Fugard's passport was withdrawn by the South African government. Fugard comments (1978:xix):

Whether there is any connection here I do not know. The Government consistently refused to give any reasons for its actions against me. My own feeling is that the act was meant to intimidate and so force me into leaving the country permanently on a one-way ticket, the so-called "Exit Permit". The Government has made frequent use of the withdrawal of passports, particularly in cases where it cannot "get at" the person involved by actual imprisonment or does not want to use a banning order, as a means of purging society of what it regards as undesirable elements. Fugard was thus hampered in his efforts to assist with the commissioned BBC-TV production of his teleplay, Mille Miglia, in 1968 (to be discussed later), and was isolated from new theatre developments overseas for a number of years. After he applied in vain three times for the return of his passport, a public petition was organised by some of his friends which collected 4000 signatures. This proved partially successful in that his passport was returned "for a limited period of one year with my travelling restricted to the United Kingdom" (Fugard 1978:xx). The passport was then fully restored later that year.

This incident as a whole is indicial of the ever tightening security stranglehold being applied at the time by the Nationalist government in defence of its interests and in its relentless implementation of the policy of apartheid. The Liberal Party itself had been forced to disband in 1968 by the Prohibition of Political Interference Act, leaving genuine liberal parliamentary opposition in the hands of a few individuals like Helen Suzman of the Progressive Party. In terms of literature, many writers, liberal and otherwise, had been banned, imprisoned, or forced into exile, so that social protest had been reduced to a minimum. In this atmosphere of fear and suspicion, few writers in South Africa had the courage to voice their opposition to apartheid as openly and as unequivocally as Fugard did, or to do so as consistently as he did throughout the period of Nationalist rule. This commitment to speak out on behalf of the oppressed continued with his next play, Boesman and Lena, which focused again on the Coloureds of the Eastern Cape, though this time on an even more impoverished and marginalised pair of people than Morris and Zach in The Blood Knot.

The origins of Boesman and Lena date back at least to 1961 when Fugard's Notebooks begin to record encounters with the kind of destitute Coloureds who would form the models for Boesman and Lena. Over the years, Fugard documents no less than six such meetings (February 1961, p.19; February 1961, p.21; August 1965, pp.123-124; July 1968, p.166; December 1968, p.178; April 1969, p.182); so that the characters of Boesman and Lena are a composite of several actual individuals rather than any single couple. In writing the play, nevertheless, Fugard was possessed with a strong sense of his duty to bear witness to the lives of such people, and to do so as honestly and as accurately as he could:

Just a sense of the possibility of sacrilege, of the demand that the truth be told, that I must not bear false witness (Notebooks, July 1968, p.166).

Fugard more than lived up to the standards he set himself, creating a play which was harrowingly realistic in its treatment of an individual pair of people, but coterminously universalising their predicament so that, as Rob Amato (1984:209) has pithily observed, they represent "Everycouple". The play resonates at other levels of political significance as well: the very name of the character, "Boesman", together with Lena's self-description as a "Hotnot meid" (p.280), calls to mind the truly autochthonous inhabitants of South Africa, the San and the Khoi, respectively, who were all but extirpated in the course of the country's wars of conquest, and who today remain estranged and dispossessed peoples within their own land.

The setting of the play's opening scene is the starkest imaginable, "An empty stage" (p.239), which at once sets up intimations of Beckett's Waiting for Godot with its suggestions of existential "nothingness" (see Fugard in Benson 1972:136). At the same time, however, the bare stage also images the literal homelessness and deracination of the characters at an actual subsistence level: when Boesman and Lena stagger onto the stage, they carry with them everything which they possess, meagre and poor as it is. They have been evicted that morning from their pondok by a slum clearance bulldozer, and have walked for hours to reach this desolate spot on the mudflats of the Swartkops River outside Port Elizabeth, where they erect another pondok to spend the night. What follows in the way of conventional plot action is that an old sick African, "Outa", stumbles out of the darkness to die beside their fire, prompting them to move on again before the body is discovered by the authorities. At the level of the psychological and philosophical, however, Fugard extracts maximum significance from the situation as the secret hopes, fears and pains of the couple are gradually revealed, and as they are forced to examine the nature and meaning of their relationship and their lives.

At the start of the play, it is Lena who does all the talking, much of it aimed merely at herself, and yet revealing in a largely unconscious way (as in Hello and Goodbye), a concern with some of life's fundamental questions. Lena's prattle eventually provokes Boesman out of his sullen silence to condemn these "bloody nonsense questions" (p.254) which she has been asking for as long as he can remember:

First you cried. When you stopped crying, you started talking. I was tired. I wanted to sleep. But you talked. "Where we going?" "Let's go back." "Who?" "What?" "How?" Yessus! On and on (pp.245-246).

It soon becomes clear that just as much as Boesman wants to forget his life and lose himself in the comfort of alcoholic oblivion ("Weg wereld, kom brandewyn", p.269), so does Lena want to know and understand the meaning of her existence. As such, they form a similar pair to Hester and Johnnie in Hello and Goodbye in their respective desire either "to be or not to be". Lena's search for meaning takes two particular forms consonant with her limited frame of understanding. In the first place, she believes that if she can only piece together the order of the places that she and Boesman have been to over the years, she will

be able to discover the pattern that will make sense of her life. (Incidentally, the names of these places - Coega, Veeplaas, Redhouse, Missionvale, Bethelsdorp, Kleinskool, Korsten, Swartkops - are as redolent of Fugard's "one little corner of the world" as are the sites listed in Hester's account of her train journey in Hello and Goodbye, pp.183-185.) Ultimately, however, when Boesman finally tells her the order of their endlessly repetitive wanderings, she realises, "It doesn't explain anything" (p.293). She consoles herself with the thought that "Anyway, somebody saw a little bit. Dog and a dead man" (p.293), for the second way in which she tries to invest her life with meaning is to have someone witness it. In his notes for the play, Fugard (1978:xxiii; following R.D. Laing 1960:40f) speaks of

Ontological insecurity: Lena in her demand that her life be witnessed. Not just a sense of injustice and abuse; and elsewhere (in Rae 1971; in Gray 1982a:49) he writes that Nothing really forces, I think, a sense of meaninglessness, of absurdity and pointlessness as much as existence without anybody knowing about it.

Here again, however, Lena's efforts seem to be futile, for the two "witnesses" she finds hardly constitute a consciousness of her existence: a small brak which disappears in the turmoil of the slum clearance, and an old man with whom she shares no common language and who is too immersed in his own personal agony to be able to attend to Lena's story of pain and suffering. What she really wants, of course, is to be able to share her thoughts and memories with her partner, Boesman, but for his own perverse reasons he withholds his company from her.

Boesman's caustic silence, it transpires, is really a defence against his own private anguish and frustration. The turning point in the play, and the catalyst for Boesman's emotional release, occurs when Lena, in her loneliness, chooses to remain with the Outa rather than shelter inside the pondok with Boesman. In a fit of drunken jealousy and despair, Boesman reveals that he has "got secrets in [his] heart too" (p.283). He discloses, firstly, his desperate longing for freedom, which he glimpsed momentarily that morning after the slum clearance:

I could stand there! There was room for me to stand straight. You know what that is? Listen now. I'm going to use a word. Freedom! Ja, I've heard them talk it. Freedom! That's what the white man gave us. I've got my feelings too, sister. It was a big one I had when I stood there. That's why I laughed, why I was happy. When we picked up our things and started to walk I wanted to sing. It was Freedom! ....

The world was open this morning. It was big! All the roads ... new ways, new places. Yessus! It made me drunk (p.275). But Boesman hasn't the resources or the insight to take advantage of the opportunity and eventually resigns himself - as the play opens - to the futility of yet another pondok at Swartkops. Secondly, Boesman confesses that he too felt the pain of the stillbirth and death of their children, which has seemed to confirm the dumb hopelessness of their lives:

Like your moer. All that came out of it was silence. There should have been noise. You pushed out silence. And Boesman

buried it. Took the spade the next morning and pushed our hope back into the dirt (p.284).  
Indeed, as Vandenbroucke (1986:87) points out, if Lena "has wanted to be a mother, perhaps even a madonna - a donkey had attended one of her births and she says, 'I want to be Mary'" (p.253); it becomes clear that Boesman "had yearned to be a paterfamilias". Finally, Boesman admits that the real source of his bitterness and hatred is the shame that he feels at his own personal sense of failure as a man: his obsequious fawning to the white baas; his inability to get a job and provide a decent home; his feelings of "withering disgust" (p.283) at their "crooked lives" (p.284) in this "vrot" world (p.240), expressed in the expletive, "Sies!" (p.283,284). As his control breaks down totally, he is reduced, in his humiliation at being "whiteman's rubbish" (p.277) and in his fear of being blamed for the Outa's death, to beating the dead body with his fists. This appalling image, together with Lena's mordant question, "How do you throw away a dead kaffer?" (p.286), represents perhaps more than anywhere else in Fugard's work the moral horror that lies at the core of apartheid.

Rather than judging Boesman, then, Fugard evokes a measure of sympathy for him. It is made apparent that Boesman's physical, emotional and psychological abuse of Lena is a consequence of his own intense self-loathing and frustration. As Fugard (1978:xxiii) notes,

it is not as simple as Lena being the victim and Boesman the oppressor. Both are ultimately victims of a common, a shared predicament, and of each other. Which of course makes it some sort of love story. They are each other's fate.

It is left to Lena, however, to suggest a more positive alternative to the current state of their lives and their relationship. As Lena realises, the options open to one with regard to "somebody else", are either to "Touch them, hold them .... or make a fist and hit them" (286). Her choice, which she offers to Boesman, is clear and earnest:

Maybe you just want to touch me, to know I'm here. Try it the other way. Open your fist, put your hand on me. I'm here. I'm Lena (p.282).

What Lena is articulating effectively encapsulates the very basis of the humanist ethic of communion, compassion and loving kindness towards all persons. In a crucial image at the end of Act I, Lena enacts a kind of secular mass, reminiscent of Schopenhauer's "religion of humanity", in which she shares her mug of tea and piece of bread with the old black stranger, while Boesman glares at them from his self-isolated position within the pondok. In a way, the image recalls the ending of Cry, the Beloved Country (p.236), where Stephen Kumalo breaks bread and drinks tea while keeping vigil on the eve of his son's execution. This intertextual correspondence suggests that although Fugard does not share Paton's Christian outlook, the foundation of their moral vision is the same. The essence of this vision is that the basis of all morality, including political morality, is the love of one's fellow human beings, and that any social system which

is not informed by this indispensable liberal tenet, is unsound. It is a truth which Fugard expressed in his Notebooks as early as 1961 (pp.40-41):

People must be loved. That is the really crucifying experience in the short time we have as human beings - that intimacy which breaks through our defensive isolation and shows the capacity - if need be no more than that - just an awareness of the potential - of someone else's suffering.

At the end of the play, Lena has not found the answers to all of her big questions, and the play's final image is of her trudging off once more with Boesman into the darkness. Yet she has achieved a great deal in the course of the play. She has transformed her role as the female partner in the relationship she has with Boesman from one of confused subservience to one of equal if not greater control and respect. As Fugard (in Rae 1971; in Gray 1982a:51) has commented,

whereas at the start of the play, the image is of Boesman dragging Lena along, at the end of the play there is a suggestion that she is going to be pushing him.

Moreover, she has learned, and has shown the audience, that even in the blackest night imaginable, the human spirit can still sing and celebrate life through the compassion for and the love of another human being. In doing so, one can, in some small way at least, challenge meaninglessness and achieve a measure of personal liberation. It is with some justification, therefore, that she can say at the end of the play, despite all her pain and suffering, "Tonight it's Freedom for Lena" (p.291).

The play premièred on 10 July 1969 at the Rhodes University Theatre during a conference to mark the 150th anniversary of the 1820 Settlers, and then went on to tour Cape Town and Johannesburg. It was hailed as a masterpiece both in South Africa and then overseas when it was produced in America, Britain and Europe. Stanley Kauffman, in a famous review in The New Republican (25 July 1970:16,25), asserted that

Fugard has seen that, by telling crystalline truth about these wretches, with no clutter of theatrical device, he could not possibly leave us out. He has embraced these people so fiercely and lovingly that in their rage and drunkenness and cunning and persistence, they move through a small epic of contemporary man;

and Kauffman went on to claim that the play "converts almost protozoan characters into vicars for us all". More simply, Russell Vandenbroucke (1986:89) states:

If there is such a thing as modern tragedy, Boesman and Lena is a prime example. It is the finest play written since Waiting for Godot.

(v)

During the writing of Boesman and Lena, the thought occurred to Fugard (Notebooks, September 1968, p.174) that the play, together with The Blood Knot and Hello and Goodbye, formed

a trilogy that if anything should be called The Family. The two generations - parents and children, and thus:

1. Blood Knot - (the children) brother and brother.
2. Hello and Goodbye - child and parent (Hester and Johnnie with the father - not with each other).
3. Boesman and Lena - parent and parent.

In biographical terms - myself and Royal; myself and father (or mother); myself and Sheila.

Thus, despite Fugard's claim (1978:xi) that these works were not written directly from life, it is clear that they had at least some autobiographical basis. This may in part account for the authenticity of the psychological insights which are presented in the plays, as well as for their validly naturalistic depiction of intense inter-personal relationships. It may also explain the remarkable coherence of the works in terms of imagery, structure and philosophical outlook. Indeed, as a corpus of work, the three Port Elizabeth plays stand together as testimony to how well Athol Fugard in the 1960s had mastered his chosen dramatic medium and, perhaps more significantly, how effectively he had utilised this medium to convey to audiences throughout the world the human cost of the policy of apartheid.

However, despite the general critical acclaim with which these plays have been met, there have been a number of critics who have found the plays wanting, particularly in terms of the political vision which they present. Such criticism coincides with the rise to prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s of a reinvigorated and revised Marxism, which took hold especially in parts of Western Europe (including Britain), and whose influence soon began to be felt in South Africa as well. It is appropriate at this point, therefore, to address some of the main lines of criticism advanced by this renewed radical school, all the more so since one of the prime targets of attack was the liberalism espoused by writers such as Athol Fugard.

When Boesman and Lena toured Britain in 1971, it came under fire from several left-wing reviewers, including Michael Billington, who argued in Plays and Players (September 1971:49) as follows:

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 play is that, while deploring the status quo, it also unwittingly helps to reinforce it.

The line of argument propounded by Billington has come to represent a standard radical criticism of liberal texts: that is, that they do not actually show real political change occurring or what actually needs to be done to bring about such change; and therefore they imply that nothing can be done to alter an unjust system. This argument has been taken up and repeated by several Marxist critics, among whom are Gala (1974), Mshengu (1979, 1982), Michael Green (1984), Jeyifo (1985), as well as Dennis Walder (1984:94), who claims that Fugard

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 movement which may create it.

At bottom, what Marxist criticism would seem to demand of Fugard is that his plays explicitly show the struggle of the masses culminating in a revolution (necessarily violent in the case of the intransigent South African regime) which would usher in a classless socialist system (see, for example, Mshengu 1979). Anything less than this is condemned as a reflection of liberalism's

naive faith in the reforming potential of personal moral pressure, associated with a failure to recognise the real centres of power (Walder 1984:16).

This attack on Fugard's liberal perspective has been unintentionally fuelled by some of his own comments. While completing Boesman and Lena, he became concerned (Notebooks, March 1969, p.181) about the clarity of the play's political message:

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?

His doubts were heightened by his reading at the time of Ernst Fischer's advocacy of "socialist realism" in The Necessity of Art, and his own sense of a "failure of imagination" in terms of being unable to find an adequate dramatic image of the kind of future which he believed in and hoped for (Notebooks, December 1968, pp.178-179). Indeed, he had been reading several Marxist writers during this period, including Brecht, the later Sartre, and Frantz Fanon with his espousal in The Wretched of the Earth of the necessity for "rebellion", and that "nothing short of a revolution in the social order" could improve the lot of an oppressed people (in Fugard Notebooks, October 1966, p.138; May 1968, p.164). As such, Martin Orkin (1991:140) is justified in noting that

Fugard's well-attested predilection for interiority in liberal and existential terms was here clearly being stretched.

Ultimately, however, Fugard resisted the temptation to align himself with the revolutionary politics of the Marxist school, and came to apprehend that his political vision was simply not consonant with that of socialist realism. This is not to say, however, that his work is not politically explicit on its own terms, or that it is not effective as a medium of political conscientisation. Benedict Nightingale (1971:247), for instance, might have been answering Fugard's own doubts about Boesman and Lena in his review of that play:

In South Africa, it is the human being who is a form of urban pollution - a vexatious ecological problem to be cleared up by the bulldozer and dumped in some alien wilderness, far from white civilisation. Could, and should, any artist be more direct with us than this?

Temple Hauptfleisch (1980:8), moreover, avers that in addition to being explicit, Boesman and Lena also succeeds in drawing attention to destitute and oppressed people like Boesman and Lena and in eliciting sympathy for their economic and political plight:

And that, in the end, is the aim of Fugard's total message in which all the elements of his total language are employed to communicate the complex texture of their lives, their dreams and their frustrations - to place an audience somewhere along the route travelled by Boesman and Lena, and to make it see and make it care.

Indeed, as Jack Tinker (1966:6) points out, the effectiveness of a political play depends not just on its social content but also on its quality in conveying that content; of The Blood Knot, he commented:

This is a fine play, finely acted, and deserves to be seen. A thousand sermons could never make the impact this work does by its sheer art.

In any event, the argument that Fugard's plays support the status quo by not overtly challenging the system is unfounded. In play after play the central laws of the apartheid apparatus are highlighted and condemned: the Population Registration Act; the Group Areas Act; the Job Reservation Act; the Immorality Act. However, the difference between Fugard's work and Marxist agit-prop drama, such as Julian Beck's Living Theatre, is that he does not present his audience with stereotyped images of struggle or harangue them with lengthy political diatribes, but instead creates authentic stories of individuals confronting the real consequences of political oppression and struggling at times fully to comprehend their plight. But there is little question in the audience's mind that the problem, at least at a socio-political level, is apartheid and the solution lies in its removal. As Don MacLennan (1981:63) makes plain,

the final insights do not belong to or happen in the characters themselves but in the plays. The characters' ignorance is the audience's knowledge. Fugard, to quote D.H. Lawrence's dictum, is showing not telling.

Fugard's drama is, thus, incompatible with the methods and aims of Marxism. He has consistently rejected the revolutionary violence advocated by the likes of Fanon, and, while drawn to many of the dramatic techniques propounded by Brecht, has finally distanced himself from him because of Brecht's "anti-individualism as opposed to my inability to see man - a man - as the sum total of his social relations" (Notebooks, September 1965, p.119). The very nature of his play writing cannot in the end be reconciled with the Marxist demand that literature reflect in a reified way an ideologically predetermined view of social reality:

I'm unable to ask the "abstracted" question. Must be rooted in a life, a here and now, and relate to the apparently trivial content of that life. Why does it always work? - given the basic conditions of Truth, Compassion, Love, etc. That a man - anywhere - concerned with the petty issues of his life, can end up talking to all of us about our unique selves (Fugard Notebooks, January 1966, p.132).

At the same time, however, it is inaccurate to equate Fugard's rejection of Marxism with an espousal of an extreme apolitical existential position. This is not to deny that Fugard was attracted to existentialism just as he was, at times, tempted by radical political strategies. But the point is that Fugard's exploration of existential thinking was always tempered by his liberal political values, so that he never embraced a form of existentialism that was unconcerned with, or uninvolved in, political reality. Too often, however, existentialist critics have attempted to suggest that Fugard's plays are at bottom metaphysical rather than political, that somehow the universal supersedes the social. Russell Vandenbroucke (1986:199), for example, writes that

preconceptions of South African society and Fugard's supposed political concerns have prevented many critics from seeing past the specific social content of his plays to the universal quandaries they dramatise .... No political, economic, religious, philosophical, or scientific system can provide a satisfactory answer to Lena's "why?" Social solutions are irrelevant for the simple reason that the problems that concern Fugard are ultimately metaphysical rather than social.

Stephen Gray (1982b:27) shows up the wrong-headedness of such arguments:

The assumption that the "politics" in a Fugard play is an overlay, and that the human condition is somehow deeper, more profound and so absolute it is free of man-made laws and injustices, simply does not pertain in Fugard's world-view. Politics at all strata (international, national, group, family, individual) intersect within Fugard's characters at the roots of personality and may never be separated out from his social and personal concerns as a writer.

It is the contention of this study that Fugard is, indeed, a political playwright, but of a particular kind. His political position is neither radical nor conservative, but liberal, and a failure to understand this entails an inability to grasp the essential meaning of his plays. Of course his work has implications at a universal and philosophical level which are not directly political; liberalism does not try to reduce everything to a narrow, rigid ideological programme. But one cannot pretend that his work is not informed in a crucially important way by a specific and focused political vision. His thinking about his plays of the 1960s is captured in an interview he granted in 1970 (Rae 1971; in Gray 1982:51), in which he claimed that although he did not consider his plays to be "necessarily political", nevertheless he felt they do "say a lot about the society we are living in at the moment". And he went on to remark,

I try to relate the very real issues of today to my plays. Perhaps you could describe it as "theatre of defiance"; yes, my object is to defy. I am protesting against the conspiracy of silence about how the next man lives and what happens to groups other than our own.

Stephen Gray (1982b:19) is again accurate in his summation of the nature of Fugard's political theatre of the 1960s:

In a period which Fugard obviously felt was dehumanising and which presented an increasing abuse of personal freedoms, his plays showed unique individuals in search of escape and fulfilment, unique individuals chafing against the givens of a practically irredeemable South African way of life. Their small heroisms and compulsory acts of endurance grew large in the South African psyche as object lessons in the struggle to exist with decency.

In the context of the intense repressiveness of this period in South Africa's history, Fugard's work courageously represents not merely a clear indictment of the manifest evils of apartheid, but also a valid alternative political vision in the form of liberalism. Taken together, Fugard's plays of the 1960s may be seen as a dramatic embodiment of the key features of liberal political philosophy: an emphasis on the individual human being as the primary source of value; an insistence that all people, irrespective of colour, creed or gender, share a common humanity and are entitled to be treated equally and fairly by their society; a rejection of violence as a political tactic, together with a demand that society be reformed in such a way that all people may live with dignity and decency; a belief in the importance of love as the basis of all morality, including that expressed in terms of social justice and political liberty. Plainly stated, Fugard's achievement, as a playwright of social conscience at the height of apartheid, is without parallel in South African literature.

**"Aberrant" Works of the 1960s: People Are Living There, The Occupation, Mille Miglia**

(i)

As noted earlier, Fugard began, while completing Boesman and Lena, to recognise consciously the affinities which existed between that play and The Blood Knot and Hello and Goodbye, suggesting that together they formed a trilogy which should be called The Family (Notebooks, September 1968, p.174). It is important to note, however, that this tripartite categorisation was only made retrospectively, and that such a grouping of plays never formed part of Fugard's initial intentions. In fact, Fugard wrote a number of other works during the period of the 1960s which bear little resemblance to the "Port Elizabeth" or "Family" plays. So different are these works in terms of setting, medium and theme that Fugard has on more than one occasion referred to them as "aberrant" works (1978:xi; in Foley 1994:66). Fugard's development as a playwright, then, was far less even and smooth than may be supposed from a superficial consideration of his major plays, though Stephen Gray (1982b:17) probably goes too far in suggesting that his career has been "a ramshackle, improvised progression". Thus, although this study as a whole has been concerned to trace the development and refinement of Fugard's thought as a liberal writer, care must be exercised not to portray Fugard as a relentless ideologue doggedly pursuing a narrow course of predetermined political objectives. He is more properly to be seen as an individual writer responding creatively and critically to the challenges of a frequently volatile social milieu, as well as to the stimuli of his personal imagination. In this section of the study, the focus will fall upon three works which are not primarily involved in specific liberal politics: People Are Living There, The Occupation and Mille Miglia. Nevertheless, as will become clear, each of these works does rest, at a fundamental level, upon certain core ideas of liberal philosophy in general. Most particularly, each is interested in the concept of human individuality, and the individual's personal search, in spite of disillusionment and danger, for meaning, fulfilment and happiness.

(ii)

Between the writing of The Blood Knot in 1961 and that of his next successful play, Hello and Goodbye, in 1965, Fugard suffered several failures and disappointments. Two novels were abandoned (Tsotsi, published only much later; and a prose adaptation of The Blood Knot), while a number of projects aborted at various stages of production. Fugard's frustration at the time is evident in a notebook entry of May 1962 (p.51):

So tomorrow - we start again. How many false starts aren't there before one hits on the one beginning that leads through to an end.

He was hopeful, however, that one prospective effort would reach completion, a play entitled People Are Living There.

Looking back some years later, Fugard (1978:xi) commented on the apparently anomalous nature of the play:

After the tour of The Blood Knot I returned to Port Elizabeth to write a play called People Are Living There. In many respects this appears to be an aberrant work. It has neither a Port Elizabeth setting nor, seemingly, a socio-political context of any significance. It deviates from my other work in still a third respect: it was written more directly from life than any of the other plays. During the period when I was employed as a clerk in the Johannesburg Native Commissioner's Court my wife and I stayed in the Braamfontein rooming-house that provides the setting for People Are Living There. All of the characters involved and many of the dramatic incidents are almost literal transcriptions of our experiences in that rambling, near derelict, double-storeyed house at the bottom of Hospital Hill. Speaking for myself personally, however, the play is in no sense an "aberrant" work. For six years my attempts to understand the possibility of affirmation in an essentially morbid society were dominated by and finally invested in three women: Mildred Constance Jenkins was the first, Hester Smit the second, and Lena the culmination.

Fugard is correct in observing that People Are Living There, through its main protagonist, examines certain thematic preoccupations in common with Hello and Goodbye and Boesman and Lena, despite its anomalous setting and its lack of any specific political context or subtext. In particular, Mildred (or Milly, as she is known in the play) shares with Hester and Lena an indomitable desire and need to assert her identity and have her existence acknowledged. It is Milly's fierce individuality, her quest for fulfilment as a human being, and her refusal to resign herself to hopelessness which forms the distinguishing feature of the play and which lends a distinctively liberal slant to the play's existential concerns. In his notebook entry for the play, Fugard (1978:xi-xii; see Notebooks, May 1962, pp.51-52, and March 1963, p.72) comments:

One image has resurrected an old complex of ideas: Milly's panic when she realizes late at night that she's spent the whole day in her dressing gown.

Her cri-de-coeur: "Is this all we get?" Hurt or outrage? Obviously both. Certainly not despair.

The entire action of the play takes place on a Saturday night in the kitchen of a shabby little Braamfontein boarding-house run by Milly, whose life has reached a crisis point. She is about to be abandoned by her lover of the past ten years, a German man named Ahlers, who is never actually seen on stage but whose presence is manifested in the play's dialogue and action. Her pain is exacerbated by the fact that it is her birthday, and that in turning fifty she fears that she is, indeed, as Ahlers callously avers, "not a woman any more" (p.157). When Ahlers goes out to see "an old friend from Germany" (p.107), but more probably a new woman, Milly tries to throw an impromptu party in a desperate attempt to show him that she is capable of having "a good time" (p.122) without him. The party is not a success, however, as the only people she can rope in to spend the night

with her are two of her lodgers, Shorty (Langeveld) and Don (Bradshaw), who are respectively described by Fugard in a prefatory note to the play (1968:31) as "a simple-witted postman and amateur boxer" and "a pimply faced pseudo-cynical student with a superficial command of Penguin-book psychoanalysis". The fourth character in the play is Shorty's wife, Sissy, a sexually-repressed and immature young woman, who, like Ahlers, goes out to see a lover whom she pretends is her cousin, Billy. (This fourth character, incidentally, makes People Are Living There aberrant in the further sense that it is one of only two of Fugard's stage plays which has more than three characters in its cast; the other is Dimetos.) In the course of Milly's party, each of the participants' evident failings are mercilessly exposed; as Robin Malan (1969:15) puts it,

these human beings, who have been indulging and humouring one another, only occasionally - and then gently - peeling a layer off one another's souls, suddenly abandon themselves to a violent exorcism, a savage Walpurgisnacht of traumatic group psychotherapy.

At last, Milly is forced to drop her pretence at gaiety and confront the reality of her "grey" and "stupid" (p.129) world:

You are telling me this is all I get? .... Then somebody's a bloody liar. Because there were promises. The agreement was that it would be worth it. Well, it isn't. I've been cheated. The whole thing was just a trick to get me to go on. Otherwise who would? Who wants to get up tomorrow if this is it? If this is all? (p.156).

Ultimately, however, the play does not end altogether bleakly. Shorty begins to try, at least, to assert himself towards his wife. Don realises that he is not totally "Numb" (p.167) and recognises his potential for feeling something in the course of what he wryly calls "Life with a capital F" (p.123, p.168). And Milly, most of all, in a way which directly anticipates both Hester and Lena, can exclaim, "Mildred Jenkins, you are still alive!" (p.158), as she plans to force an uncaring world to acknowledge her existence:

There must be something we can do! Make a noise! .... Lest they forget, as the monument says. I can still do that. I'll make it loud, make them stop in the street, make them say: People are living there! I'll remind them. Tomorrow (p.168).

The play ends, indeed, with Milly finally, and unexpectedly, finding something to laugh about, and we are told, as the curtain drops, that "her laughter grows enormous" (p.169).

Such a conclusion to the play appears, however, a little too pat perhaps, and Milly's laughter jars somewhat with what has seemed to be her unrelievedly hard and bitter personality up to this point. As a character, she has appeared to lack the potential for true compassion and generosity that will distinguish both Hester and Lena in Fugard's later plays, and, thus, she evokes far less sympathy than do those two figures, for whom Fugard has come to believe Milly was really a "preparation" (in Rae 1971; in Gray 1982a:43). Moreover, the play's central positive symbol of the ugly silkworms creating beautiful silk seems rather twee and unconvincing given the fact that the characters' situations lack

any substantially transformative possibilities (though perhaps the silkworms' transformation into unwanted moths is the point). The play has other flaws as well. As was the case with the original version of The Blood Knot, this play seems rather wordy in places, with both Milly and Don given long paragraphs of speech which tend to cloud rather than clarify their thoughts and feelings and which renders the piece fairly static at times. Finally, the play lacks, as Fugard concedes, any significant political context, apart from a passing remark by Don that Shorty is saved by his white skin from being a "labourer" doing "dirty work" as he would have to outside of South Africa (p.154). While not a fault in itself, this apoliticality seems to drain the play of the kind of underlying tension and wider social reference which permeates and vitalises his other work. There is, perhaps, more than a grain of truth in the comment made about the play by Ian Bernhardt - a friend of Fugard's from the Dorkay House days - that "It is a good play but I don't know why you wrote it" (in Fugard Notebooks, May 1963, p.83).

For all these reasons People Are Living There was not a success. Fugard struggled to cast the play, especially the character of Milly. Several companies rejected the play out of hand, both at the time of its completion and later on (though Fugard, conversely, refused to allow the State-run PACT to perform it in 1967). Fugard, in his prefatory note to the play's first publication in Contrast in 1968, bitterly observes that the play was recently turned down by the Alexander Theatre, Johannesburg as "indifferent" and "not suitable for Johannesburg audiences", and he goes on to assert that "subsequent to their decision it was staged at the Citizens Theatre of Glasgow where it was a considerable success" (1968:31). In actual fact, most productions of the play, in South Africa (it had its local première in Cape Town in June 1969) and abroad, have received rather mixed reviews (see Vandenbroucke 1986:118-119). In spite of Fugard's continuingly high opinion of it, the play must be regarded as a flawed and even minor work in his canon, especially in relation to his other great plays of the same period.

(iii)

Like People Are Living There, The Occupation is also something of an "aberrant" work in Fugard's oeuvre. In the first place, it is a play for television (or, perhaps, the cinema) rather than the stage: it is, in fact, sub-titled "A Script for the Camera". Secondly, it is the only unproduced work of Fugard's which has found its way into print, having being published in the journal Contrast in 1964 (57-93). And, like People Are Living There, it is a generally apolitical work, dealing with four characters who find themselves confronted by a hostile and even destructive environment, and focusing particularly on one individual's refusal to resign himself to his fate. However, whereas in People Are Living There, Milly is determined to make people aware of her existence, in The Occupation the central character, Barend, is involved in the struggle to maintain his capacity to dream.

In a letter to Mary Benson in 1963 (see Vandenbroucke 1986:119-120), Fugard explained the origins of the work:

To keep the home fires burning, the wolf from the door and bread in the bin, I am writing a T.V. play ... It's a good idea - four derelicts - hoboes - in an abandoned house where they doss down for the night. What is it really about? Walls, I suppose. Why we build them, imprison ourselves and live our lives away behind them, why we hate, need, even destroy them. This is of course a completely new field and one in which I might prove quite talentless (see also Notebooks, July 1963, p.91).

Fugard had got the idea of the hoboes from a group of derelicts he had witnessed outside the Johannesburg Library: as in the play, they each had "a little cardboard box full of bootlaces", presumably to avoid being arrested for straightforward begging, and at least one of them appeared to be an ex-serviceman (Notebooks, December 1962, pp.66-67).

In the screenplay itself, three of the four characters form quite a close-knit group, while the fourth, Barend, appears to be something of an outsider. Cappie (Captain) is the leader of the band: about 45 to 50 years old, a second World War veteran, he is educated and well-spoken, but alcoholic. Serge (Sergeant Atkins) is a veteran of about the same age, but is less educated than Cappie and is ordered around by him, even being forced at the end of the play to have homosexual intercourse with the drunk Cappie. Serge also possesses a horrifying laugh - "a wild mirthless sound thrown violently out of an open-mouthed face" (p.20) - which reveals the shell-shocked state of his mind. As Cappie points out amidst the dilapidation of the abandoned house they "occupy" for the night,

We're also ruins. The guns have left our hearts in ruins (p.43).

Fugard based this laugh, in fact, on that of his cousin, Garth, a lonely and deeply disturbed man (see Fugard 1994:66), and he uses such a laugh again in a later work, Playland, in the character of Gideon le Roux, another veteran suffering the after-effects of war, though this time the South African Border war. The third member of the group, Koosie (Jacobus Rossouw), is only about twenty years old, but, even though he is not an ex-soldier, he too is mentally disturbed, living "in a schizophrenic world" (p.20), and willing to be ordered around like a private by Cappie.

The fourth member of the group, Barend, is quite different. He is an Afrikaner, about thirty years old, and is described as "physically strong, even powerful". At the same time, however, he is depicted as "brooding" and as possessing "a strength that is inarticulate and lost" (p.20), symbolised by his empty hands (p.20, p.41) - an image that will recur in a play about another confused and troubled man, Dimetos. Nevertheless, Barend is able to maintain his independence from Cappie and the other members of the group, and to sustain his capacity to dream. Indeed, the central dramatic conflict in the play involves Barend's refusal to resign himself to the broken-spirited disillusionment of the other tramps. Cappie realises this, and hates Barend for it:

I'm suspicious of you .... I've always been. An' you know why? You stink of wages. And dreaming. You dream, don't you Barend (p.45).

The play ends with Barend taking possession of the only bed in the derelict house (a symbol, perhaps, of his enduring will to survive and not give up hope of repairing his life), while Koosie keeps guard outside on the front verandah.

The Occupation has never been produced. What may have militated against its production at the time of writing were what Stephen Gray (1990:10) terms "the abrasiveness of its content", as well as the ambitiousness of its camera directions. Fugard (Notebooks, July 1963, p.91) claims to have been stimulated by reading Alain Robbe-Grillet's "scenario" for the film, Last Year at Marienbad, and seems to have tried to emulate, not altogether successfully, the imaginative detail of that film script. Indeed, Fugard's rather naive pretentiousness as a novice screenwriter is underscored by the fact that he intended the play to be produced for British television; since South Africa acquired television only in 1976, his "T.V. play" could not have been meant for local consumption. Fugard, in fact, sent the play to Mary Benson and to Michael White, the producer of The Blood Knot in London, and, though both were supportive, the work did not find a sponsor then, and remains unfilmed today.

(iv)

Fugard was more fortunate with his next attempt at a television script for British production, Mille Miglia, sub-titled, "A Play for Television". Following the success of the BBC broadcast of The Blood Knot in 1967, directed by Robin Midgley, the BBC commissioned Fugard to write a teleplay about Stirling Moss's 1955 victory in the Mille Miglia, a "thousand mile" road race around Italy. Fugard's idea for the play dated back to 1960, however, when he read a newspaper story by Moss about his win, and by June 1963 he had already had discussions about "working this up into a TV play" (Notebooks, p.87).

The play does not, in fact, cover the race itself - at the time such outside action shots would have been impossible for television cameras - but rather deals with Moss's strategic preparations for the race together with his navigator, Denis Jenkinson, a motoring journalist. As the Italian drivers held the advantage of knowing the roads on which the race would be run, Moss and Jenkinson compensated by making meticulous notes about how best to navigate the course, and developed a detailed system of hand-signals to convey information from navigator to driver at high speed. The play thus consists of thirty-two short sequences, many in flashback mode, showing Moss and Jenkinson preparing for, and talking about, the race, as well as holding conversations with several other minor characters, including Moss's Mercedes-Benz team boss, Alfred Neubauer.

In any event, though Fugard researched the technical aspects of the race thoroughly, his interest was much more focused on the

men than on the race itself, and the play reveals many of Fugard's characteristic motifs, including the central liberal idea of the individual quest for personal fulfilment. According to Mary Benson (1972:137), Fugard was influenced by two remarks Moss had in reality uttered: "Death is like a piece of furniture in a familiar room. You know it's there but for a long time you've not noticed it"; and apropos the dangers of racing, "It's life. The rest is just waiting". Such remarks clearly lend themselves to an existentialist interpretation and Fugard incorporates this into the dialogue of the play, constantly inviting comments about motor-racing to be read as metaphors for life. Early on in the play, Moss declares about the race circuit: "It's a long drive to get back to where you started from" (p.78). Later on, Jenkinson remarks that the race is "A thousand miles to get nowhere", to which Moss retorts, "That's right. And I want to be there first" (p.106). Such remarks may well be taken to indicate an absurdist view of life, but as the play develops a more meaningful worldview begins to emerge. Moss makes the point, for example, that speed and movement form an intrinsic part of existence:

Round and round. This lump of mud and rock, or whatever it is we're living on, is turning at a good thousand miles an hour or so. That's what governs us. If you don't keep moving ... you're dead (p.110).

And he suggests that for him at least racing brings a sense of purpose and fulfilment: "The nearest I'll ever get to real peace is when I'm driving very fast" (p.111). But the play's final view of racing, and, hence, of life, comes in Moss's last full speech before his starting-time. In it, he argues that racing - or any human endeavour - when done well, creates at least temporary order and meaning out of the chaos of human life, and, more importantly, leads to a greater degree of self-understanding:

I dunno - it's such a mess ... crashing all the time. We live it like amateurs. But put all that chaos together, pack it into a few hours - tight! - and give a man a way through it, clean, decisive, a reward for his talent, skill, his concentration, his little bit of courage! ... That's the circuit. Round and round, getting nowhere, it seems ... and it does lead somewhere. Into yourself (pp.114-115).

Having articulated that insight, the play - as a human story - reaches its climax, and the result of the race, which was foreknown anyway, seems virtually irrelevant. Almost as an afterthought, a text appears on screen at the end stating that Moss won the race on "May the 1st, 1955" at a record average speed which "will stand for all time" since the race "was abandoned two years later as being too dangerous" (p.114).

Mille Miglia was broadcast on 5 August 1968 on the BBC-2 series "Theatre 625", but no copy of the production has been preserved on either film or tape (Vandenbroucke 1986:126). This teleplay is again a rather strange work in Fugard's canon. Apart from the anomaly of being a commissioned work for television, the play does not fall easily into any specific genre. It is neither a fully imaginative work nor a documentary, and seems to fall awkwardly between those two stools. Moss and Jenkinson themselves

were interviewed immediately after the original screening and complained that the film was not at all an accurate portrayal of what really happened (Stoppard 1968; in Gray 1982a:78-79). Fugard, obversely, complained some years later (in MacLennan 1971:2-3) that he had found Mille Miglia "an inordinately frustrating experience" because he "could never escape the facts" and could not control the plot. In future plays based upon historical figures and events, such as Eugene Marais in The Guest, or Helen Martins in The Road to Mecca, Fugard would never again make the mistake of becoming enslaved to factual details but would instead fashion out of that material a fundamentally imaginative statement of his own. Nevertheless, despite the mixed reception which greeted Mille Miglia, the play was rebroadcast by the BBC on 14 January 1970; the script was adapted into a stage play renamed Drivers by David Muir and produced in Cape Town in 1973; and it was performed as an SABC Radio broadcast in 1985. Moreover, Tom Stoppard, in a review of the original production in the Observer (1968; in Gray 1982a:79), argued that Fugard's play in a very real sense captured the essential spirit of Moss's attitude to racing (and to life) and "might have got to at least part of a deeper truth than ... Mr Moss [could] ever admit to".

The next phase of Fugard's career marked a radical departure from any of the methods he had hitherto employed as a professional dramatist. Leaving behind the conventional dramaturgical techniques which he had used so effectively up to this point, he embarked on an exploration of the possibilities inherent in collaboration. The results, like the methods themselves, were remarkable.

Collaboration: The Coat, Orestes, Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act, Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, The Island

(i)

Towards the end of the 1960s, Fugard experienced what he termed a "crisis" in relation to his work (Fugard 1974b: page 3 of unnumbered pages). This crisis derived from a number of different though interconnected sources, including the dramaturgical, the creative and the political. In the first place, he recalls that for several years, and particularly as a writer, I had become increasingly dissatisfied with the type of theatre I was making (1974b:3),

especially in terms of its orthodoxy and conventionality. Secondly, he observes that, largely as a result of this dissatisfaction,

I began to develop a writer's block. Somehow I felt myself frustrated by the orthodox method of just sitting in your room and writing a play. I was running out of juice: every attempt, and I made several, to write plays after Boesman and Lena, miscarried because those techniques had gone stale on me (anonymous Momentum interview 1984:22).

And thirdly, he had begun to become concerned, as he wrote in his notebooks while completing Boesman and Lena (March 1969, p.181), about whether his work was "explicit enough" in a political sense:

The "social" content of Boesman and Lena. Nagging doubts that I am opting out on this score, that I am not saying enough.

In seeking to resolve this crisis, Fugard embarked on an extraordinary phase of his career, one in which he left behind his securities as a writer working alone and in private and embraced the techniques of creative collaboration. In doing so, he was able to explore the possibilities inherent in an alternative kind of theatre, engaging directly and immediately with specific political issues and experiences and actualising the creative potential of his actors and fellow-collaborators.

In this venture, Fugard drew on his experiences with the actors at the Rehearsal Room in Dorkay House and with the Serpent Players of New Brighton township outside Port Elizabeth. More particularly, he was able to utilise the remarkable creative talents of two young New Brighton actors, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, as well as those of an actress who would prove to be a continuing source of profound inspiration to him, Yvonne Bryceland. He was heavily influenced, moreover, during this period by his reading and productions of classical Greek tragedy, as well as by his encounter with the avant-garde dramatic theories of the Polish director, Jerzy Grotowski. And, of course, his predominant concerns continued to focus on the suffering of people under apartheid, and the attempt to construct a meaningful response to an ever increasingly oppressive and polarised situation. The nature of this response in his plays of collaboration, and how this response accords with his liberal political position, will form the subject of this section.

(ii)

Although Fugard began to employ collaborative play-making methods in a deliberate and professional way in the early years of the 1970s, this was not, in fact, an altogether new departure for him. Some of his earliest dramatic experiences had been as part of a group, the Circle Players, which Fugard and his wife had helped to found in Cape Town in the mid 1950s. Subsequently, he had continued to work closely in the development, if not the genesis, of many of his plays with a number of theatre professionals, including Tone Brulin, Barney Simon, Robin Midgley, to name a few. Moreover, as a director of his own plays, he had always enjoyed close working relationships with his actors, whose contribution towards the final product of the play he valued and respected. This held true from his early Sophiatown plays, and is exemplified in the development of the young Zakes Mokae in the original production of The Blood Knot. It was evident also in Fugard's work with other black actors whom he directed in productions at the Rehearsal Room in Dorkay House in Johannesburg in the early 1960s. In his notebooks (November 1962, p.65), Fugard recalls, for instance, "a sublime performance of Waiting for Godot" in which the cast, especially David Phetoe and Cornelius Mabaso in the leading roles, put on an "amazing" display, and confirmed Fugard's high regard for the role of the actor in theatre:

Again it has been proved: a play is an actor before an audience. We had nothing else. "The moment of truth" needs nothing more.

Fugard's first real attempts at collaborative play-writing began, however, with his involvement with a group of actors from New Brighton, the African township outside Port Elizabeth. Fugard recalls (Notebooks, May 1963, p.81) that he was first approached by Norman Ntshinga, who had evidently heard of The Blood Knot and the extraordinary fact of a black man and a white man acting on stage together:

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.

The visit left Fugard

in a mood of guilty awareness of how selfishly I live with my "simple" pleasures - how cut off I am from the physical realities of South Africa,

and thus, despite his tiredness after touring with The Blood Knot, he resolved to help them organise a dramatic group. Fugard (Notebooks, July 1963, p.91) explains how they came to call themselves the Serpent Players:

Rhodes University, which had taken over the old museum and snake pit as part of their P.E. campus, offered us our pick for a place to perform - intrigued by the abandoned snake pit, with the audience looking down into the space, we have chosen that. Hence our name.

The group was made up of a clerk, two teachers, a bus driver and domestic servants, and over time included Ntshinga, his wife

Mabel Magada (a well-known blues singer), Mulligan Mbiqwana, George Mnci, Simon Hanabe, Michael Ngxokola, Welcome Duru, Sipho Mguqulwa, Humphrey Njikelana and Nomhle Nkonyeni. They soon delighted Fugard with their enthusiasm and talent, proving to be "so much more responsible" (Notebooks, September 1963, p.96) than the Rehearsal Room group. In their turn, the Players had nothing but praise for Fugard, whose "dedication and encouragement" had gained their "confidence and respect" ("reports" dated 29 March 1965, NELM 1338/25-30; see Walder 1993:418). The group's first production, a localised adaptation of Machiavelli's Mandragola, retitled The Cure, and played in Commedia dell'Arte style, making use of a bare stage, few props and some improvisation techniques, was a tremendous success when it played in August 1963 to an audience made up of New Brighton friends and some people drawn from the university community. For Fugard's part, apart from enjoying the whole experience immensely, he noted: "For the first time I feel I really sense the potential in truly improvised theatre" (Notebooks, August 1963, p.94).

After working with the Serpent Players on a production of Buchner's Woyzeck, Fugard accepted an invitation from Robert Loder, an old Dorkay House associate, to direct Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle at a drama festival in Lusaka in what was then known as Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The experience turned out to be a most unhappy one, as Fugard was virtually forced out of the country by the authorities after being quoted in a local paper (see Vandenbroucke 1986:134-135) as saying that he was "profoundly disturbed by a form of racialism that I have never met in South Africa". Fugard's remarks arose from an incident in which some local black men had insulted Fugard and his white male companions for accompanying the play's black actresses to a dance. Although the production was aborted a few days before opening, Fugard made good the experience by using Caucasian Chalk Circle as the Serpent Players' next venture. Again disaster struck, though this time from within South Africa, as the actor due to play Azdak, Welcome Duru, was brutally arrested days before opening in December 1964. A horrified Fugard took over the role and the production went ahead, but a Nationalist government purge had begun in the Eastern Cape. Within a year, three more members of the group, which was preparing Sophocles' Antigone, had, like Duru, been arrested and sent to Robben Island for belonging to the banned African National Congress: Norman Ntshinga, Sipho "Sharkie" Mguqulwa and Simon Hanabe. Fugard's notebooks record his rage and despair over the arrests (August 1965, p.123f). Moreover, although Fugard noted that the classics which the group had been performing had all "had an urgent relevance to the lives of the people of the township" (1980:12), he now felt the need to "write something about New Brighton, about Black South Africa" (Notebooks, December 1965, p.129). The inspiration came, in fact, from a chance encounter while Fugard was attending Ntshinga's trial at Cradock as a witness in mitigation (unsuccessfully). A fellow accused, when sentenced like Ntshinga and the others to three years' imprisonment on Robben Island, gave Ntshinga's wife his coat to take back to his own wife in New Brighton to "use". The following year saw Fugard involved in a successful "African"

season at Hampstead re-doing The Blood Knot, as well as Wole Soyinka's The Trials of Brother Jero with a "cosmopolitan" African company, called Ijinle, which, unfortunately, proved to be ephemeral. After a holiday in Crete, Fugard returned to Port Elizabeth and began to work with the Serpent Players on his notes about "the coat". Influenced by Brecht's The Messingkauf Dialogues, Fugard engaged the group in constant "improvisation and discussion", together with an attempt at Brecht's "ease" (literally, "Leichtigkeit": see Brecht 1963:94). Then, when the group were asked to show their work to a white "Theatre Appreciation Group" in Port Elizabeth - permission having been obtained from the local magistrate - they decided to spring on them their own play, now titled The Coat. After much heated discussion about the demeaning conditions laid down by the magistrate (the players were not allowed to use the whites-only toilets, for instance, and had to return to the township straight after the performance), as well as about the likely presence of the Special Branch, the group eventually decided to go ahead with a reading of the play on 28 November 1966.

The play itself - subtitled "An acting exercise from Serpent Players of New Brighton" - consists of five actors, using noms-de-plume taken from previous roles to avoid possible police harassment: Lavrenti and Aniko from Caucasian Chalk Circle (Mulligan Mbiqwana and Nomhle Nkonyeni respectively); Marie from Woyzeck (Mabel Magada); Jingi from The Cure (Humphrey Njikelana); and Haemon from Antigone (the young John Kani, having taken over from Norman Ntshinga in the original). The actors then take up various roles surrounding the incident of the coat, which is explained to the audience by a Brechtian actor/director, played by Lavrenti:

Just before we start let me answer any of you who might be asking: Why the coat? Why not the man who wore the coat? Isn't he real? Isn't a real man a better subject for an actor's exercise? Of course he is. The man would have been better, but it was the coat that came back (p.54).

They then act out the improvisation of a number of scenes, which Lavrenti titles: The Scene In Which The Wife Gets Back Her Husband's Coat; The Scene Where The Old Woman Is Alone With The Coat; The Scene Where The Son Borrows The Father's Coat To Look For A Job; The Scene Where The Wife Is Faced With Selling Her Husband's Coat To Pay Her Rent. At the end of the play, the actors conclude that they "didn't do too badly" with their improvisations, striking "a good balance between reason and emotion" (p.78). In fact, of the actual performance, Fugard (in MacLennan 1971:5) recalls that the actress called Aniko, playing the man's wife, despite making "a terrifically impassioned speech" at the play's climax, rather "lost herself to the extent that it was totally blurred". In spite of that, Fugard (Notebooks, November 1966, p.143) notes that at the end of the play, "you could have heard a pin drop", the white audience's "complacency shattered" as they were confronted directly with the facts of what life was like in New Brighton, in black South Africa. As such, the play perhaps lived up to the intentions spelled out at the beginning by Lavrenti:

We want to use the theatre. For what? Here it gets a bit

confused again. Some of us say to understand the world we live in but we also boast a few idealists who think that theatre might have something to do with changing it (pp.53-54).

While still reading plays like Genet's Death Watch, the group continued to work on their own plays, including Friday's Bread on Monday, "an improvised essay into hunger and desperation in the township" (Fugard 1978:xii), The Last Bus and Sell-out. None of these plays has been published, although some idea of a performance of Friday's Bread on Monday can be gleaned from a review of the play by Rob Amato and Skhala Xinwa (1972:17-18). As Fugard readily concedes, however, his contribution to the making of Friday's Bread on Monday was far less significant than with The Coat, which originated in his notes and where he had "acted as a scribe to the group" (in MacLennan 1971:1). Indeed, by the time the group moved on to The Last Bus, which Fugard had "partly set going", his attentions were fully engaged elsewhere and they went ahead without him (in Vandembroucke 1986:141).

Looking back on his experiences with the Serpent Players, Fugard remains full of praise for the group. As he has commented (1978:xii-xiii),

apart from the talent of one individual in white theatre [Barney Simon], the work of this group is the only significant provocation and stimulus to myself as a writer and director that I have encountered in South Africa. In the context of theatre in this country I think it is the only group of actors with a unique and important identity, a truly creative potential which if one day fully realized might be our most meaningful contribution to theatre.

More broadly, Fugard's work with the Serpent Players served as a vindication at the time of the much-maligned liberal principle of bridge-building, suggesting that it was indeed possible for whites and blacks to work together as equals without the relationship descending necessarily into white patronisation and black dependence. Such conditions of professional equality have characterised all of Fugard's work with black actors and dramatic collaborators and have actively demonstrated at a fundamental level both the ineffectiveness and the immorality of apartheid. At the same time, however, Fugard (1974b:3) did become aware in retrospect of the limitations of the work which he and the group produced:

The Coat was followed by many similar experiments over the next few years. I am enormously indebted to them, but equivalently I must admit that looking back now I am very conscious of them as being two-dimensional. Facts, and somehow we never managed to get beyond facts even though they were very important facts, are flat and lacking in the density and ambiguity of truly dramatic images. The reason for this limitation was that I relied exclusively on improvisation in its shallowest sense. I had not yet thought seriously about alternative methods of releasing the creative potential of the actor.

The following stage of Fugard's career would develop largely as a result of his response to the theories of Jerzy Grotowski, who

had, indeed, thought about the creative potential of the actor. However, the work done with the Serpent Players did not stagnate: two young black actors had joined the group to help replace those imprisoned. These two men, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, showed great talent in the Players' productions, and would soon feature significantly in Fugard's creative work. But it was another actress, Yvonne Bryceland, who was to have a major hand in the next phase of Fugard's development.

(iii)

Fugard's experiences in working with the Serpent Players had led him to consider the potential of alternative methods of making plays, as well as confirming his need to address the grim realities of the South African political situation. His first attempt to meet these dual objectives resulted in a remarkable work, called Orestes, which Fugard (1974b:5) has described as  
my most extreme excursion into a new type of theatre experience, in which we attempted to communicate with the audience on the basis of, for us at least, an entirely new vocabulary.

It also stands as a key statement of Fugard's liberal principles, particularly in terms of its rejection of violence as a political strategy at a time when liberals like Fugard were coming under increasing pressure to endorse the legitimacy of armed struggle. Some discussion of both the creative and political background to Orestes is necessary before dealing with the actual play itself.

A number of events coincided in the first years of the 1970s to give Fugard the confidence to move away from his conventional techniques of creating plays - both as a writer and as a director - and to explore new and different methods of theatrical expression. In the first place, he had met and worked with an actress, Yvonne Bryceland, who seemed to be uncannily in tune with his thinking and feeling about drama. After she proved to be, finally, an actress capable of playing Milly in People Are Living There, Fugard created the character of Lena with her at least partially in mind, while at the same time noting how well she could have read the part of Hester - as indeed she later would (Notebooks, April 1968, p.158). Fugard was then given the opportunity in mid 1970 of producing with Bryceland what he refers to as a "revolutionary" version of Boesman and Lena in Durban, relying "just on ourselves and a pile of rubbish and the word" (Momentum interview 1984:23), which further fuelled his desire to experiment with the dramatic medium. Finally, at the beginning of 1971, Fugard, together with Bryceland and two young actors, Winston Dunster and Val Donald, were given financial support by CAPAB to conduct experimental theatre work with no fixed rehearsal period, no commitment to public performance, and no deadlines. It was a perfect opportunity for Fugard to put his ideas about alternative drama into practice.

Many of these ideas Fugard had gleaned from his reading of that time, particularly, though not exclusively, in the field of avant-garde contemporary dramatic theory. The most important of

such reading was that of the work of Jerzy Grotowski, whose unorthodox ideas about theatre had proved to be hugely influential in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Grotowski had for many years studied theatre all over the world before establishing in his native Poland first the Theatre Laboratory in Opole in 1959 and then the Institute for Research into Acting in the university town of Wroclaw in 1965. In the late 1960s he had toured Europe and America extensively, sharing his radical theories, holding workshops and staging productions. His views were published in a book of essays entitled Towards a Poor Theatre in 1968 (translated into English in 1969), and in 1970 Mary Benson and Barney Simon sent Fugard a copy of this book together with detailed notes of Grotowski's New York lectures. Fugard (Fugard 1974b:4; technically Fugard quoting himself freely from Marks 1973:64) found himself enormously stimulated and provoked by this material which

made me realize that there were other ways of doing theatre, other ways of creating a totally valid theatre experience ... that it needn't be the orthodox experience I had been retailing for so many years since The Blood Knot ....

My work had been so conventional! It involved the writing of a play; it involved setting that play in terms of local specifics; it involved the actors assuming false identities ... etc., etc. I wanted to turn my back on all that. Permanently or not I didn't know. I just knew I wanted to be free again.

Grotowski's basic premise is stated in the opening essay of Towards a Poor Theatre (1968:18-19):

Through practical experimentation I sought to answer the question with which I had begun: What is the theatre? What is unique about it? .... By gradually eliminating whatever seemed superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion.

Moreover, since theatre must necessarily "remain technologically inferior to film and television", Grotowski proposed abandoning what he called the "Rich Theatre" of high-tech effects in favour instead of "Poor Theatre": an ascetic chamber theatre of intimacy and immediacy between the actor and the audience. To achieve these ideals, Grotowski put his actors through a gruelling programme of physical and psychological preparation until they had left behind the conventional "bag of tricks" of the shallow "courtesan" actor and had achieved the status of the "holy actor": someone who is not merely an interpretive performer but a creative artist who expresses his own unique truth in an act of virtual self-sacrifice before the audience (1968:33f).

For Fugard, long isolated from theatre developments abroad because of the withdrawal of his passport, Grotowski's ideas seemed tremendously exciting and reinvigorating. However, despite Fugard's modest acknowledgement of Grotowski's influence, it is

true to say that Grotowski's views came to Fugard less as a revelation than as a confirmation from a kindred spirit of the validity of his own personal beliefs about drama. Indeed, in a prefatory note to an extract of The Blood Knot published in Contrast (1962a:29) - nine years before Fugard had read or heard of Grotowski - it may be seen that Fugard's "vision eerily anticipates Grotowski" (Vandenbroucke 1986:145; and see Fugard in Benson 1977:81). In this introductory note, Fugard attempts to define what he means by "'the pure theatre experience'":

The experience belongs to the audience. He is my major concern as a playwright. The ingredients of this experience are already partially revealed in what I have said and are very simple - their very simplicity being the main justification for using the word 'pure' in the context of a form as open to adulteration as Theatre: they are the actor and the stage, the actor on the stage. Around him is space, to be filled and defined by movement; around him is also a silence to be filled with meaning, using words and sounds, and at moments when all else fails him, including my words, the silence itself.

After going on to condemn the technical "tricks associated with so much of present day theatre", Fugard concludes:

The cathartic possibility in theatre needs nothing more than the actor and the stage. For the miracle to happen it must come from within the actor. A good play will plant the seed there. Externals will profit the play nothing, if the actor has no soul.

As Vandenbroucke (1986:146) accurately points out, therefore, Fugard was not transformed like Saul on the road to Damascus. Grotowski was not a prophet of a new theatrical religion different from the one Fugard was already practising, but an envoy whose message Fugard was predisposed to accept because it was so similar to his own.

In this light, there was one further crucially important way in which Grotowski's ideas "struck a responsive chord" in Fugard (Fugard in Benson 1977:81) and that was in terms of Grotowski's view of theatrical performance "as an act of transgression" through its capability "of challenging itself and its audience by violating stereotypes of vision, feeling and judgement" (1968:19,22). Although Grotowski describes this transgression mainly in mythic and existential terms, many of his actual productions involved playing ancient myths off against modern political scenarios: his version of Calderon's The Constant Prince, for example, deals with the torture and attempted brain-washing of political prisoners, while his production of the Polish playwright Wyspianski's Akropolis presents a panoramic view of the history of Mediterranean culture which culminates in the extermination camps of the Holocaust (see Grotowski 1968:61-116). This method of creating harrowing, yet intelligent, political drama must clearly have appealed to Fugard, who claimed, again in that preface to the extract from The Blood Knot (1962a:29),

I write plays because I believe implicitly in the potential of this ['pure theatre experience'] as a means to approaching and transmitting Truth, and in way and with a

force unique to the drama.

The relevance of this political dimension to Grotowski's work was heightened by the political exigencies with which Fugard was confronted in the early 1970s. Throughout his writing career, Fugard had been concerned to oppose the injustice and oppression of apartheid from a liberal position, and had as a result been subjected to harassment and intimidation by the regime, the withdrawal of his passport in 1967 constituting but one example. In fact, the deeply anti-liberal sentiment in the Government under Verwoerd had, after the Prime Minister's assassination in 1966 (which Fugard described in his notebooks (September 1966, pp.134-135) as a fittingly "lunatic" end), continued unabated under his successor, B.J. Vorster. It was Vorster, for example, who had declared that

Communism kills ... but Liberalism leads one into ambush in order to be killed (see Paton 1962; in Paton 1975:166), and it was Vorster who effected the dissolution of the Liberal Party in 1968 through the Prohibition of Political Interference Act (see Davenport 1987:425).

Now, however, liberals such as Fugard began to feel pressure not only from the right but also from the left. After a decade in which political opposition had been all but silenced through a massive security clampdown by the Government, a new generation of militant activists began to emerge. This opposition was fuelled by an uncompromising Black Consciousness movement and abetted by the revisionist school of Marxist intellectuals, neither of which had much time for white liberals who refused to accept violent revolution as a legitimate political principle. The unofficial leader of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa, Steve Biko, for instance, condemned liberals for what he saw as their ineffectiveness and hypocrisy, believing that they did not really have black interests at heart (see Biko 1978:21f). Instead, he called on blacks to liberate themselves, in a line of thought far more reminiscent of Malcolm X than Martin Luther King, as indeed was the case with most of the Black Consciousness groups, including the South African Students Organisation and the Black People's Convention. In fact, a number of black theatre groups which sprang up in the late 1960s and early 1970s unequivocally espoused Black Consciousness ideals, including the Theatre Council of Natal (TECON, 1969), the Music, Drama, Arts and Literature Institute (MDALI, 1972), and the People's Experimental Theatre (PET, 1973). TECON, significantly, banned whites from membership and attending its shows in 1973 (see Vandenbroucke 1977a). The spirit of Black Consciousness was also to be found in the work of the so-called Soweto poets who emerged during this period, most particularly Oswald Mtshali, Mongane Serote, Sipho Sepamla and Mafika Gwala. A number of white artists at this time also began to distance themselves from liberal principles, including Nadine Gordimer, who claimed that her novels charted the failure of liberalism in South Africa (1973:51); and Workshop '71, which had been founded under the aegis of the liberal South African Institute of Race Relations, but which soon severed that relationship (see Mshengu 1976).

Under pressure to lend his support to this radicalised thinking, Fugard remained steadfastly opposed to two of its central tenets: counter-racial exclusivism and armed resistance. In the first place, Fugard's work with the Serpent Players and later with John Kani and Winston Ntshona gave the lie to the argument that whites and blacks could do nothing of significance together under apartheid (for a statement of this argument see Walder 1984:29-30). Secondly, Fugard refused to accept the principle of violence as a political strategy. In this latter regard, Fugard chose not to go the way a number of young white liberals had in the earlier 1960s. These young people, some of whom had been members of the Liberal Party, formed an underground organisation called the African Resistance Movement (A.R.M.), intending to commit acts of sabotage in order to help force the Government into ending apartheid. Amateurish in their methods and incompetent in their security, those who did not flee the country were arrested on 4 July 1964 and sentenced to lengthy jail terms. Shortly after the arrests, another member of the group, John Harris, a school-teacher and something of an outsider, decided to act alone and on 24 July 1964 planted a bomb in the concourse of the Johannesburg Railway Station. Although he apparently did not intend to harm anyone, the bomb killed a child and severely maimed an old woman, and he was subsequently arrested and executed. The Government seized on the incident to discredit liberalism in general and the Liberal Party in particular, resulting in "incomputable harm" to the liberal cause, as Alan Paton, President of the Liberal Party bitterly observed (Paton 1965b:2). Indeed, Paton felt that Harris had not only damaged the Party but had violated one of the central principles of liberalism, and he could never bring himself to forgive him (Paton 1988:237).

The Harris incident, which was given massive media coverage, struck deep at the heart of South African liberal thinking, and left a permanent impression in the minds of many liberal writers. Apart from being treated in several longer texts such as C.J. Driver's Elegy for a Revolutionary (1969) and Hugh Lewin's Bandiet (1974) - the author himself imprisoned for sabotage activities - the incident has also formed the subject of poems like Peter Wilhelm's "John Harris Bombs Johannesburg Station" (1977:80) and Mike Nicol's "Under the Stone" (1978:7-8). In fact, in 1971, Sheila Fugard (1971:17; 1975:38) also composed a poem on the topic, making use of virtually surrealistic imagery to suggest both the horror of the actual explosion as well as, perhaps, the forces which drove Harris to such desperate action:

#### **Platform 5**

(The incident of John Harris, who placed a bomb in the Johannesburg station)

A man with a suitcase

blew up the world

The contents of his universe

the mother the lover the  
children



experience only by having it "scored" in three large drawing-books (Fugard 1974b:5). Later, the play was recorded in the form of a long letter which Fugard wrote to an American photographer friend, Bruce Davidson, in June 1973. In the letter, Fugard describes how he and his three actors, referring to themselves as the CAPAB Experimental Theatre Lab in deference no doubt to Grotowski, "disappeared into a rehearsal room and ten weeks later we came out and gave our first 'exposure'" (p.117). After several more weeks, by which stage money had run out and they were forced to disband, they were able to share with their spectators "an experience which lasted about eighty minutes and which had a 'text' of about four hundred words. The rest was space, silence and action" (p.118). Fugard then goes on to describe not the methods and techniques used in developing the play, but rather "what the audience was witness to, what happened" (p.118).

The only external aid provided to the spectators before the "exposure" was a rather cryptic programme note:

From Greek mythology comes the story of Clytemnestra. Her husband was Agamemnon. She had two children, Electra and Orestes. Agamemnon sacrificed their third child, Iphigenia, so that the wind could turn and the Greek fleet could leave Aulis for the Trojan War.

Agamemnon returned to Clytemnestra ten years later when she murdered him. Orestes and Electra avenged his death by killing their mother.

From our history comes the image of a young man with a large brown suitcase on a bench in the Johannesburg station concourse. He was not travelling anywhere (p.118).

Fugard has noted elsewhere (1974b:4) that he "superimposed, almost in the sense of a palimpsest" the image of John Harris on that of Clytemnestra and her two children, developing the idea without the aid of a text through "strange, almost somnambulistic action" to produce the sensation of a dream rather than chronological, causally-linked realism. The full effect of the dramatised superimposition is highly complex and not easily explicated in its entirety; Fugard has himself observed that he still does not "properly understand the relationship between the two ideas that [he] coupled" (in Momentum interview 1984:23). Nevertheless, it is possible to approach the meaning of the play at the level at least of its fundamental relevance to the contemporary South African political situation.

In his notebooks (early 1971, p.188), Fugard observes that he had very early on a sense that Harris stood in relation to his society as Orestes did to Clytemnestra. An intolerable burden of guilt for the crimes committed - the act of violence an attempt to escape the burden of guilt.

And in the letter (p.118), Fugard states that Harris acted in an appalling desperate protest about the world in which he found himself.

As such, the play examines the attempt to use violence as a means of avenging prior acts of violence and political injustice and, thereby, setting the times right. In the original drama, Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon in revenge for the murder of Iphigenia; Orestes, encouraged by Electra, kills Clytemnestra in

revenge for the murder of Agamemnon. Both hope by their actions to purge their society of corruption and evil and to usher in a new era of political sanctity. As Richmond Lattimore (1953:14) points out, however, this is not so easily accomplished:

Clytaemnestra answers, over the corpse of Agamemnon, that she has been bloody but the house is clean. No more evil need be done. Orestes is to make the same claim over the corpse of Clytaemnestra herself. Both are mistaken.

They are mistaken because, as the tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides make clear, such acts of violence, far from ending evil, actually serve only to perpetuate a never-ending chain of murder which engulfs all the executioners in further acts of evil and violence.

Fugard claims in the letter that "so much of Orestes was an attempt to articulate, by means of dramatic metaphor, primitive if not archetypal experiences" (p.120). Several of these, which function at the level of personal and social violence, are described in some detail. First, and perhaps most importantly: "You cannot destroy without being destroyed" (p.123). This truth is dramatised in a scene which Fugard introduces with the heavily ominous words, "Time, and a chair called Agamemnon" (p.123). In this scene, Clytemnestra, played by Yvonne Bryceland, physically smashes to pieces "one unique, irreplaceable chair", representing Agamemnon (p.123). As Fugard has commented (in Benson 1977:82),

Yvonne used the metaphor of the chair to kill and destroy totally so that not even God could put the pieces back together again.

According to the letter, "it was an awesome and chilling spectacle" (p.123). Through her act of destruction, however, the destroyer is herself destroyed:

As she went through the experience Y wrecked her soul. It was a devastated human being who sank down finally into the debris, the splintered and shattered wood, torn upholstery and padding, the bent bolts, of what had once been a good thing (pp.123-124).

The second truth that is dramatised is intricately connected with the first: "You cannot witness destruction without being damaged" (p.124). In this case, Orestes and Electra, who have been established as innocent children at the outset, are "terrified" by what they have seen: "Their metaphor of innocence has met a metaphor of evil. Nothing will ever be the same again" (p.124). It is important to note that while Fugard used the "Agamemnon" from Aeschylus' Oresteia trilogy as the primary source for Clytemnestra's murder of her husband, he turned to Euripides' Orestes and Electra for the subsequent action (Notebooks, September-December 1970, p.188). The point is significant. Whereas Aeschylus' tragedies present a world which is ultimately ordered and meaningful even if only through divine resolution, Euripides' Orestes, in particular, has been described as a play of "howling spiritual lunacy" (William Arrowsmith 1958:106), where almost all of the characters have been warped and damaged, and where morality itself seems devoid of meaning. Indeed, the purpose of the sudden Apollonian deus-ex-machina at the end seems to be less an actual resolution than an ironic commentary on the

disjunction between an ideal world ruled by beneficent gods and the real world of chaotic violence and corruption of men on earth. Thus, in Fugard's play, the Orestes who emerges from witnessing his father's murder is not some noble Hamlet-like avenger, but a lost and damaged soul, thrown into a bewildering world of violence and destruction, and desperately "searching for escape, searching for significant action as a response to the evil in the world" (p.124). Orestes' response is a further act of violence, which destroys Clytemnestra, and which leads to his being hounded by Menelaus and his men; similarly, John Harris's response is an act of violence which serves no purpose but to destroy - in this case killing an innocent child and severely burning an old woman. Once more, the task of creating a horrifying image of agony and destruction fell to Yvonne Bryceland, now representing both Clytemnestra and the old woman, the soles of whose feet have been burnt away by the petrol in the bomb:

She wants to walk but cannot. She wants to cry but all that comes out are small sounds of disgust as she grabs her ankles and, using her heels and her arse, drags herself away across the floor of a station concourse so vast and empty it looks like the floor of a palace (pp.125-126).

The play then ends with the actors reading three texts, including an extract from the testimony of John Harris in which he claimed to have been confused at hearing of the casualties "because [he] had known that people were not going to be hurt" (p.126). Though the play does not make the point explicitly, Harris was, in turn, executed by the State in yet a further act of violence.

The two other extracts come from the writings of R.D. Laing, an existential psychoanalyst, and, like Grotowski, another well-known radical figure of the 1960s, whom both Fugard and Bryceland had been reading at the time. The first extract is taken from Laing's The Divided Self (1960), a study of schizophrenia, and comes, in fact, from the case study transcript of an actual patient, Joan, though Fugard elides two separate quotations and modifies them slightly (see Laing 1960:183,190). The purport of the extract involves Laing's basic theme of the alienation and isolation of all people, and not just schizophrenics, from their society and other people. The third extract is taken from Laing's The Bird of Paradise (1967), a harrowing, visionary essay about the way in which modern society, without even realising it, is becoming caught up in a nightmare of violence and horror. To give the twice-repeated quotation its full context, Laing (1967:152,156) is railing at the deadened responses of a sick and vicious world:

This writing is not exempt. It remains like all writing an absurd and revolting effort to make an impression on a world that will remain as unmoved as it is avid. If I could turn you on, if I could drive you out of your wretched mind, if I could reach you, I would let you know (152,156).

Fugard claimed (Notebooks, early 1971, p.188) to be impressed, in particular, by Laing's "desperate urgency" about the "devastation; alienation" of people in society. And thus Fugard may be seen in Orestes to be trying, in a similarly radical and

even visionary way, to convey authentically the horror of an endless cycle of uncontrollable violence to those who might have been tempted to use violence as an instrument of political change. As he pointed out (Notebooks, early 1971, p.189), among many things, we wanted to say to our audience of young white South Africans: "You could have been the person beside whom a young man left a large brown suitcase".

The audience to whom Fugard refers was a group of young South Africans who responded powerfully to the play and followed it around from venue to venue (Fugard in Williams 1971:10). It was this group of progressive young people that Fugard particularly wanted to reach with his urgent message of non-violence. And Fugard has remained true to his non-violent convictions throughout South Africa's recent history. In a recent interview which I conducted with him (Foley 1994:65), he stated his position eloquently:

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. It's as simple as that. You get trapped in a karma, you get trapped in a cycle, in a reciprocity that just goes on creating more and more darkness.

The answer, as Fugard has always maintained, and as the political settlement achieved in South Africa in the 1990s has borne out, lies not in violence but in reason, discussion and peaceful negotiation. Though Fugard's Orestes does not go so far, the play invites one to extrapolate to the conclusion of Aeschylus' Oresteia, where Orestes, pursued by the Furies for his mother's murder, arrives at last at the rock of Athens and appeals to Athene. The goddess permits him a trial and his case is judged according to rational argument by Athene and a court of appointed human jurors (the law court of the Areopagus), resulting finally in a just peace. Stephen Gray (1986:24) seems wrong, therefore, to suggest that Orestes shows that in 1971 Fugard "saw no way out": more properly, he saw no way out through violence.

The play's "exposures" in 1971 (it has never been presented since) caused some confusion among its spectators and reviewers. Fugard has observed (Momentum interview 1984:23) that "it turned out to be a very controversial experience" though there was "a faithful following of people who found the experience meaningful". The significance of the play continues to elude some critics, including Vandenbroucke (1986:151), who, while conceding that Orestes "has a clearly political theme", goes on to say that by drawing a parallel between the John Harris bombing and the Orestes myth Fugard suggests forces that are timeless, perhaps unavoidable. They are not simply due to the socio-political circumstances of a given time and place.

Such a conclusion runs directly counter to Fugard's intention to make a very definite statement about his place and time, especially given the influence which Grotowski's ideas about using myth in drama exerted on him at the time. According to

Grotowski (1968:59), one reads, studies and adapts ancient myths not so much "to acquaint ourselves with the cultural and social life of the people of that age" but because such myths offer a different perspective from ours, and therefore are able to "throw a new light on our own condition". For Fugard, the story of Clytemnestra and Orestes performed just such a task, enabling him to explore the thorny question of the armed struggle in a fresh way, and to provide an original and objective account of the reasons for the liberal rejection of all political violence.

Fugard's experiments with Orestes supplied him, furthermore, with the tools and the experience for creating other collaborative plays. As he has noted (1974b:5), Orestes

is one of the most important experiences I have had in Theatre and I will be living with it, and using it, for as long as I continue to work. I can think of no aspect of my work, either as writer or director, that it has not influenced.

Yvonne Bryceland, moreover, has stated that it is "the most important single thing in his career" (in Gussow 1982:70). It would certainly prove to be a vital factor in Fugard's next collaborative venture, again with Yvonne Bryceland, at the newly opened Space theatre in Cape Town.

(iv)

In the year following his work on Orestes, Fugard was given a further opportunity to develop the techniques of collaboration as an alternative method of bearing witness to the destruction of human lives wrought by apartheid. Brian Astbury, Yvonne Bryceland's husband and a well-known photographer in his own right, had finally managed to realise a dream which he, Bryceland and Fugard had long cherished: the establishment of an alternative theatre for progressive drama. Called The Space/Die Ruimte/Indawo - after Peter Brook's book, The Empty Space (1968), the Open Space in London, and Fugard and the others' need for a "space" to work in (following Astbury 1980:np) - the theatre was due to open in March 1972 with a production of one of Fugard's plays, though Fugard himself was unavailable. Astbury had originally favoured staging a production of People Are Living There; however, after some discussion, Fugard announced that he would help, but would be doing a new play, with Yvonne Bryceland, to be entitled Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act. Despite Astbury's very real fears of a play with such subject matter being closed down by the authorities, rehearsals went ahead.

The origins of the play date from 1966, when Fugard read a newspaper report about an "Immorality case at De Aar" involving a "Coloured Anglican missionary and a forty-year-old white woman, a librarian. The police caught them in bed, pulled back the sheets and took photographs" (Notebooks, January 1966, p.132-133). Already at this stage, Fugard had in mind the central image of the play as "a blinding flash of light like a photographer's flash" crudely illuminating the lovers, as well as the idea of

three "statements" to be delivered by "Woman Man Sergeant" (p.133). The idea for the play returned to Fugard in conversation with Astbury while the two families were on holiday together at the Wilderness at the end of 1971, and by early 1972 Fugard was committed to the project. Given the opening of *The Space* in March, Fugard was confronted with a very tight schedule and deadline, as had not been the case with *Orestes*. Nevertheless, he was determined to continue with the experimental play-making techniques which he had employed in *Orestes*. As he maintains in the introduction to the so-called "Statements" plays (1974b:7), "although on the title page of this volume I claim sole authorship" for Statement after an arrest under the Immorality Act, and "although I do regard myself as having written that play", nonetheless the play's creative development "was totally dependent on the methods I had evolved with *Orestes*". Elsewhere, moreover, he has spoken of it as "the play Yvonne and I wrote together" (in Vandembroucke 1986:180). And in an interview with Peter Wilhelm (1972:37), he described the "process of making" the play:

I didn't start rehearsals with a finished script, I started rehearsals with a little newspaper cutting and we went from there.

Under the pressure of time, however, the process did not run altogether smoothly, and Fugard and Bryceland chopped and changed the play drastically right up to, and even after, opening night on 28 March 1972. By the end of the play's run, Fugard remained unsatisfied with the work, regarding it (*Notebooks*, May 1972, p.196) as a premature and unfinished production:

At many levels, possibly unavoidably because of circumstances, the most uncompleted, even careless, work I have yet done on a stage. Absolutely no doubt now that what I staged was Notes for a Play. The chance now, and the determination, to write that play.

The task of rewriting the play proved more difficult than Fugard had anticipated, however, and he found himself unable "to escape sociology and sentiment" and deal with the human reality of the story. By August (*Notebooks*, p.199) he was ready to give up:

I am now very near abandoning Statements as a flawed work which I will never get right.

At last, in September, he postponed work on the project to commit himself fully to John Kani and Winston Ntshona's first professional endeavour: one which would lead, as it turned out, to Sizwe Bansi Is Dead and The Island. However, when those plays were invited to be performed at the Royal Court Theatre in London, Fugard took the opportunity to include a revised version of Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act as part of a South African "season". It is the text of this production which Fugard published in the "Statements" volume (Fugard 1974b:7), and which will form the basis of this discussion.

Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act (henceforth Statements for brevity) deals with the end of a love affair between Errol Philander, the Coloured principal of the Bontrug location school, and Frieda Joubert, a white woman who runs the library in the adjacent town of Noupoort. The relationship is

shattered when they are caught and arrested under the Immorality Act, which the Nationalists had stiffened in 1950 to make sexual intercourse between members of different racial groups a far more serious offence. The main action of Statements takes place on the night of their arrest on 12 January 1966, the actual date of the original incident on which Fugard based the drama. Fugard has, however, slightly shifted the locale from De Aar to the little town of Noupoort about sixty kilometres away on the road to Cradock. The harsh, arid Karoo setting is maintained, but the name, Noupoort, allows Fugard to reinforce the idea of the narrow ("nou") attitudes of the white townspeople, including Mrs Tienie Buys, the woman who alerts the police to the suspected affair from her house adjoining the library. In a further attempt at actuality, Fugard has created the central image of the play out of the six police photographs which he remembers seeing of the couple caught in the act of love-making (1974b:5). The play is divided roughly into three segments: an opening sequence in which the lovers chat on the floor of the library after their love-making; the moment of the arrest, together with the statement of the policeman, the couple's fearful reaction and then their interrogation; and a final sequence in which the man and the woman, isolated from one another, make their final speeches to the audience.

In the opening sequence, the couple talk idly about a number of superficial topics. In the course of their chatting, however, a number of issues arise which are of a far more serious nature. Most obviously, their interracial sexual intercourse causes them to fear being caught by the authorities, and the actual arrest is foreshadowed by their being startled by "a sudden noise" which makes them "scramble apart" (p.89). The insidious effect of apartheid on their relationship is also made plain in Errol's angry rejection of Frieda's offer of extra water from her borehole, and his determination "to go along with Bontrug" (p.90) in solidarity with the Coloured community's severe water restrictions during the drought. But their relationship is more complicated than that merely of two "State-crossed lovers" (Cushman 1974:29) under apartheid. Errol is married and has a child, so that theirs is also an adulterous liaison. Indeed, Errol's surname, "Philander", carries resonances of "philandering", which serves to undercut the idea of theirs being a pure and ideal love, a point further emphasised by the fact that Frieda is six years older than him, and leads a lonely spinster's life apart from him. After their guilty recriminations boil over into a quarrel, however, they calm down and "come together and embrace" (p.94). Ironically, it is "against this image of the two lovers" (p.94) that the plain-clothes policeman, Detective-Sergeant J. du Preez (tellingly, we never learn the forename of this functionary of apartheid), walks on, carrying a police dossier and notebook, and dictates his "statement" to the audience. This statement, delivered in horrifyingly emotionless "officialese", reveals less about the offenders than it does about the cold inhumanity of the apartheid state machinery. Du Preez's statement is punctuated by a scene dramatising the actual arrest (p.96), conveyed by the man and woman scrambling around for their clothes in the darkness while

first "a sequence of camera flashes in the darkness" expose them, and then "torches are shone on them" relentlessly. Again tellingly, "we never see anything of the men behind" the camera or the torches. Fugard explains in his stage directions that these "flash-sequences" are nightmare excursions into the split-second of exposure and must be approached as "sub-text" rather than reality.

During these "flash-sequences", Errol and Frieda babble in fear and try to cover up their nakedness, with Errol apologising desperately and even degenerating "into a grotesque parody of the servile, cringing 'Coloured'" (p.99), reminiscent of Boesman in Boesman and Lena. They then recall "in a frank and eager manner" (p.100) how their relationship began, before the woman, alone, speaks as if being interrogated about the intimate details of their sexual intercourse. And finally, with not torches but "harsh, directionless white light .... suggestive of one of the photographs handed in in the Court as evidence", Errol resignedly states that "There was nothing left to say", and the policeman completes his statement (p.104). The play ends with the two lovers, now "totally isolated" (p.105), making their final speeches to the audience.

Throughout this moment of crisis, it is the woman, as in almost all of Fugard's plays, who emerges as the stronger of the two and who is able to maintain some kind of stoic dignity. During the arrest, she states plainly (quoted by du Preez), "I'm not ashamed of myself" (p.104), openly admitting that she initiated the relationship, that she gave Philander a key to the library, and asserting that she is "guilty" only of finding and loving Errol (p.101). Her final speech, moreover, takes the form of a moving elegy for the end of their relationship and despair at the fact that "all of me that found you must now lose you" (p.105). By contrast, Philander cowers in terror when arrested, promising "I won't do it again" and trying to use his position as Principal to escape punishment. In the police statement, du Preez notes that "Philander said nothing", either to the police or to Frieda (p.104). His final speech is an appalling manifestation of guilt-stricken psychological emasculation: paralysed by fear and shame, he obsessively repeats "I can't love" (pp.105-106). As Fugard has noted (Notebooks, November 1972, p.194), Philander's predicament, like Boesman's, is

the constant emasculation of Manhood by the South African "way of life" - guilt, prejudice and fear, all conspiring together finally to undermine the ability to love directly and forthrightly.

Even more disturbingly, in a scene every bit as chilling in its perversion of religious faith as Johnnie's final actions in Hello and Goodbye, Philander conflates God and the apartheid police ("God shines a torch to see what [Frieda] looks like", p.107) so that Calvinistic guilt and racial subservience cohere in his act of sexual transgression to result in a double castration - as a man and as a Coloured:

And it's a court case. That on the night of January the twelfth 1966, I ... who had been made in his image ... did lose a part of me. They did it I say. They dug a hole and buried it. Ask the dogs (p.107).

He then imagines God taking back "the other parts", even his useless, impotent "empty hands" until "there is only the emptiness left", which the police arrest "all the same" (p.108). Only when he has been totally extinguished as a human being can he finally claim in utter defeat, "They can't interfere with God any more" (p.108).

From a liberal point of view, then, Statements serves as a bitter indictment of the dehumanising nature of the apartheid system. In the text, the characters are merely titled "Man" and "Woman", for instance. The Immorality Act (which Fugard (Notebooks, July 1972, p.199) has called South Africa's "unique contribution to the world of pornography") long outraged the liberal conscience in terms of its flagrant infraction of basic human rights, as well as its invasion on the part of the State into the private lives of individual citizens. Having made this point, however, one must concede that the play remains problematic in a number of ways. In the first place, as Elsa Joubert (1972; in Gray 1982a:86) points out, while the play's political "statement" is made with "stark honesty", it is also a highly obvious one: the Immorality Act

is a man-made, unjust, basically indefensible thing. The knife that pushes into it, pushes through paper - there is nothing at the back of it. The drama has already been played out in the news bulletin.

It was, perhaps, in his awareness of this limitation that Fugard decided to add the complication of the adulterous nature of the lovers' relationship, though this in turn, as Joubert again observes, only serves to dilute the audience's sympathy for the characters.

There are other problems also. Apart from the rather portentous and artificial language, which has been universally condemned by the critics, Fugard has attempted, in an uncharacteristically clumsy fashion, to heighten the sub-textual significance of the play through scientific and philosophical allusion. Philander and Joubert meet, in fact, because he is doing a correspondence course and needs books which are available only at the white library. Although the course is not specified, Philander's reading includes classics on evolution such as Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology and Julian Huxley's Principles of Evolution, and in the opening sequence he tries to share with her his fascination with this topic. He is particularly obsessed with Lyell's phrase, "...no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end" (p.84, p.86), and the fact that some of the richest fossil deposits have been found in the Karoo itself. Since no more is made of these references in the play, it is difficult to know what to make of them. Raymer (1975:195) has sought to see in such allusions a framework of optimism for the play's political context:

Time is seen as something beneficial to South Africa's oppressed people, if not to its white population. Since evolution is no respecter of anti-miscegenation laws, one day in the distant future all men will be the same colour and, when men are all the same colour, an immense source of conflict will have been eliminated.

As Vandenbroucke (1986:190-191) argues, however, while Raymer's view may be correct in evolutionary terms, the fact seems to be of little consolation to Philander, who sees himself at the end of the play not "as part of an awesome process" (Raymer 1975:195), but as an isolated and broken individual. Vandenbroucke (1986:191) quite rightly states that Philander's final speech is not one of group consciousness, triumph, and hope, but of individual guilt and failure.

Indeed, the phrase used by Philander which seems far more representative of the true mood of the play is that "Because life lives, life must die" (p.82), a sentiment redolent of one of Fugard's favourite authors, Malraux (see Notebooks, August 1963, p.94, October 1963, p.103). In an interview with Peter Wilhelm (1972:39), Fugard reveals that at the time of writing the play he was listening incessantly to the requiems of Mozart and Brahms as celebrations of death, and felt obsessed by what he regards as "man's central dilemma: the fact that life dies". He goes on to point out in the interview that whereas the music of those two great composers may be regarded as "also a celebration of life, a prelude to death", Statements does not go that far, functioning merely as a statement about "something ending .... Two people at the end of a love affair" which is itself a metaphor for the fact that "nothing lasts". Thus, while it might be conceded that at an abstract level the play, by condemning present injustice and oppression, looks forward to "a better moment, sometime hence" (in Wilhelm 1972:39), on a personal and immediate level the play's vision seems unrelentingly dark and gloomy. Indeed, Statements remains one of the most pessimistic plays in Fugard's entire canon.

Reviews of the play when it opened at the Space were mixed, ranging from "damnably dull" (Williams 1972:17) to "damnably fascinating" (Fiskaal 1972:2), though the general tenor of the response was rather unenthusiastic. The revised version of the play received equally cool notices when it played at London, especially in comparison with the other two plays making up the South African season. Nevertheless, for Fugard Statements remains one of his favourite plays, partly because he feels he found in it "just the right balance in my attempt to make the actor creative without eliminating myself as the writer" (in Benson 1977:81). More than that, though, he claims (in Hough 1980:47-48) that the play still "lurks" in his life because it contains "some very dark and very ambiguous imagery" as well as, in parts, "the density, the ambiguity of poetry". It was this trend towards dense, complex, inward-looking drama that Fugard would continue to follow in Dimetos after the Royal Court performances. Before considering that work, however, it is necessary to discuss what have been widely regarded as Fugard's two finest collaborative plays, Sizwe Bansi Is Dead and The Island.

(v)

Shortly after the opening of *The Space*, the Serpent Players were given a Sunday night slot to perform for the Space Club - a members-only audience which circumvented the law prohibiting mixed casts and spectators. The Players presented a locally adapted version of Camus's *The Just*, which they re-titled *The Terrorists*. As Brian Astbury (1980:np) recalls,

the depth of talent was stunning. Two of them - John Kani and Winston Ntshona - were so turned on by the experience, which was their first in a "real" theatre, that they decided to turn professional.

To do so, they had to be registered as Athol Fugard's domestic servants in their reference books in the sort of absurd situation they would later exploit in their collaborative plays with Fugard. For Fugard's part, he decided "after several weeks of doubt", while trying to revise *Statements*, to commit himself "to a total involvement with Winston and Johnny in their first 'professional' venture" (*Notebooks*, September 1972, p.201). At first he had thought of using an existing play,

but soon realised if something meaningful was to come out of working with them it was only going to happen if I turned the idea into a mandate and worked along the lines of *Orestes* (p.201).

After presenting them with a "rather jumbled exposition" (p.201) of Grotowski's theories, Fugard and his actors began working on an idea involving two black waiters in a hotel, which would dramatise the white master-black servant relationship (a concept Fugard would later develop and amplify in *"Master Harold"...and the boys*). This idea was soon abandoned, however, in favour of an image with which Fugard had long been fascinated: "a studio photograph I had once seen of a man with a cigarette in one hand and a pipe in the other" (Fugard 1974b:5). By collectively teasing out the implications of this image, they decided that no black South African would smile like that unless his passbook was in order, and so the basic storyline of the play that would become *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* was born. Because of the improvised nature, and very rapid creation, of the play, at first no set script existed. In fact, it was only after the play was invited to be performed in London that an actual script was committed to paper, and later published in the "Statements" volume.

*Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, like *Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act*, is constructed as a one-act play divided into various segments by means of strategic lighting changes. The play opens with a long monologue delivered by the dapper and articulate Styles, played by John Kani. Styles sits in the New Brighton photographic studio of which he is the proprietor, reading and commenting sardonically on topical items in the newspaper, talking about his life and his work. He recalls his earlier job at the Ford automobile plant in Port Elizabeth, and how he took his chance to set up his own studio, which he regards not merely as a place of work but as "a strong-room of dreams" where "the dreams and hopes of my people" may be captured and preserved in time (pp.12-13). He illustrates the point by citing several clients who have come to be photographed, including the

forty-eight year old man who wanted to commemorate the fact that he had just obtained his Standard Six Certificate through correspondence , and the old patriarch who had his photograph taken with his entire family shortly before he died. Much of this monologue is based on Kani's own autobiographical experiences, particularly his seven years working at the Ford factory, which "Mr Henry Ford Junior Number Two" (p.4) had in actual fact visited, and where Kani had indeed mischievously translated for "General Foreman Mr 'Baas' Bradley" (pp.6-8) during the preparations for the ridiculously brief inspection of the plant (see Fugard Notebooks, July 1968, p.171). At some point in this frequently hilarious monologue - Astbury (1980:np) recalls that Kani went on for an hour and a half on opening night - a prospective client (played by Winston Ntshona) knocks on the door and enters the studio. Nervous and dressed in an ill-fitting new suit, the man is clearly marked as a rural newcomer to the city. He has come to have a photograph taken to accompany a letter he intends to send back to his wife in King William's Town (in actuality Ntshona's own birth place). Styles's enthusiasm soon rubs off on the man, and they try out various poses, including one in which, carried away by their excitement, the man is posed with "pipe in one hand and cigarette in the other" (p.20), until they finally take a "movie" (that is, a posed action still) of the man against the backdrop of "the City of the Future" (p.21). As the camera flash goes off, a blackout of everything except the man leaves the audience looking, effectively, at the photograph itself, which "comes to life" and dictates the letter to the wife, explaining to her, and to the audience, what had led the man to this point in his life.

It turns out that the man, Sizwe Bansi, having rather ingenuously come to Port Elizabeth to look for work, has run into the Kafkaesque labyrinth of apartheid bureaucracy, with its Native Commissioners, Bantu Affairs Departments, Labour Bureaux, administration offices, recruitment offices, and its Influx Control, Reference Books, Record Cards, Residence Permits, Work-Seeker's Permits, Hawker's Licences, and so on and on. Ntshona, Kani and Fugard could all bring their personal experiences of this legislative maze to bear upon the play: Ntshona had firsthand experience of problems with the pass laws; Kani had worked as a welfare assistant with the Bantu Administration in New Brighton after being fired from the Ford plant (Walder 1993:420); and Fugard could draw on his bitter memories of working as a clerk in the Native Commissioner's Court in Fordsburg during the 1950s. Sizwe Bansi, bewildered by this administrative jungle, has been referred for help to a New Brighton resident, Buntu (the name means "humane" or "compassionate"), played by a more sober Kani. Unable to offer much assistance since Sizwe's passbook is invalid, Buntu takes Sizwe to the escapism of the appropriately named Sky's shebeen. Emerging drunk from the shebeen, Sizwe loses his bearings in the unfamiliar surroundings in the vicinity of New Brighton's Newell High School (where, incidentally, Kani and Ntshona had attended school and performed in plays together: see Walder 1993:414). Buntu, meanwhile, relieves himself on some rubbish, only to discover to his horror that the trash covers a corpse. After

recovering from the shock, he checks and finds that the dead man's reference book is in order. Having hurried home with Sizwe, Buntu swaps the photographs in the reference books of Sizwe and the dead man, and announces that "Sizwe Bansi .... is dead" and Robert Zwelinzima, with his valid work-seeker's permit, has come back to life (p.36). Persuading the reluctant Sizwe that it is his only chance, Buntu rehearses him in his role as Robert Zwelinzima (a name taken, interestingly enough, from a character in a Serpent Players' production, Friday's Bread on Monday). One of the most important things Sizwe must know is his Native Identity number, NI3811863 - again, for actuality sake, Ntshona's own number, as printed on the original programme along with that of Kani and Fugard's ID number (see Astbury 1980:np). The various situations they rehearse include collecting a pay-packet, buying a suit at Sales House, going to church, and, inevitably, being stopped by the police in a pass raid. After wishing him luck, Buntu exits, leaving Sizwe Bansi/Robert Zwelinzima to take up again the pose of the photograph in Styles's studio and finish the letter to his wife. He concludes by hoping that with his new identity, "for the time being" at least, his "troubles are over" (p.44). As he signs off, Styles calls out to "Robert" to "smile" (p.44), and the play ends with the camera flash and blackout.

The play may finish with a smile, but, as Dennis Walder points out (1984:86-87), this final image is "deeply ironic" since "we have been taken behind the black man's smiling face, and we now know what it hides". The play clearly functions as a denunciation not only of the plethora of apartheid laws explicitly highlighted in the course of the play, but also of other aspects of life for blacks in South Africa. Styles's opening monologue, for example, reveals the general exploitation of African labour under the apartheid economy, as well as such particular manifestations as the criminal disregard for basic safety standards for blacks in South African factories. Sizwe's predicament, among many other things, lays bare the inhumanity of the Bantustan and migrant labour system: his wife's name, Nowetu, suggests phonetically that, apart from being separated from her husband, she has literally "nowhere to" go (which, in turn, forms a bitter counterpoint to the Nguni meaning of her name - "ours", or "our one"). And Buntu's story of Outa Jacob (pp.27-28) is a moving account of the fundamental powerlessness of the ordinary black farm-worker under apartheid employment conditions. Underlying the whole tragic absurdity of apartheid is found, of course, the Population Registration Act of 1950, in which individual human beings are classified according to race and then treated with gross discrimination as a result. As Sizwe realises at the end of the play, trouble can never be permanently avoided by black people in apartheid South Africa, because "Our skin is trouble" (p.43).

The play does not pretend, thus, to depict any utopian solutions in the short term for South Africa's oppressed majority under apartheid. Buntu's plan offers at best temporary relief to Sizwe, without any guarantee of lasting success. Indeed, even though Buntu argues that all black men are, in any event, "ghosts" in their own country (through their disenfranchisement and exclusion

from civil liberties), Sizwe's adoption of a dead man's identity at the expense of his own still seems a dubious manoeuvre, particularly in terms of its distant echo of the ending of Hello and Goodbye. What Sizwe Bansi Is Dead ultimately makes plain, then, is that the South African problem could only be solved by the total eradication of the apartheid system in its entirety.

The play does show, however, that in the short term it is possible for black men and women to survive in spite of the overarching presence of apartheid. It depicts black South Africans taking on the apartheid machine and winning, even if these victories are small and temporary, and as such celebrates the endurance and resourcefulness of the individual against the system. Thus, Styles's entrepreneurial talent demonstrates the skill and flair of the individual and the potential for full African participation in a true free enterprise system: in what can only be regarded as cocking a snook at the centralised socialist economic model, Styles's "City of the Future" is undoubtedly a vibrantly capitalist one (witness Hilary Seymour's outraged reaction (1980:279), for instance). Moreover, Buntu's compassion and practical helpfulness exemplifies the very quality of "ubuntu" that his name suggests. It is significant that Styles refers to Buntu as a "liberal":

Very good somebody that one. Came here for his Wedding Card. Always helping people. If that man was white they'd call him a liberal (p.18).

Clearly, Walder's conclusion that the lines are uttered "mockingly" is distorted (1984:87). In one sense, it is true that Styles draws attention to the fact that many black South Africans at the time hesitated to label themselves "liberal", as a result, to a large extent, of the African nationalist and Black Consciousness hegemonies. In another sense, however, the lines highlight the notion that the traditional African concept of "ubuntu" is consonant with the principal values of liberalism. The underlying implication, therefore, is that African humanism, as exemplified by Buntu, and Western-derived liberalism share the same basic vision of the human person and society. Both philosophies, in particular, emphasise the fundamental worth of the person and the equal rights of all individuals in society. And, while both philosophies would agree that nothing short of the total destruction of apartheid is necessary as a political solution for South Africa, they would also agree, as the play suggests, that helping one's fellow human beings at an individual level is a crucial ingredient of any just society.

Ironically, the early history of the play's production forms a real-life enactment of the very apartheid laws which the play censures. Brian Astbury (1980:np) recounts that the play's original one-off Sunday night Club performance at the Space in October 1972 "exploded onto our stage" with such unprecedented force that half the audience stayed on after the end discussing it. After touring other venues, therefore, the play was invited back for a late-night run at the Space where its continuing success (and lack of trouble with the authorities) prompted Astbury to present the play to open audiences rather than just Club members. On the opening day, however, the police forced a

cancellation of a sold-out house. With Buntu-like resourcefulness, Astbury, together with the non-racial Argo Film Circle, organised the signing on of 1500 new Club members and the show went ahead the following night despite the presence of two plain-clothes policemen. Martin Orkin (personal communication) recalls, however, that when the play opened at the Box Theatre at the University of the Witwatersrand, the police not only closed down the show but tried to arrest the cast, crew and audience, who fled en masse across the University's Library Lawns, in a scene straight out of the Theatre of the Absurd. The play's enormous success - and controversy - continued at venues in Port Elizabeth and New Brighton: in the latter, Fugard (1983; in Walder 1984:87) remembers it caused a near-riot as people reacted

with disbelief, panic and fear that these things were actually being talked about out loud and then there was joy, that this was a celebration of small things in their lives.

As a result of its local success, Sizwe Bansi Is Dead was invited to London by Oscar Lewenstein of the Royal Court Theatre (fourteen years after the same theatre would not hire Fugard as a stage-hand): with Brian Astbury and the Space again coming to the rescue by helping to raise funds for the tour. It was in London, incidentally, that the play's title became corrupted. The original spelling was "Sizwe Banzi", a name meaning in Xhosa, roughly, "the nation is strong". It was misspelt on a poster sent to London from Port Elizabeth and, for some reason, the error has been perpetuated. Whatever the spelling, the play was a huge success, being voted Play of the Year in London, and earning Kani and Ntshona joint Tony awards for Best Actor when the play was produced in New York in 1974. This honour was offset, in a further note of absurdist irony, by the pair being arrested in the Transkei in 1976 by Kaiser Matanzima for the play's anti-Bantustan remarks (see pp.30-31), and only being released after an international petition led by the Australian Nobel Prize winning author, Patrick White.

In spite of the play's overwhelming success, it has been condemned by several critics, especially those espousing a Marxist point of view. Although some radical critics have acknowledged the inspiring influence the play has had on black South African theatre in the 1970s (Mshengu 1977:42; Steadman 1983:225), others have found the play's liberal values inadequate. Much of this criticism shows a very poor understanding not only of liberalism but also of South Africa: Hilary Seymour (1980:275), for instance, continually conflates author(s) and characters indiscriminately, and cites as typical South African liberals Pik Botha and Anton Rupert! Moreover, several of these criticisms seem to work in the play's favour rather than against it. Seymour's excoriation of the play's vision of "universal brotherhood" (1980:285) is a case in point, as is Martin Orkin's condemnation of Sizwe's speech on leaving Robert Zwelinzima's body. Indeed, Orkin's complaint that the speech draws on liberal discourse which "gave the individual supreme importance and stressed the same basic rights for all"

(1991:162) could well be taken as proof not of the play's naivety but of its enduringly humane and valid political vision.

(vi)

While waiting for passports and permission to leave South Africa to do Sizwe Bansi Is Dead in London, Fugard, Kani and Ntshona decided to make good the time by working on some new ideas for a play. After several false starts, Fugard presented to the two actors the image of Robben Island, the notorious prison for political dissidents - including at that time Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki, Mhlaba and Kathrada - around which a shroud of fearful silence prevailed. Fugard's fascination with Robben Island and political imprisonment dates back at least to May 1962, when he attended the trial of a friend, Harold Strachan, on sabotage charges along with John Jack and Govan Mbeki (Notebooks, p.48f). His personal connection with Robben Island was hardened in 1964 and 1965 with the imprisonment of several members of the Serpent Players, among them Welcome Duru, Norman Ntshinga, Simon Hanabe and Sipho "Sharkie" Mguqulwa. Duru was released at the end of 1966 and Ntshinga in September the following year, and both of their vivid "hilarious-terrible stories about life on the island" (Notebooks, September 1967, p.157) made a strong impression on Fugard's imagination. He began thinking deliberately about writing a play entitled Robben Island or Seal Island or The Island in May 1970, but only took up the idea in earnest in 1973, so that he accurately observes that what became the finished product of The Island in fact "began with the notes and ideas I had accumulated over many years relating to Robben Island" (1974b:5). For their part, Kani and Ntshona contributed material derived from stories about the prison which they had heard from friends and relatives, including Kani's brother (later shot at a funeral).

The main focus for the play, however, came from the fact that two of the original Serpent Players, Norman Ntshinga and "Sharkie" Mguqulwa, had put on a version of Sophocles' Antigone (which the Players were rehearsing when Ntshinga was arrested) for prison entertainment. This idea cemented Fugard's prior sense (mentioned in a notebook entry of March 1973, p.209) that "the complex of Robben Island ideas and images" was beginning to take on an almost "classical" style of "distance", "elevation" and "objectivity". It may be worth mentioning that Fugard's experience with Sophocles went right back to 1956 when he was cast, in his first professional acting role, as the old shepherd in Andre Huguonet's production of Oedipus Rex. Thus, as with Orestes, Fugard turned to classical Greek myth and drama to make a contemporary political statement. It must be pointed out, however, that the idea of using the Antigone for political protest purposes is by no means a new one: E.A. Mackay (1989:41), following George Steiner's Antigones, cites numerous instances over the past few hundred years, including Brecht and Anouilh. Indeed, Fugard himself (in Gussow 1982:69) likened the Serpent Players' Robben Island production of Antigone to that of Anouilh's during the second world war, where the German officers

(like the Robben Island warders) thought they were merely watching a classical tragedy whereas the French (like the inmates) got the real political message. Despite such antecedents, Fugard, Kani and Ntshona's collaborative venture, which they workshopped in Fugard's garage in about a fortnight, still produced a play which functioned as a highly pertinent and effective comment on the nature of oppression in South Africa under apartheid.

The Island, which is divided into four distinct scenes, begins, in fact, with a recontextualisation of another Greek myth: that of Sisyphus. Fugard had first apprehended the modern relevance of the myth from his reading of Camus in 1963 (Notebooks, p.105; see Camus 1940:96-99), and now he recalled Sisyphus' "meaningless absurd labour" (Notebooks, March 1973, p.212) as a perfect dramatic metaphor for the Robben Island prisoners' punishment. Thus, after a "long drawn-out wail of a siren" (p.47), the two characters, in prison uniform and with shaven heads, mime a scene in which each man fills a wheelbarrow with sand and takes it to where the other man is digging so that their piles of sand never diminish. It is "an image of back-breaking and grotesquely futile labour" which is "interminable" (p.47), a concept underscored by the fact that in performance the scene may last for anything between ten to twenty minutes. At last, at the sound of a whistle, the two men, chained together at the wrist and ankle, are chased back to the cell which they share. Beaten for not running fast enough, they manage nonetheless to summon the strength to care for each other's wounds, revealing that "their brotherhood is intact" (p.49). At this point, John reminds Winston (the actors use their own names) of their production of Antigone which they are due to perform at the prison concert in a few days' time. John is far more enthusiastic about the project than Winston, whom he has to cajole into learning the plot of the play. The scene ends with John, in an effort to lighten Winston's mood, pretending to phone home to New Brighton - the Robben Island prisoners did in actuality use such role-playing and improvising of movies like "Fastest Gun in the West" for light relief (p.56; Fugard Notebooks, September 1967, p.152). But the role-play which begins with excitement about friends like Scott and Sky (in an echo from Sizwe Bansi Is Dead), ends in melancholy as they remember their wives and families alone at home.

In the following scene, Winston tries on his costume for the role of Antigone - a makeshift wig and false breasts - but when John bursts into fits of laughter, he refuses to carry on with the project. Just then, however, comes the turning point in the play. John is called out and told that as a result of a successful appeal his sentence has been reduced from ten years to three, which means that he will be released in fewer than three months. At first, Winston shares in his delight and they laughingly remember their journey to Robben Island: from their respective magistrates' courts to "Rooihel" (literally "Red Hell" but actually an Afrikaans corruption of the "Royal" prison in Port Elizabeth), and then the van ride when they were first chained together, or "married" (p.65), through to Cape Town. But this "mood of innocent celebration" passes as "John realizes what his

good news means to the other man" (p.67), who is serving a life sentence (see p.48). Indeed, in the following scene, Winston, having caught John counting the days he has left, begins "with a strange smile" (p.68) to imagine John's journey home to freedom, his own torment and pain building up into a terrible confrontation:

JOHN. Winston? What's happening? Why are you punishing me?

WINSTON [quietly]. You stink, John. You stink of beer, of company, of poes, of freedom .... Your freedom stinks, John, and it's driving me mad (p.71).

At last, however, Winston controls himself and addresses John, like Camus's Sisyphean hero, perhaps, with "the voice of a man who has come to terms with his fate, massively compassionate" (p.72). His words, "Nyana we Sizwe" ("Brother of the Land"), echo those he uttered at the beginning of the play when he and John nursed each other's wounds, and reveal, on an even more profound level, the sense of fraternity and solidarity between the two men. Such a sense is seen to exist between all of South Africa's political prisoners, manifested in the cries of "Courage, Brothers! Courage!" (p.66) which the Coloured prisoners at George had shouted to them on their journey to Robben Island. The scene ends after a shift in time with Winston, in a reversal of attitude, collecting the props for Antigone and hurrying John along to the concert.

The fourth and final scene takes the form of their performance, delivered so that the audience becomes conflated, as it were, with the audience on the island. John, appearing as himself, gives a brief background to the plot of Antigone: two brothers had fought on opposite sides in battle and killed each other; Eteocles, who had defended the State, was to be buried with full religious rites, while Polynices, the rebel, was to be left to rot on the orders of the king, Creon. Antigone, their sister, had been arrested for burying the body of Polynices, and her trial and punishment (which is only a part of Sophocles' tragedy) is to form the substance of their version. The play proper starts with John, as Creon, delivering a lecture to his people on the role of the law, which he states functions both as a shield to protect the innocent people of the land in their "fatness and happiness" (p.74), but also as a sword to punish the guilty. As Creon speaks, however, his words start to degenerate into the familiar "total onslaught" jargon of the apartheid regime: "the constant troubles on our borders" and the fact that "there are still at large subversive elements" (p.74). At length, the accused is brought in. Winston, wearing the wig, necklace, false breasts and skirt of Antigone, now strikes a totally serious figure. After pleading guilty, Antigone argues in mitigation that in burying Polynices' body she was merely obeying her duty to uphold the law of God, which overrides that of man, and she claims, moreover, that all the people in Creon's kingdom would agree with her actions "if fear of you and another law did not force them into silence" (p.76). At Creon's assertion that by honouring her one brother she was insulting the other, she replies with crushing simplicity, "I shared my love, not my hate" (p.76). She is sentenced by Creon to be taken to the Island to be walled up in a cell for life "with enough food to acquit

ourselves of the taint of her blood" (p.77), whereupon Winston, tearing off his wig and confronting the audience as himself, cries,

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.77).

The play ends with the two men removing their costumes, striking the set, and, returning to the image of being chained hand and foot as at the beginning of the play, "they start running" (p.77). A siren wails, and the stage fades to blackout.

The final scene of the play is, thus, a fairly faithful adaptation of the trial scene in Sophocles' Antigone, but its relevance to the South African context, at least up to 1990, is unmistakable and needs little explication. One comment may be made, though: many in the audience of The Island would recognise in Antigone's final words a correspondence to the closing words of Nelson Mandela in his statement to the court at the Rivonia Trial in 1964, shortly before he and his fellow accused were due to be sentenced:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But if needs be it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die (quoted in Benson 1990:159).

At the time of the original production in 1973, Mandela had been in prison for almost ten years and there seemed scant prospect of his release. Those familiar with the ending of Sophocles' tragedy must have wondered whether Mandela, like Antigone, would die in prison, leaving Creon to suffer unrelenting remorse and guilt. His eventual release on 11 February 1990, however, served as a dramatic symbol of the end of apartheid and brought to an end, for all time, it is to be hoped, the era of political imprisonment in South Africa.

In ideological terms, The Island, like the Orestes adaptation, stands as a pre-eminent example of a modern reworking of Greek myth to assert a liberal political perspective. The Antigone has been described by David Grene (1954:3) as "the classic statement of the struggle between the law of individual conscience and the central power of the state", and its adaptation in The Island raises numerous issues crucial to liberalism. In particular, apart from explicitly condemning the notion of political imprisonment, the play highlights the key liberal principles of freedom of belief, freedom of speech and freedom of political association. Such principles form the sine qua non of any democratic society, and any limitation of such liberties by the State serves as a sure sign of the erosion of a government's commitment to the politics of liberal democracy. As such, even in a democratic society such as South Africa has become, liberals remain the principal guardians of liberty and open government. It is interesting, therefore, that at a recent revival of The Island at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg - I was there on 27

June 1995 - John Kani, as Creon, directed his threats very clearly, twice, at "liberals". The implication would seem to be that, at least from Kani and Ntshona and Fugard's perspective, liberalism continues, even in post-apartheid South Africa, to present the sternest challenge to any abuse of power by the State.

Like Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, The Island had a great impact when it opened at the Space Theatre in Cape Town in 1973. At the time, however, it was for reasons of avoiding censorship called Die Hodoshe Span ("Hodoshe's Work-Team", "Hodoshe" meaning a green carrion fly, prevalent on Robben Island, and the nickname of a particularly sadistic warder). The play was given its present title when it was produced at the Royal Court as part of the highly successful South African season in 1974. Nevertheless, the idea of the carrion fly remains an important theme in the play as it reinforces the notion of the inversion of values which the play (and the play-within-a-play) highlight: a corpse is left to rot while a living person is entombed; a man is sentenced to "life" but is reduced to a living death on the island; and, most importantly, in both texts, people are punished for standing up for what is right, leaving the entire country in a state of moral and political corruption and putrefaction. In such a light, The Island continues, in any context, to make a powerful political statement.

Indeed, The Island and Sizwe Bansi Is Dead together constitute a remarkable achievement on the part of Fugard and his two actor-collaborators, John Kani and Winston Ntshona. The plays succeed, in particular, in producing politically explicit theatre that is still artistically impressive and effective. Andre Brink (1993:450), for instance, makes the point that the plays represent

not a renunciation of sociopolitical action in favour of an aesthetic and/or existential response, but a highly charged confluence of the two.

The plays certainly never descend into the dour, moralistic solemnity of so much "committed" drama; as Stephen Gray (1982b:21) observes,

Fugard's humour, never far from the surface, breaks abundantly through in works even as grotesque as The Island. The strategies employed in these plays form a unique "carnival" of solidarity between an audience and the players.

And Gray goes on to suggest, following Fugard's own dramaturgical analysis (for example, Notebooks, October 1967, p.156; 1974b:6) that the plays approach both

Brecht's "ease", which comes from a technical mastery of the medium, and, in the ability never to lose confidence in the actor-audience relationship, a state of Zen "spontaneity".

To a very large degree, Fugard achieved with these plays the "poor theatre" of rich meaningfulness advocated by Grotowski (see O'Sheel 1978), so that even a critic so generally antagonistic towards Fugard's politics as Dennis Walder (1984:95,83) can concede that such drama "is capable of bearing witness" and

"defy[ing] the status quo". And finally, what these plays demonstrate, both through the stories that they tell and as plays in their own right, is that theatre does matter and can have a progressive effect in a politically illiberal context. Just as Sizwe Bansi finds that acting is sometimes necessary for survival, and just as Winston uses drama to make his statement of defiance, so these plays revealed the potential capacity of art to challenge injustice. Fugard himself, in a BBC Radio 4 interview in 1984 (quoted in Walder 1984:125), made the point adroitly:

I still believe that theatre is an inordinately civilising factor in any society. It does provoke people to think and feel, sometimes about things they don't want to think and feel. One of my most passionate convictions is that if the majority of white South Africans got around to doing that, then we would stand some real chance of things happening inside that country.

(vii)

Following the completion of the revised version of Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act, on which he worked with Yvonne Bryceland and Ben Kingsley, Fugard decided to give up the process of creating plays through collaboration. The main reason for this decision seems to have been that Fugard experienced a similar kind of frustration and writer's block with this method of play-making as he had done with the more conventional techniques after the writing of Boesman and Lena. Part of the cause of this frustration lay in the fact that the collaborative method, while powerful in its simplicity and effective as "a form of instant play-making", was a limited one "with a very specific ceiling" as opposed to a play written in private over a long period of time (Fugard in Momentum interview 1984:23). Referring specifically to Sizwe Bansi Is Dead and The Island, Fugard states (Momentum interview 1984:23):

I'm critical of those two works, I think they suffer from haste. I think there is a limit to the density, the subtlety, even the complexity of the text which emerges under those conditions. Actors aren't playwrights: they can deal with the experience, and the best of them, if you use certain techniques correctly, can arrive at some articulation of it, or an articulate response to a situation you've created, hoping to release something in them. But it's important to distinguish between the actor's articulate response and the very different, ruthless, painful discipline that is involved in professional play-writing.

A further reason may derive from the fact that the collaborative method involved working intensely and intimately with other people, and this seems to have begun to cause some tension between Fugard and his actors. Although Fugard pays tribute to the "courage" and talent of these actors in the introduction to the "Statements" volume (1974b:6-7), he adds that the process was at times "painful" and threatened to disintegrate "into a

dangerous game with personalities". He goes on to explain that this

might be one of the reasons why at this point I feel that I have exhausted for myself personally the experience that started with Orestes, and that the time has come to return to the privacy of blank paper.

A particular problem appears to have arisen over the question of the acknowledgement of authorship of Sizwe Bansi Is Dead and The Island. In several interviews in the 1970s and early 1980s, John Kani claimed that he and Winston Ntshona were significantly more responsible for the creation of those two plays than Fugard (see Vandembroucke 1986:159-160 and 171). Fugard, by contrast, while generously praising the contribution of Kani and Ntshona to the creation of those plays - they are described on the title page as "Two Workshop Productions devised by Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona" - nevertheless stresses the role of "the writer" (Fugard 1974b:5):

But I would just like to make one point clear: we did not jettison the writer. It was never a question of coming together with the actors on a "let's make a play" basis. The starting point to our work was always at least an image, sometimes an already structured complex of images about which I, as a writer, was obsessional. In all three of these plays the writer provided us with a mandate in terms of which the actors then went to work .... These initial mandates from the writer were also not his final contribution. He kept pace with us as fast as we discovered and explored ... sometimes as no more than a scribe, but at other times in a much more decisive way. The final dramatic structure of each play, for example, was his responsibility. Looking back on the three experiences now, it was if instead of first putting words on paper in order to arrive eventually at the stage and a live performance, I was able to write directly into its space and silence via the actor.

At any rate, when an invitation to return to the Royal Court Theatre with Sizwe Bansi Is Dead came in 1976 (Notebooks, p.222), Fugard balked, noting that Kani and Ntshona - as well as he - were "very tired" with that play. Nevertheless, when Fugard did finally accept the Royal Court invitation in January 1977, he was pleasantly surprised at how well the play stood up to the test of time. Thinking that the play should be updated to incorporate the events surrounding the 1976 Soweto uprising, he and the others found that it had acquired a life of its own and resisted revision. He began to consider (Notebooks, January 1977, p.226) that he had, perhaps, been wrong to have "always rated Sizwe fairly low, a play which walked the tightrope between poetry and propaganda"; and as the three of them found themselves caught up in the play again, Fugard claimed

I am as confident of the integrity and honesty of its "witness" now as I was then and, equivalently, am just as sustained by it.

Nevertheless, Fugard (Notebooks, September 1976, p.222) rejected the idea of doing "something new" in terms of collaboration with

the actors:

Every instinct however tells me that those days of "making" are past. They hijacked my life and energies for three years. I won't let that happen again. That sort of "making" would not in the slightest alleviate the yearning to tell a story which still possesses me.

If I can't say "No" now, I will never. And I need to. And thus, although Fugard (in Vandenbroucke 1986:191-192) could claim that he was confident of working with Kani and Ntshona for a long time still, he was also certain that he would not be "working so intimately in collaboration any longer" because it required an energy and a vision which was different from the one which he now wanted to pursue. What he wanted instead was "to go back to myself just as a writer again .... to go back to being very private, with myself and a blank paper" (in Hough 1980:45). Indeed, this desire for privacy derived in no small measure from the fact that Fugard had some very private, and very complex, problems and dilemmas to explore, not least of which were a haunting sense of personal alienation and an increasingly desperate battle against alcohol addiction.

Alienation and Alcoholism: *Dimetos*, *The Guest*, *A Place with the Pigs*

(i)

The 1970s brought Fugard's fortieth year and with entry into his fifth decade and middle life Fugard began to experience a profound sense of change in his general perspective and orientation. In an interview with Peter Wilhelm (1972:39) shortly before his fortieth birthday in 1972, Fugard spoke of his obsession with the passing of time and the ineluctability of death, noting that while this preoccupation (reflected in plays like People Are Living There and Hello and Goodbye) may have "possibly operated as a rather casual, intuitive perception some years back", he now felt "progressively more disturbed by the fact that my hour glass has also been turned over and my sands are running out". In similar vein, in a talk at Yale in 1974 (see Vandembroucke 1986:204), Fugard again disclosed his "very personal sense" of time diminishing and his "sense of panic" at the prospect:

I'm not being funny when I say that I'm now becoming conscious of dying, and to the extent that I think I'm dying, I would like to use my time, and calculate my effect very very carefully.

Fugard's general sense of crisis was sharpened and exacerbated by several specific problems and dilemmas with which he was confronted at this time. In the first place, allied to his own awareness of ageing, he was having to come to terms with the difficulties of change in his close-knit family life, in his relationship with his wife and with his only daughter. Secondly, he was being forced into acknowledging the reality of his addiction to alcohol, and the destructive effect his drinking was having on his life and work. And, from the point of view of his career as a writer, he was experiencing growing frustration at the coercive political expectations placed upon his work, as well as exhaustion in the face of the excessive demands made upon him to use his art as some form of short-term social activism (see Fugard Notebooks, September 1976, p.222; and in Vandembroucke 1986:205).

In large measure as a response to this combination of factors, Fugard turned away from the explicit political "statements" of his three previous plays and focused instead on concerns which were both personal and at the same time universal. Neither Dimetos nor The Guest is a narrowly political play; instead, they are works which meditate upon the meaning of alienation, pain and destruction, including self-destruction. Such generalised themes are, however, informed by the crises of Fugard's own life, so that the plays may be read as Fugard's attempts to find ways of resolving or at least accommodating such crises. As such, it will be useful to consider the later play, A Place with the Pigs (first produced 1987), at this point, since that work may be seen as celebrating the resolution of at least some of Fugard's personal problems.

This is not to say, however, that these plays are wholly without political relevance. All three works, at certain levels, reflect and help to clarify issues that are important to a full understanding of political life in general, certainly from a liberal perspective. In each play, the focus on an alienated and alienating individual underlines the direct and significant impact that such individual alienation has on the surrounding society. Concomitantly, it is emphasised that the integrated functioning of a community depends ultimately on the integration - both inner and outer - of the individuals constituting that community. More broadly, the fact that each of these plays contains a significantly autobiographical dimension serves to illuminate the point that all art, including political art, derives fundamentally from the wholeness of vision and judgement of the individual artist whose task it is to make sense of, and to elucidate, the often complex and confusing issues of his or her time and place. This is certainly part of the meaning of what has frequently been regarded as the most intractable and obscure of Fugard's plays, Dimetos.

(ii)

Apart from the complexity of its images and ideas, Dimetos has one of the most complicated plot structures in all of Fugard's oeuvre. The title character is an engineer who has left his unnamed city to live in a village "in a remote province", which forms the setting for Act One of the play. He has brought with him Lydia, his orphaned niece, and Sophia, his housekeeper of many years. The play opens with Lydia being lowered naked by rope into a well in order to rescue a horse which has fallen in - an operation successfully co-ordinated by Dimetos. The implicit eroticism of this opening scene is continued in the next, where Lydia, who seems to be an innocent young girl on the verge of sexual consciousness, swims naked in a pool to wash off the mud of the well, while holding a conversation with Dimetos, who later helps to dry her with her dress. Back at the house, Dimetos is met by Danilo, a young man from the city who has been sent to ask Dimetos to return to aid the people of the struggling metropolis. Dimetos stalls for time in giving an answer, claiming, untruthfully, that he finds life in the province, assisting the peasants, "refreshing", "stimulating", "challenging" (p.13). While waiting for an answer, Danilo enlists the help of Lydia, and it becomes clear that a mutual attraction develops between them. But when one day Danilo drunkenly tries to force himself upon her, she resists and runs away, aware of someone watching from the lemon orchard. After confronting a disorientated Dimetos as the man in the orchard, she hangs herself, using one of the knots Dimetos had shown her how to tie.

Act Two is set "Beside the ocean. Many years later" (p.38). Dimetos and Sophia have withdrawn to this isolated and inaccessible spot in a futile attempt to get over Lydia's death and to come to terms with their own respective feelings of guilt. Danilo again appears, finding Dimetos a defeated man, and confronts him about his "guilty love" (p.43) for his niece as

part of a punishment not only for her death but also for not admitting his culpability at the time. After Danilo's departure, Dimetos is left aimlessly fiddling with sea shells and stones, while he and Sophia gag in the suffocating stench of a rotting sea animal on the rocks outside. In the final scene of the play, Dimetos desperately searches for a way of accommodating Lydia's death and the inexorable passing of time, at last recalling Lydia's advice to make a "story" (p.7, p.51), and he ends by holding out his empty hands.

In the light of such a bare outline of the play's plot action, the surprise and bewilderment of the first audiences is quite understandable, especially since they had expected an overtly political work in the fashion of Fugard's recent Statements plays. Indeed, a good deal of close analytical effort is required to unravel the play's complexity, and even then there has been much critical disagreement over the actual meaning of the work, with some readers resigning themselves to the "intractable and often ambiguously unresolved" nature of the play's significance (see Gray 1982b:21). What follows, then, is an attempt to show that it is possible to discern the play's meaning, even if this meaning is highly complex, and then to suggest how this play relates to Fugard's overall concerns and preoccupations.

A clue to the meaning of the play is located in Fugard's Programme Note to the play (1975; NELM 87.25.11.14; in Gray 1982a:63) in which he reveals that the idea for the play originated in a paragraph from one of Camus's Notebooks, which is quoted in full:

Dimetos had a guilty love for his niece, who hanged herself. One day, the little waves carried on to the fine sand of the beach the body of a marvellously beautiful young woman. Seeing her, Dimetos fell on his knees, stricken with love. But he was forced to watch the decay of this magnificent body, and went mad. This was his niece's vengeance, and the symbol of a condition we must try to define.

Fugard goes on in the Note to explain that he had long been fascinated by the paragraph, and had eventually decided to write a play in response to it, even though he could find out nothing more about Dimetos either in Camus's Notebooks or via "a cursory search through Greek legend and mythology".

Nevertheless, in perhaps the best analysis of the play to date, Richard Whitaker, in "Dimoetes to Dimetos: The Evolution of a Myth" (1981), not only hunts down the primary source but shows the remarkable structural parallels between the original myth and Fugard's play. Whitaker reveals that the story of Dimetos is recorded only once, in an obscure work, the so-called Unhappy Love Stories, by a minor Greek writer of the first century BC, Parthenius, who in turn took the tale of Dimoetes (the original spelling) from an earlier mythographer, Phylarcus, none of whose works survive today (1981:45-46). Following the structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, Whitaker suggests that the essential meaning of myths like that of Dimetos is to be found in the structure of the myth, and he goes on to argue that

despite differences in the details of Parthenius's, Camus's and Fugard's versions of the story, the underlying mythic structure remains unaltered in each (1981:47). In all three versions, according to Whitaker (1981:49),

the structure of the myth may be said to comprise a twice-repeated pattern: A. Unnatural Relationship; B. Personal Destruction/C. Unnatural Relationship; D. Personal Destruction.

Thus, Dimetos's unnatural relationship with his niece leads to her suicide; and the unnaturalness of the rotting corpse leads to Dimetos's mental breakdown. More than that, however, in both Parthenius's and Camus's versions, there is a causal link between the two sections in the sense that the decaying body is part of the "niece's revenge", as Camus puts it. In other words, using Whitaker's scheme, (A;B) leads to (C;D). It may be surmised, then, that the stinking sea creature in Fugard's play "is in some sense the agent of Lydia's revenge" (Whitaker 1981:50). Whitaker's conclusion is that Fugard unconsciously grasped the structural significance of the myth - demonstrated in the two-act structure of the play - and succeeded in conveying the essential cause-effect meaning of the myth in his play. Whitaker (1981:54) is critical of the play as a work of art, however, arguing that Fugard unsuccessfully added elements of his own to the story which

are not fully worked into it but are rather tacked on at various points in such a way that they seem to constitute an embroidery of their own rather than a new, but integral part of the pattern.

Among such elements are the stagnation of Dimetos's engineering talents, the theme of time, the conflict between metropolitan progress and rural naturalness, and the intrusive introduction of the character of Sophia into the mythic pattern. Whitaker feels that such themes remain abstract and incompletely dramatised, whereas Fugard is at his best, as in the successful moments of the play, when he is dealing with human situations such as "the complex of relationships between Dimetos, Lydia and Danilo" (1981:57,58).

Whitaker's reading of the play is a generally cogent and plausible one, and does much to elucidate the underlying meaning of the work. He fails, however, to take cognizance of the play's rich literary allusiveness and layered autobiographical texture, and so cannot account for those elements of the play which go beyond the basic mythic structure. In his Notebooks (February 1976, p.219), Fugard recalls "my enormous debt to Roszak's Where the Wasteland Ends, and how that book helped me understand what I was trying to say". Theodore Roszak's book, published in 1972, is sub-titled "Politics and Transcendence in Post industrial Society", and takes the form of a condemnation of the over-dominance in the twentieth century of the scientific-rational approach to life, which has led in urban-industrial countries to the spiritual and psychological alienation of man. The book somewhat idealistically calls for a regeneration of the transcendent perspective offered by such non-scientific approaches as religion, mysticism, mythology and nature-based primitivism. Roszak bases his thinking heavily on the visionary

Romantic poet, William Blake, and calls his book "an effort to work out the political meaning of William Blake's prophetic poems, especially Vala, Milton and Jerusalem" (1972:xxvi), though it is to be noted that Roszak conceives of "politics" in a broad socio-cultural sense, rather than a narrow ideological one. Part Two of the book is titled "Single Vision and Newton's Sleep", and opens by quoting the concluding sestet of Blake's poem, "With happiness stretch'd across the hills", contained in a letter to Blake's patron, Thomas Butts, in 1802 (Blake 1927:321-323; Roszak 1972:107):

Now I a fourfold vision see,  
And a fourfold vision is given to me;  
'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight  
And threefold in soft Beulah's night  
And twofold always. May God us keep  
From Single vision & Newton's sleep!

Put briefly, the basic premise of Blake's personal mythology is that true humanity is made up of four elements, or "zoas", which ought to be harmoniously integrated: Urizen (reason), Lurvah (passion), Los (imagination) and Tharmas (spirit). In the fallen world, however, the "cold and scientific" Urizen has taken over, resulting in a disintegrated and alienated humanity. Blake saw evidence of this in the scientific revolution of his time in which the factual, rational vision of Newton, Locke and Bacon had become tyrannous, producing "single vision" and causing man's other faculties to fall into a "deadly sleep", which in turn had allowed the spoliation of nature to take place and "the dark Satanic mills" to develop. Blake therefore called (as Roszak would later do) for a reawakening from "Newton's sleep" and the "single vision" of science, and for a reintegration into composite harmony of all of man's faculties.

Now, Fugard was clearly much moved by the perspective offered by Blake (via Roszak), taking the lines "... May God us keep/From Single vision & Newton's sleep!" as the epigraph to Dimetos. The play not only takes up Roszak's challenge to use myth (such as that of Dimetos) as a way of structuring experience (1972:131-134), but also utilises the Dimetos story as a means of exploring the possibility of overcoming alienation through the psychic reintegration of the self. The play thus begins with a man who is so totally reliant on the facts of science that his emotional, imaginative and spiritual faculties have become repressed and distorted; and it ends with a broken man who nonetheless has haltingly begun the process of transcending alienation and achieving ontological wholeness.

At the outset of the play, Dimetos dismisses Lydia's attempts to understand the world through story-making rather than through the hard scientific facts of Newton's laws of gravity and motion: as he says, "I'm an engineer, Lydia, not a story-teller. An artisan, not an artist" (p.7). But the play suggests that such a worldview is much too narrow and cannot accommodate the complexity and unpredictability of human emotions. Indeed, it transpires that Dimetos has, in fact, become aware of the limitations of a purely technological approach to life, acknowledging in a conversation with Sophia that one needs not just "head" and "hands" but also

"heart", for it is "caring ... about people" which "bridges that mysterious distance between head and hands, bringing them so close that they are almost one" (p.17). Dimetos's secret, then, and the reason why he left the technocratic metropolis was that he had lost his sense of compassion: "something eroded away the habit of caring" (p.17). He needs to learn how to care again, but in his struggle he chooses a perverse and destructive path, making of his niece the object not just of his caring, but of all his repressed emotions and, fatefully, of the "guilty love" (p.43) of sexual passion. In two telling instances, for example, he reveals heatedly that he saved the horse not for the peasants, but for Lydia (pp.17-18; p.28). However, with his rejection of art and stories, Dimetos can neither understand, nor imagine how to give expression to, this love, and so reverts to narrow technological vision, literally "engineering" (p.44) the encounter between Lydia and Danilo to experience release through the vicarious pleasure of voyeurism. As Danilo accuses him:

You used us like tools and with such consummate mastery because of your passion for your niece. She was your only real mistake ... a miscalculation of the stress that little soul could take (p.44).

Lydia's suicide is, in a sense, a completely fitting punishment of Dimetos for his deadly "single vision", for she uses not only the knot he taught her for the noose, but also the very Newtonian principles of gravity and motion in order to hang herself.

At the end of the play, Dimetos, alone and driven to the point of madness by pain and guilt, desperately seeks a way to comprehend the anguish he feels, a way to get Lydia down from the rope. At last, prompted by what seems like Lydia's voice, he begins to realise that the solution lies not in using tools or his hands to "possess" things (p.52), but rather in using the tools of story, which need to be handled with the skill of a juggler - juggling the "individual elements" (p.51) until a pattern of sense emerges. And so Dimetos's story begins to take shape: "Once upon a time, there was ... a man ... who dreamt he was a horse" (p.51). Through the filter of a story, Dimetos comes to understand that he cannot explain and control his whole world and himself through science, and that there are times when he too will stumble and need help. He cannot always be the one who rescues horses; there are times when he will be like the stupid horse which falls into a hole of the world and needs to be rescued (see p.37). He cannot always be the one who is loved and who takes; he must also at times be the one who loves and who gives, even if this means accepting "a position of weakness" (see p.36). It is this reciprocity of loving and giving which constitutes the vital lesson that Dimetos must learn, summed up in the paradox of the juggler whom Dimetos met long ago: "You must give and take with the same action" (p.25; p.52).

If the image of the juggler is complex and multiple, then so too is the final image of Dimetos holding out his empty hands. Gerald Weales (1978:12) is correct to see that the image recalls not the juggler but the beggar, though he is wrong to suggest that the image is therefore a negative one. It is true that Dimetos, as Danilo remembers, once scorned the beggar whom he saw in the

market square of the city:

Beggars take, what do they give? I have no patience with that bloodless ethic that elevates beggary to a state of Grace" (p.25).

But this is a new, chastened Dimetos who understands that "it is now time for the skills you scorned" (p.52). And this, "the last skill of all", involves opening one's hands, holding them out, and waiting. The significance of this final image, in the manner of Roszak's definition of "transcendent symbols" (see 1972:137-141), is left deliberately open and enigmatic, producing a vision which transcends quotidian reality. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify several relevant, though by no means exhaustive, meanings which can be read into it. Firstly, Dimetos has realised that in times of personal need, one must sometimes admit one's weakness and, like a beggar, accept the help that is offered. Sometimes, indeed, such assistance seems to come as an act of "grace" rather than as a result of one's own purposeful actions. Moreover, in the face of tragedy, death, alienation, one can at times do nothing but accept that the universe is a supremely complex admixture of good and evil, happiness and sorrow, and trust that there is a meaning to it all. As such, Dimetos, in the act of juggling, begins to laugh, a laugh of liberation and understanding which recalls that of Milly in People Are Living There or Lena in Boesman and Lena. But here Dimetos goes beyond those characters in that he achieves "gaiety", a phrase which crucially calls to mind another great visionary poet, W. B. Yeats, and his famous poem, "Lapis Lazuli" (Yeats 1950:338-339). The poem explores the capacity of art to help one comprehend tragedy and reconcile oneself with the pain, suffering and mortality which are inextricably part of the complexity of life, an acceptance of which results in what Yeats describes as tragic joy or gaiety (see also "The Gyres": Yeats 1950:337). The poem ends with a depiction of two old chinamen carved on a piece of lapis lazuli who stare on "all the tragic scene", but still

Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,  
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

And finally, the image of the empty hands evokes one other great figure who taught the loving acceptance of the world, St Francis of Assisi. The saint is mentioned by Roszak (1972:254) in a description which clearly suggested the play's final image to Fugard. Roszak argues that the knowledge possessed by the saint transcends the limits of modern science which, with its debilitating reliance on "the hard fact", cannot comprehend "the hands of St Francis, held open to the birds ... empty, yet full".

The image of empty hands is, in fact, a recurrent but ambiguous symbol in Fugard's work. In some plays, it suggests uselessness and defeat, as in the case of Barend in The Occupation or Errol Philander in Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act. In other plays, however, it implies trust and compassion, as in Lena's advice to Boesman to open his fist and touch her with love rather than anger. Taken as a composite whole, then, such conflicting images reinforce the idea that life itself is a compound of opposites. But accepting this does not necessarily entail resignation to manichean passivity or to despair in the face of an ultimate randomness, as Dimetos seems ready to do as

he contemplates the "colossal and totally absurd energy" of the sea which merely serves to "polish stones until they disappear" (p.40). Instead, the play does suggest that there are universal laws which govern human existence and which render life meaningful. Ironically, such laws may be formulated in terms of the scientific principles whose "single vision" they transcend and transform, as Fugard points out in a notebook entry for Dimetos (February 1976, p.220):

The remarkable coincidence that the very laws (Newtonian physics) which have led to man's alienation in the twentieth century, can also be read as the spiritual laws (Karma, Love) that can lead him back to wholeness.

The first of these laws is the law of love, which, like Newton's gravity, maintains that "... every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle ..." (p.50), suggesting that it is only through learning to respond with love to one's world that one becomes a fully integrated human being. The second is the law of karma, which, like Newton's motion, affirms that "... to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction ..." (p.50), and confirms that the cosmic order rests upon an elemental principle of rightness and justice. This is the law which Danilo tries to articulate in explaining the predicament which confronts Dimetos:

Punishment. Not just for you specially, but as a fundamental law of the universe, and of a magnitude on a par with your gravity. Because without it our notions of justice man-made or natural, of good and evil, are the most pathetic illusions we have entertained (p.44).

It is, moreover, the principle which underlies the mythic structure of the play, with which this discussion began: for every cause there must be an effect, a truth made manifest in the mysterious symbol of the rotting body of the sea creature. And, thus, there is a further meaning to Dimetos's open hands, empty yet full - of weakness and understanding, of knowledge and humility, of responsibility and acceptance.

What the play presents, then, is a complex and transcendent vision of human existence, of its susceptibility to pain and alienation, and of its potential for wholeness and integration. To those who complained that the play was not political, Fugard could argue that it is "a political play in the sense that Roszak's Where the Wasteland Ends is a political book" (Notebooks, February 1976, p.220). For Roszak (1972:xxvii) argues that while it is not denied that the world needs (peaceful) "revolutions of bread, and social justice, and national liberation", it also needs the kind of revolution that will liberate people from alienation and despair. In Dimetos, Fugard had reached a point in his life and career when he wished to reveal how vitally and how urgently humankind (and not least of all his fellow South Africans) needed such a liberation of the mind and the spirit.

In terms of popular and critical opinion, however, the play was a failure. Commissioned for the Edinburgh festival of 1975, the play proved too abstract, too complex, too difficult for its first audiences, and even after being substantially reworked for

a run in Nottingham and London with Paul Scofield in the lead role, it was again unsuccessful. Today it remains probably Fugard's least produced work, though he continues to regard it as a favourite play (see Vandenbroucke 1986:217) whose time will yet come.

Fugard's fondness for the play is understandable, for in it he not only presents his most extensive vision of the condition of humankind as he conceives it, but he also explores with great courage some of his most pressing and painful personal dilemmas. Indeed, the autobiographical dimension of the play is suggested by Fugard's comment in the Programme Note to the play (1975; NELM 87.25.11.14; in Gray 1982a:63) that *Dimetos*, despite being a figure derived from myth, nevertheless "acquired an adequate life of his own from the accidents of mine", and he has affirmed that it is, "in a way, a very personal play" (in Hough 1980:47).

The first personal dilemma facing Fugard was that of the changes taking place within his own closely-knit family, in his relationship with his wife and, even more significantly, perhaps, with his daughter. It is no coincidence that the play's dedication is "For Lisa", for many of the play's central tensions are informed by Fugard's intensely close relationship with his only child, and his struggle to accept her maturation. *Dimetos* was bound up from the very beginning, in fact, with Lisa. Fugard came across Camus's reference to *Dimetos* in 1961 when his wife, Sheila, gave him a copy of the first volume of Camus's notebooks while they were awaiting Lisa's birth, and he thought of the myth as "the germinal idea of a play" (see Fugard *Notebooks*, December 1963, p.107). But the idea for the play really took hold in February 1975, at a time, tellingly, when Lisa, now thirteen, was, like Lydia, approaching sexual consciousness. In an intriguing paragraph in his notebooks (January 1975, p.215), Fugard discloses his sudden awareness of his daughter's maturity:

Lisa in the back of the bakkie with Shauva and Isadora, on the way to Sardinia Bay for a late afternoon swim. I watched her in the rear-view mirror - she didn't know I was watching - and saw a Lisa I had never seen before. Eyes pensive, mouth exquisitely but quietly alive as she lived with herself - a face that subtly changed expressions in the way a landscape does its moods when broken clouds drift across the sun. An astounding maturity, a coherent centred "self". Why had I not seen it before?

Elsewhere, he has quipped to Russell Vandenbroucke (1986:206), for instance, "our relationship isn't incestuous, but ..."; and Mel Gussow (1982:80) recalls how Fugard would roughly shoo boys away from his daughter like an over-protective father. Now, none of this is meant to suggest any impropriety on Fugard's part, of course, but it serves to reveal how Fugard's own problems in coming to terms with his daughter's changing identity found their way into the texture of the play he was writing, and gave a sense of veracity to the painful confusion of *Dimetos* towards Lydia, whom he loved "as if she were my own child" (p.18). At this time, Fugard was also having to redefine the nature of his relationship with his wife, Sheila, in a similar way, perhaps, to the manner in which *Dimetos* and *Sophia* seek to conceptualise their

relationship to each other (see pp.29-30; pp.40-41). It is no accident, then, that the names in the play correspond so closely to Fugard's own family (Sophia/Sheila; Lydia/Lisa) or that the structure of Dimetos's home life forms a parallel to Fugard's. This may also explain why Fugard disrupted the structural cohesion of the original myth of Dimetos to introduce the character of Sophia. The play may thus be seen as charting Fugard's own exploration of the changing nature of his family life, and his problems in coming to terms with these changes. Most importantly, Fugard, like Dimetos, had to learn that he could not always possess and control his family but that he had to accept their independent development. In a moving moment in the play, Dimetos tells Lydia, "I had sworn to myself that I was going to pull your pain out of the world" (p.28). By the end, he realises that he cannot always make happy endings. It seems, in an analogous way, that Fugard too had to learn to allow his daughter the space to discover her world for herself.

The second of these personal dilemmas concerned the fact that Fugard, like Dimetos, had felt himself increasingly pressured and harried by the demands of others: Dimetos's words could perhaps be read as a reflection of Fugard's own sense of fatigue, "I'm tired of other men's needs, other men's disasters" (p.28). These needs and demands, Fugard confessed, had drained him mentally and physically, not only in the sense that they "hijacked my life and energies" (Notebooks, September 1976, p.222), but also in that they threatened to stultify his creativity. Fugard's predicament recalls the similar situation facing W.B. Yeats in his time at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, expressed in Yeats's poem, "The fascination of what's difficult" (Yeats 1950:104), in which he issued a curse

On the day's war with every knave and dolt,  
Theatre business, management of men,  
and vowed to set free again the colt Pegasus, sacred symbol of creativity. The image of the liberated horse is central to Dimetos and the play may well be read as Fugard's attempt to withdraw for a while from the enervating social conflicts of the time in order to regenerate his creative energies - not only for his own sake, but also in order, like Dimetos, to find the "story" that would help him to make sense of the pain and suffering he saw in the world around him. As he has often said, he is by nature neither a political leader nor a social reformer; instead, "my essential sense of myself is that of a storyteller" (Momentum interview 1984:24; Fugard 1993a:384). But as a storyteller, he needed the time and privacy to allow his imagination to become receptive to the mystery of creative inspiration - a further interpretation, perhaps, of the image of empty hands being held out in anticipation. As such, in the documentary film, Fugard's People (Nogueira 1982), Fugard asserts:

What I didn't understand was that, at one level, Dimetos's story was going to become mine. I'm very conscious to a certain extent now of a gradual withdrawal from people, from society, into a strict privacy. I wouldn't be surprised if I ended up being a recluse!

Finally, it is possible to see Fugard's own sense of time passing

and his life running out reflected in Dimetos's obsession with time, trying to hold time in his hands (p.38) or trying to construct a machine that will stop time. Once more, the rotting sea creature functions as a symbol of the literal dying of time: "Time stinks!" shouts Dimetos at one point (p.51), as the smell of death fills his nostrils. Again, however, it is Dimetos's discovery of the possibilities of story which saves him as he realises that story telling enables one to structure time into a beginning and an end; it gives the imagination the power to conceive a "for ever after" (p.51); and it provides one with a vision of human existence which transcends the boundaries of individual mortality and death. By the same token, then, the play may be seen as Fugard's own attempt to find a way of resolving his haunting sense of approaching death.

But if Fugard achieved some measure of resolution in terms of these particular personal dilemmas, there were other difficulties which remained exigent. It was, in fact, his problems with alcohol that formed part of his motive in writing the next play to be considered in this study, The Guest.

(iii)

The idea of making a film about the Afrikaans poet, Eugene Marais - an idea which resulted in The Guest - was first suggested to Fugard in 1973 by Ross Devenish, with whom Fugard had worked on the film version of Boesman and Lena. Whereas this latter work had been little more than a filmed play, however, The Guest was to be an original work in its own right. Moreover, whereas in a film like Mille Miglia Fugard had felt himself to be constrained by the facts of Stirling Moss's life and his Mille Miglia victory, in The Guest Fugard believed he could enjoy rather more creative latitude, though as it turned out he remained quite faithful to the biographical source he used for Marais' life (see Rousseau 1974).

At the time that Devenish suggested the idea to Fugard, interest in Marais was rife. Marais's lost manuscript, The Soul of the Ape had been recovered, and was published in 1969. Furthermore, a biography of Marais by Leon Rousseau, entitled Die Groot Verlange ("The Great Yearning"), was published in 1974. Fugard and Devenish had read the biography in manuscript and decided to focus on a single, relatively minor, incident in the book, the time which Marais had spent at the farm "Steenkampskraal" (the original full title of the screenplay was The Guest at Steenkampskraal: an episode in the life of Eugene Marais). Fugard had long admired Marais's poetry, and felt an affinity with Marais not only as a creative writer but also as an amateur naturalist: Marais's works such as The Soul of the White Ant and My Friends the Baboons, along with The Soul of the Ape, have been praised by natural scientists like Robert Ardrey. But Fugard was drawn to Marais's story, and the episode depicted in the film, for rather darker reasons. Marais was a morphine addict whose talent as an advocate, journalist and writer had been all but

ruined by his addiction, and his visit to Steenkampskraal involved one of many efforts to overcome his drug dependency. Fugard, in turn, had by the 1970s begun to recognise his own addiction to alcohol, and the film thus gave him the opportunity to trace what Samuel G. Freedman (1984:1) would later call "a dark parallel" with Marais.

The screenplay opens on a scene of a car travelling through a bare highveld winter landscape - the date is given as 1926. The driver of the car is A.G. Visser, a medical doctor, fellow poet and friend of Marais, who is taking a "devastated" (p.11) Marais to the isolated Steenkampskraal farm to try to help him break his addiction. In his time at the farm, Marais suffers terrible withdrawal symptoms, but does eventually improve, drastically reducing his morphine intake, and recovering sufficiently to begin writing again. Towards the end, however, he tells Visser that he will never be cured, and does, indeed, soon suffer a relapse. The film ends with Visser driving away from the farm, then stopping to allow Marais to step out into the veld and recite his powerful, bitter poem, "Die Lied van Suid-Afrika" ("The Song of South Africa").

The family on the farm with whom Marais stays knows nothing of his addiction at first, believing it to be merely some sort of fever, like malaria, and presuming naively that the fresh farm air will act as a panacea. The kindly patriarchal head of the family, Oom Doors Meyer, is charged by Visser with the responsibility of ensuring that his prescribed dosage of pills for Marais (actually morphine tablets) is followed strictly, and this Oom Doors does, in spite of several confrontations with an angry and desperate Marais. But Marais's presence and erratic behaviour divide the family: the mother, Tant Corrie, and the elder son, Doorsie, feel compassion for him, while the younger son, Louis, grows increasingly resentful. The third, much younger child, Little Corrie, is at first afraid of Marais, but is eventually won over by his charm and empathy, represented by his recital to her of his children's poem, "Die Spinnerak-rokkie" ("The Cobweb Dress") (pp.52-53). After his relapse, however, the family is seen "in attitudes of complete defeat" (p.74), from which not even readings from the Bible can relieve them.

The theme of the film is articulated by means of several "voice-overs" taken mainly from the magnum opus on which Marais works at the farm, The Soul of the Ape, as well as through excerpts from Marais's and Visser's poems and scriptural quotations. The extracts from Marais's writing establish his belief that "pain is a predominant element of consciousness" and "some quantity of suffering is inseparable from thought" (p.17); that man experiences "consciousness as something based on pain and suffering" (p.41). Or, put in Cartesian terms, as Marais quips in conversation with Visser, "Suffero ergo sum" (p.58). Man's propensity for addiction is therefore explicable:

'Habitual recourse to the use of a poison to induce a feeling of happiness as a remedy for the pain of consciousness ...' (p.55).

Such a cycle of suffering and attempted relief is endemic to life

itself:

You will look in vain in nature for love, sympathy, pity, justice ... protection of the weak and innocent. From the very beginnings of life we hear a chorus of anguish. Pain is a condition of existence. Escape from pain is the purpose of all striving (p.74).

But if drugs such as morphine offer only temporary and imperfect release from such pain, then it follows that more drastic measures must inevitably be pursued. As Marais explains to Visser, there is but one final cure for the "ailment" called "life":

Diagnosed as such a few thousand years before Christ by the nameless author of an Egyptian papyrus. Title: Dialogue between the writer and his soul. In it the writer came to the conclusion that the very existence of life was founded on sorrow and pain, and that there was ultimately only one perfect remedy ... to put an end to one's existence. The Sotho have a nice turn of phrase for that ... pele n'daba ... 'end of dialogue' (p.71).

Visser admonishes Marais that he has not "got a monopoly on pain and sorrow", and that he should try to overcome "a morbid streak of self-indulgence" in his nature and seek, like Visser, who has also known the pain of the loss of a beloved wife, to "also try to ... sing" (p.71). Nevertheless, at the end of the film a text appears on the screen which reads:

Ten years later, on the farm "Pelindaba" in the Pretoria district of the Transvaal, Eugene Marais, suffering acutely again from withdrawal symptoms, shot himself (p.79).

The vision of the film seems unremittingly dark, and is amplified by passages from Marais's poetry and other sources. In his poem, "Diep Rivier" ("Deep River"), Marais cries out in reference to his addiction,

Blus uit, O Diep Rivier, die vlam van haat;-  
Die groot verlanse wat my nooit verlaat (p.75);

(Snuff out, O Deep River, the flame of hate;-

The great yearning that never leaves me - my translation).

And he points out to Doorsie a phenomenon that seems to encapsulate his own attitude towards life as an addict, namely, that the white ant sometimes spends

years underground in darkness waiting for that one moment, and when it comes ... might only last for three seconds. For a distance of only three yards, they will enjoy the exquisite thrill of flight (p.117).

Against such powerful sentiments, Visser's warning in his poem, "Lotos-land", of the dangers of succumbing to mindless contentment, seems futile (see pp.56-57). Moreover, in a more general view of life, Marais recalls his mother's nihilistic deathbed vision:

My mother died in my arms. Just before the end there was an expression ... a look in her eyes. I asked her what it was she saw. She said ... 'Nothing. There is nothing' (p.68).

And finally, in his poem, "Die Lied van Suid-Afrika", the country is characterised as a ruthless and implacable goddess, who, far from nurturing her children, offers them nothing but pain, suffering and violent destruction:

Sy sê: ,Ek vorder as 'n heil'ge reg  
Die vrug van eindelose pyn;  
Ek smyt hulle oor die berge weg,  
Ek smoor hulle in die sandwoestyn (pp.78-79);

(She says: 'I claim as my sacred right  
The fruit of never-ending pain;  
I smite them over the mountains,  
I smother them in the desert plain - my translation; see  
also Fugard, Notebooks, September 1976, p.223).

Fittingly, this is the "grace" (p.78) which Marais offers at the end of the film.

As a record of a man's desperate struggle against the pain and terror of addiction, the film is a powerful and harrowing experience. Shot in sombre colours, against the background of the bleak highveld landscape and the spartan farmhouse of Steenkampskraal, the mood of the film is sombre and captures effectively the sense of Marais's physical and psychological torment. The film does have some weak moments: the dream sequences with the baboons are confusing rather than enlightening; the visit of Marais's ex-lover, Brenda, does little to advance the central ideas of the film; and the African servants and farmhands seem almost neglectfully peripheral. Nevertheless, the film as a whole is of a very high quality, and deserved a better response than it received. Aired first on BBC-2 on 5 March 1977, and later released as a film in South Africa in both English and Afrikaans versions, the film reached a disappointingly small audience. As Ross Devenish explains (1980; in Gray 1982a:136):

The outside world doesn't want to know anything about the Afrikaner .... And certainly I think the local Afrikaans audience doesn't want to know about Afrikaner drug addicts, and the English-speaking audience is not interested in Afrikaners, or anything. So the film was penalised on all scores; it hasn't really had very much exposure.

With hindsight, however, the film may be approached as affording a fascinating insight into Fugard's awareness of his own addiction. In their introduction to the published text, Fugard and Devenish (1977a:7-8) write that the film intends to explore Marais's "dark vision" which "rested on the knowledge of both the euphoria and the pain of morphine. This knowledge informed everything he thought and did" (1977a:.7). And, indeed, the questions which Fugard and Devenish (1977a:8) explicitly set out to examine via Marais's own introspection are:

'What is addiction?' 'Why am I addicted?' 'Why are humans prone to some form of addiction?'

Such questions might well be read as part of Fugard's enquiry into his own condition. In fact, in two telling instances, the film introduces the notion not of drug addiction but of alcohol abuse. The first occurs when Oom Doors and Marais uncover an old liquor still which Marais is to repair, and Oom Doors suddenly realises that Marais might be addicted to alcohol as well as to morphine. Marais (truthfully) denies this, but the encounter resonates with regard to Fugard's personal life story. The second instance occurs when Marais has relapsed and lies on his bed

babbling incoherently from morphine euphoria, and the Meyer family tries desperately to counter their fear and bewilderment by reading from the old Dutch Bible. The passage, from Isaiah 28:7-8) refers, significantly, to alcohol:

... the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgement .... For all the tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean (pp.75-77: translation p.81).

This passage, like the earlier extract from the final chapter of Ecclesiastes (p.72: translation p.81; see also p.118), warns of the impending destruction of those who do not heed the doctrine and precepts of God, in this case "the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim" (Isaiah 28:1,3). In both these passages, one senses the fear and anxiety of Fugard himself, as his own "vision" and "judgement" became increasingly impaired through drink, and as he stumbled into the literal pigsty of his life about which he would write in A Place with the Pigs.

Fugard finally gave up alcohol in 1983 and has subsequently written candidly about his addiction. Scattered throughout his notebooks and his interviews, however, are early indications of his particular problems with drink. Fugard had always been a heavy drinker - as his accounts of his time aboard the SS Graigaur as a young man in his twenties reveals: at one point he threw his first completed novel into the sea in a drunken fit. As early as August 1967, he writes disturbingly in his notebooks (p.150), "A good time - sobriety", as if the opposite had come to be the norm. But then by October of that year he talks about "an almost total loss of all sense of value" and "drinking myself every evening into a wild, maudlin, emotional stupor so as to fool myself that I still feel (p.155). Testimony is offered by outside observers also. A South African actor, Tsepo Mokane, for instance, recalls that when he first met Fugard in the 1960s, Fugard "was a real boozier" (in Barbera 1993b:436). In rather more genteel fashion, Mel Gussow, in his long article on Fugard in 1982, twice adverts to Fugard's drinking. In the first place, Gussow (1982:51) comments (in terms which chillingly recall Eugene Marais's condition) that Fugard

refers to himself as an 'addictive' personality. Alcohol and tobacco, not drugs, are his habit. He can drink more bourbon, red wine and brandy without showing it than any other man I know, but sometimes the drinking catches up with him. He can move from euphoria to a feeling of deep pessimism.

Then Gussow (1982:80) remembers an incident in Autumn 1980, while Fugard was in rehearsal for A Lesson from Aloes in New York, when Fugard arrived at Gussow's house late for an appointment, heavy with drunken despair. With something of Marais's "morbid streak of self-indulgence", Fugard claimed to be "hurting" and mourning for his life, and, when asked if he felt this way often, he replied, "I felt this way for ten years". Indeed, at one shocking moment in his notebook for A Lesson for Aloes (NELM 87.25.13.10.3) his handwriting becomes a virtual scrawl until he writes in large, painful letters, "TOO DRUNK!" and the entry

breaks off.

Unlike Marais, however, Fugard managed to break his addiction, acknowledging his alcoholism and resolving never to drink again. As he explained to Samuel G. Freedman in 1984 (1):

There is this addictive nature in my personality .... I did reach the point where I had to stand up at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in New York and say, 'My name is Athol Fugard and I am an alcoholic'.

As he revealed in an interview with me (Foley 1994:67), that was an intensely traumatic time, a time when he "reached a point of breakdown" and "had to admit that I was, that I am, an alcoholic. That was a very painful, a very difficult moment". One of his greatest fears in giving up drink was the fear of a loss of his creativity. He writes about this fear eloquently in his memoir, Cousins (1994:38-39), describing, as he did to Gussow (1982:87), how he would use a combination of alcohol and music to release his creative imagination:

Right up until my fifty-second year I believed that my creativity was totally dependent on music and alcohol. In that year I finally faced up to the fact that I was an alcoholic, and decided to try to give up drinking even though a very insistent voice inside kept warning me that this would be the end of me as a writer. Heaven alone knows where I found the strength to ignore that warning, but I did and just as well. After a year of what can only be described as hell, during which I not only lost my impulse to write but my capacity for laughter, I returned slowly to life, to a new life in fact, and the biggest adventure I have ever had - sobriety.

Despite the recurrence of that dangerous, tempting voice, Fugard has stayed sober and written five successful plays since overcoming his addiction, beginning with The Road to Mecca in 1984, a play which explores issues such as the creative instinct and its potential extinction. But it was in the play after that, entitled A Place with the Pigs, that Fugard chose to write specifically, if obliquely, about his victory over alcoholism. As Gerald Weales (1993:511) notes,

If The Guest is the only Fugard work to make an obvious allusion to his alcoholism, A Place with the Pigs (1987) is the only one to celebrate his drying out.

It seems appropriate, therefore, that before turning to the plays which immediately follow The Guest, attention should be given to A Place with the Pigs. Not only does A Place with the Pigs form a companion piece to The Guest, but it also concludes the series of plays, beginning with Dimetos, which deal with Fugard's personal predicaments and private pain, as opposed to those works whose focus is more directly social in nature.

(iv)

When Fugard first went to London in 1960, he had tried to interest people in a play he had written called A Place with the Pigs, which he describes as "the first of my attempts at an

Immorality Act story" (in Vandenbroucke 1986:40). However, he "eventually tore it up" when it transpired that no one valued the play. When he did at last write and stage a play entitled A Place with the Pigs in 1987, it was to involve a very different subject matter. The play found its genesis in a brief article which Fugard read in the New York Times about a Russian soldier (see Fugard 1993a:388). As he comments in a prefatory "Note" to the play:

The writing of this play was provoked by the true story of Pavel Navrotsky, a deserter from the Soviet army in the Second World War, who spent forty-one years in hiding in a pigsty.

Apart from its unexpected subject, the play is also unique in Fugard's canon in terms of its style and form. It is an almost wholly comic work, written in the form of a black farce, with little or no serious social reference at all.

The play is set in "a pigsty, in a small village, somewhere in the author's imagination" (p.1), and involves two characters, Pavel Ivanovich Navrotsky, the deserter, and his wife, Praskovya. When the play opens, Pavel, who is in his thirties, has been in hiding in a pigsty at the back of his house for ten years - from 1944 to 1954 (p.1). He now plans to come out of concealment on "The anniversary of the great victory" (a phrase which serves as the title of Scene One), and has a grand speech prepared. From his dialogue and the text of his speech, it is clear that Pavel is wildly self-indulgent, bombastic, histrionic, as well as unintentionally bathetic. As he informs his wife:

You must understand, Praskovya, life in here has involved dealing with two realities, two profound philosophic realities which have dominated my entire existence, permeated every corner of my being ... Pig Shit and Time (p.3).

Speeches such as this set the tone for the rest of the play, as well as providing insight into Pavel's character. It turns out that he is a self-deceiving coward who eventually backs out of handing himself over to the authorities. Praskovya goes to the ceremony instead and ironically collects a medal for bravery on behalf of her supposedly dead husband. Praskovya, in fact, proves to be a highly likeable character, level-headed, pragmatic and sensible, who, while indulging her husband's pretensions, also gently but regularly deflates his self-dramatising hyperbole. At the end of both Scene One and Scene Two, as Pavel beats his breast about the state of his soul, Praskovya quietly takes her leave to do the washing or interrupts him to ask whether he'd like cabbage soup and dumplings for supper (p.16; p.22). In similarly pragmatic fashion, she has used his army uniform - which he had pompously planned to wear to the ceremony - as rags for cleaning. Her characteristic phrase is, "if you're interested in the truth, Pavel" (p.2; p.16; p.20), and she serves as a polar opposite to her deluded and deluding husband.

In Scene Two, entitled "Beauty and the Beast", "a lot of time has passed" (p.17), but Pavel remains in the pigsty. Instead of marking off time on the wall, Pavel now occupies himself by keeping a tally of the thousands of flies he has swatted. He

swats them "with what looks suspiciously like the last remnant of one of his cherished slippers" (p.17), these slippers being the objects he most yearned for while in the army, and which he had subsequently kept as an emblem of his plight. As he languishes in the sty, a butterfly flutters in - a glimpsed reminder of the beauty and promise of the world outside - but, before he can catch it, it is eaten by one of the pigs. In his rage and horror, Pavel slaughters the pig. Typically, Praskovya undercuts his histrionic grief in an interchange which captures the humorous nature of the play:

PAVEL: I'm saying that God has no jurisdiction in here. And do you know why? Because this is hell .... And it is more than I can endure. I'm reaching the end, Praskovya. Those few seconds of innocent laughter might well have been the death rattle of my soul.

PRASKOVYA: Come now, Pavel, I know you are very upset but don't exaggerate. You can't have it both ways.

PAVEL: What do you mean?

PRASKOVYA: You can't be both dying and in hell.

PAVEL: Why not?

PRASKOVYA: Because every little child will tell you that hell is where you will go after you're dead.

PAVEL: (Nearly speechless with outrage) You are going to split hairs with me at a time like this?

PRASKOVYA: Just thought you might be interested in the truth, Pavel (p.20).

By the point that Scene Three, entitled "The Midnight Walk", opens, "a lot more time has passed" (p.23): indeed, Pavel has spent more than thirty years in the pigsty (p.31). He is reduced by this time to scrawling "obscenities and rude drawings of the pigs" (p.23) on the walls. He now plans, however, aided by Praskovya, to sneak out of the house late at night disguised grotesquely in a woman's dress for a breath of fresh air. But, once outside, "the assault on Pavel's senses is total....After a few deep breaths of freedom, he reels giddily" (p.26). He runs around, making a racket and babbling about having recovered his soul, all of which is liable to give them away to the authorities. In fear, Praskovya returns home. Pavel soon follows in haste, having been chased by a fierce black dog. Lapsing into despair again, Pavel finally resigns himself to the pigsty as "home" (p.31), stripping himself naked and flinging himself down among the pigs. Praskovya at last loses patience with him and whacks him mercilessly, driving him back onto his own two legs again. She leaves, insisting, "That's as much as I can do for you. Now help yourself" (p.33).

Scene Four, called "Orders from the Commissar", takes place the following night, and focuses on Pavel in crisis. Suddenly, he is taken with an idea as he looks at himself in the mirror and imagines hearing orders from some interior "commissar" (p.37). He simply lets the pigs out. Praskovya, summoned by the noise of the escaping pigs, is surprised but not angry, even though their livelihood has disappeared, for Pavel has finally managed to find his way out of his own pigsty. Unlike previous occasions, he can announce with firmness and finality: "I'm going out there as

myself" (p.39). At last, he is prepared to face the world and take whatever punishment is meted out:

I don't belong in here. Even if my punishment turns out to be a firing squad ... those men, looking at me down the barrels of their guns, will be "home" in a way this sty could never have been (p.39).

The clothes which he puts on are not some ostentatious army uniform but rather the suit he wore to his wedding, which Praskovya has kept for him, and which signifies not only a return to normal life but also a renewal of their relationship. Together, "they leave the sty" (p.40), and may even be in time for the sunrise which Pavel missed the night before.

As Fugard (1993a:388) notes, the play "immediately baffled all the critics". Even Gerald Weales (1993:511) admits that when he first saw the play, "it seemed little more than an untidy farce". The key to an understanding of the play lies in its autobiographical dimension, suggested by the play's sub-title, "A Personal Parable". Fugard outlined the significance of the play at some length in a talk he gave at New York University in 1990 (Fugard 1993a:388): A Place with the Pigs

was a special experience for me because, about seven or eight years ago, I confronted and for the first time tried to deal with, and I'm still in the process of trying to deal with, a problem involving the use of alcohol.

And he goes on to explain that the newspaper item in the New York Times about the Russian deserter from the Second World War

gave me a magnificent opportunity to make a statement about the fact that we as human beings make and crawl into pigsties. We make them out of all sorts of things. I made a pigsty out of a bottle of Jack Daniel's whiskey. I have known people who have made pigsties out of a lot of money. I know of people who have made pigsties out of food. I know of people who have made pigsties out of their bed. I wrote the play because I had an experience. The experience was that I had left the pigsty. I had discovered that to get out of a pigsty you just have to stand up and get out of it. That shattering revolution climaxes this play. The man realizes that judgement is waiting for him outside, but nothing can be worse than the nightmare he has been living. He's been living in pig shit for forty-two years, and he's hated it. Suddenly he realizes that his hell is self-inflicted. It's not God's punishment. He just has to leave it. I wrote the play for that reason.

The play thus invites interpretation not only as a "parable" about metaphorical pigsties, but also as a "personal" document detailing Fugard's alcoholism and recovery. As such, there are a number of parallels which may be drawn between the play and Fugard's own autobiographical reality. In the first instance, Pavel's hiding away may be compared with Fugard's attempt to hide his guilty secret and, perhaps, to hide away from the responsibility of admitting his addiction. Similarly, Pavel's endless cycle of attempts to leave the pigsty, followed by cowardly relapses marked by statements like, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I won't do it again" (p.34), are all familiar territory

to the alcoholic. Even the fact that Pavel is awarded a medal ironically echoes the fact that Fugard received many awards from all over the world for his courage as a playwright while not being able to face up to his own personal weakness. Again, Pavel's morbid histrionics seems to be a cruel yet accurate self-portrait on Fugard's part, as evidenced by Gussow's candid description, noted earlier, of Fugard's drunken despair (1982:80). And the very metaphor of the pigsty of the alcoholic seems to have had a basis in literal fact, if one is to take as a personal reference a voice-over in The Guest in which Marais describes the socially destructive effects of addiction:

In such cases life becomes a continual struggle to render permanent by excessive use the very fleeting happiness these poisons bring ... the bonds of civilized life are eagerly snapped, where the strongest springs of human conduct - love of friends and relatives, position, honour - are restraints more powerless than plumed reeds to stop the whirlwind in its course. Everything held priceless in normal life is carelessly cast into the maelstrom. The sufferer drifts into a vicious circle, and like the scorched fly, spins in vain upon the axis of his pain (p.40).

But if the play is a brutally honest portrayal of Fugard's own self-inflicted torment, it is also a celebration of his recovery from that ordeal. It pays tribute, moreover, to the stoical patience and support of his wife, Sheila. If Fugard portrays himself cruelly, then Sheila, mirrored in Praskovya, is drawn with loving admiration. It is Praskovya who gets Pavel to help himself, as all addicts must finally do, and leave the sty. And at the end of the play, the mood is one of joyous release: the husband and wife prepare to begin a new life, signified by the breaking day, ready to face whatever challenges lie ahead, even, perhaps, the loss of their livelihood, as Fugard feared the extinction of his creative ability. A Place with the Pigs is thus not the dark and sombre exploration of addiction that The Guest was. Instead, the play is shot through with a comic exuberance which reflects the relief and release that Fugard felt at not only overcoming his alcohol dependency, but also at finding, through the writing of The Road to Mecca and A Place with the Pigs itself, that he could continue as a playwright.

(v)

It was perhaps to be expected that many critics, especially radical critics, should be appalled at the apparently non-political nature of plays like Dimetos, The Guest and A Place with the Pigs. Such critics saw in these plays evidence not merely of a failure on Fugard's part to confront the most pressing issues in the South African political situation, but also of a withdrawal on the part of liberals generally from a revolutionary climate which was beyond the ability of liberalism to comprehend or respond to in any meaningful way. Dennis Walder (1984:100), for instance, asserts:

It is no coincidence that, when Dimetos and The Guest

appeared, other white liberal writers were veering away from direct treatment of the crises then facing their country towards symbolic, unspecific modes of storytelling.... The impotence of white dissidents to effect change in the face of the rising generation of politically conscious blacks is expressed in terms of a retreat into self-scrutiny, fantasy, and an obsession with the psychopathology of the isolated consciousness.

In like fashion, Margarete Seidenspinner (1986:335), writing about this period in Fugard's work, argues that the white liberal artist, knowing that he will always reach a point where he will be asked to indicate a clear direction, either to his right or to his left, and being aware that he is unable to take this particular decision viewed within a South African context, will either continue his wanderings or remain rooted to the ground and will, in the end, deliberately turn backwards or inwards in search of familiar terrain.

There can be no denying that the mid 1970s, when Dimetos and The Guest were written, and the mid 1980s, when A Place with the Pigs was composed, were difficult times for liberal writers and liberals generally. Given liberalism's traditional principled opposition to violence as a political strategy (as exemplified by both Alan Paton and Fugard), it was deeply disturbing to be confronted by the prospect of the country descending into widespread violent confrontation and even civil war. But to claim that liberal writers simply withdrew from the political arena because of an ideological incapacity is manifestly untrue. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, liberal writers continued to address and explore the political issues of the country both directly and indirectly, through the medium of poetry (for example, Christopher Hope, Mike Nicol, Patrick Cullinan, Lionel Abrahams, Sheila Roberts, Chris Mann, Francis Faller: see Foley 1990); through fiction (Christopher Hope, Jonty Driver, Stephen Gray, John Conyngham, Jenny Hobbs, Michael Cope, are but a few names which come to mind); and, of course, through drama (where dramatists such as Paul Slabolepszy began to emerge, though Fugard remained pre-eminent).

Fugard himself was deeply affected by both the 1976 Soweto uprising (see Notebooks, June 1976, p.221) and the nation-wide unrest, and subsequent imposition of the State of Emergency, in the 1980s, and responded in time to both these events with plays which were overt in their political import (most particularly, 'Master Harold'...and the boys and My Children! My Africa!). Part of the problem, then, lies in the fact that a number of critics and reviewers have tried to assess Fugard's whole political thinking on the basis of a single, current play instead of taking into account his whole oeuvre, with its trends, cycles and continuities. Such an approach inevitably leads to distortions and false generalisations. Nevertheless, it is useful to offer responses to some of these criticisms, as this serves to focus attention on the actual nature and meaning of Fugard's political art, particularly in the context of a politically volatile milieu.

One of the most stinging criticisms of Fugard's plays under discussion in this section came from Fatima Meer, an academic and political activist who had been detained in the aftermath of the 1976 riots. Fugard recalls (Notebooks, September 1976, p.223) the letter he received from her:

Fatima has heard about the Marais film and with characteristic honesty asks how, after plays like Sizwe and The Island, I could involve myself in a film like that. She sees it as being totally without political commitment and therefore valueless in terms of the urgent and violent realities of our time.

Fugard's reply is revealing and insightful. In it, he addresses the question of political art in a way which takes the debate beyond the level of mere propaganda and pamphleteering, and suggests a larger view of the capacities and potential of literature in bringing about political change. He begins by arguing that a seemingly apolitical story can have far-reaching effects:

The old dilemma - can there be an action (the telling of a story) which, if informed with love and an attempt at the truth, is without significant consequences? (Accepting now finally that writing is a form of action.) Is the story of one man's hell ... of no significance today in South Africa with the Soweto uprising only a few months behind us?

Referring to the Marais poem with which the film ends, he asks: What writer today has answered the blind patriotism of our existing national anthem with a more withering and final recognition of the truth?

And he suggests, in conclusion, that it is necessary to acknowledge "two categories of action for the writer":

1. The one which will produce immediate returns (political pamphlet).
2. The long-term investment (story telling).

Fugard implies therefore that political art need not necessarily be blatant, one-dimensional, designed to meet immediate goals (though this kind of writing may well have its place). Rather, political writing can also take the form of story telling, whose effects may be deeper, more powerful, and longer lasting, than direct protest. This conception of the power of story, which is part of the meaning of the play, Dimetos, informs all of Fugard's work. And because of the nature of his writing, Fugard has succeeded not merely in drawing attention to the general facts of the South African situation, but also in providing an understanding of the complexities, paradoxes and ironies inherent in that situation.

This complex and anti-reductionist vision establishes Fugard's work as clearly liberal in nature, for it refuses to reduce politics to abstract groupings or social formations, but insists that politics is, finally, about individual lives, individual stories. As Dimetos points out, one should care about "people" not "cities" (p.14). In this sense, then, Fugard's plays, dealing as they do with individual human beings trying to come to terms with their world, personal as well as social, cannot help but be "political". As Fugard told Kathryn Long (in Long 1985:8),  
at the level of our daily lives - one man or woman meeting

with another man or woman is finally the central arena of history.

As such, Michael Chapman (1988:34-35) seems crucially mistaken in his judgement of a play like A Place with the Pigs; Chapman asserts that Fugard

should have remained silent. Instead A Place with the Pigs (1987) reveals, sadly, the consequences of the playwright's own voluntary removal of himself from the social life of this country.

And he proceeds to state that

Fugard's avoidance, at this particular time, of our own extremely narrow tolerances of dignity and freedom is disappointing. His 'universalism' seems a luxury.

A standpoint such as Chapman's itself seems, ironically, to encapsulate contemporary South Africa's "extremely narrow tolerances of ... freedom" in its implicit insistence that Fugard's views correlate with the critic's own and that he focus on generalised social themes rather than on individuals. Ivor Powell (1987:22) is much closer to the mark when he notes that in A Place with the Pigs Fugard's emphasis had moved "towards a meditation on freedom and the uses and abuses of that freedom". Powell points out, however, following Fugard's own comments, that such a shift in emphasis was "not at the expense of any 'political' content", especially since

current definitions of politics ... are so stupid, so pathetically limited and limiting. Freedom ... is a political thing.

Indeed, even so generally antagonistic a critic as Martin Orkin (1991:187) perceives that a play like A Place with the Pigs concerns the crucial notion of individual liberty, noting that the play "culminates in a hint of optimism about the individual's chance for self-redemption". Ultimately, one could argue that without the potential for redemption and emancipation at the individual level, there can be none at the national level.

All of this is not to suggest, however, that the three plays under scrutiny here are to be regarded as primarily or directly political in the same way that some of Fugard's earlier plays were. These three plays certainly function at personal and even private levels which have little to do with the political and which set them apart from many of Fugard's other works. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that a liberal aesthetic seems more capable of dealing with these personal elements than does a radical approach, which would seem to regard such elements as luxuries that are included at the expense of an undiluted social focus (see again Chapman 1988). Liberalism prizes above all the liberty of the individual, including that of individual writers, and would freely grant a writer like Fugard the space to explore whatever personal concerns he wished, particularly, as in his case, in order to try to come to terms with some private demons. He has revealed, for instance (in Foley 1994:66), that so-called "aberrant" plays like Dimetos and A Place with the Pigs

arose out of moments in my life of huge, huge emotional disturbances - to such an extent that I think of them, personally, and I refer to them, at least within the family, as my breakdowns. I know something about

breakdowns, and I realise that something very close to a breakdown went into the writing of those plays.

From such a perspective, to demand that a writer like Fugard ignore his inner dilemmas and crises seems churlish and pusillanimous, particularly when he has already made such a significant social contribution. In fact, both Dimetos, and Eugene Marais in The Guest, plead at particular moments for the same kind of understanding and tolerance that they have granted others; through them, one can almost hear Fugard addressing those of his critics who have approached his work with narrow-minded, illiberal intolerance. Dimetos, for instance, tells Sophia:

Even when I've disagreed, or haven't understood, I've always respected other men's decisions as to how they wanted to live their lives. Is that asking too much for myself? (p.15);

and in The Guest, Marais says to the old matriarch,

I haven't judged anyone, Tant Corrie. I hope no one has judged me (p.52).

Following this period of personal introspection and exploration, it was, perhaps, inevitable that Fugard should once again turn his attention to the social and political problems of his country. It was during the completion of The Guest, in fact, that the Soweto uprising of 1976 broke out, an event that greatly distressed Fugard, and impelled his creative thinking back towards a directly social mode of expression. Sheila Roberts (1980; in Gray 1982a:229) argues provocatively that evidence of this shift is discernible within The Guest itself, noting that there is something odd about the fact that the film ends with Marais's "Lied van Suid-Afrika":

Marais' general meditations on the universal suffering of conscious man are here curiously narrowed down to the suffering of specifically the 'children' of South Africa. She concludes that in an unconscious way Fugard's inclusion of the poem forms

a transition from the self-enclosed, existential suffering of his character, Marais, to the wider, more socially based suffering of Piet Bezuidenhout in the play, A Lesson from Aloes.

Roberts's argument is a persuasive one, and helps to suggest a plausible line of development in Fugard's thinking and writing during this time. It is certainly true, at any rate, that in his next three plays, Fugard's vision became once more focused upon the specifics of South African socio-political life, and more particularly upon the "lessons" that were to be learnt from an exploration of these specifics.

Port Elizabeth Revisited: A Lesson from Aloes, Marigolds in August, "Master Harold"...and the boys, (The Drummer)

(i)

Athol Fugard returned to South Africa in June 1976 from the London production of Dimetos to finalise the script for the screenplay of The Guest and was confronted by "the horror of the Soweto riots":

Driving back to Pretoria at night through a landscape of violence and destruction - veld fires in every direction. Newspaper posters and headlines as violent as the acts they were reporting - photographs more terrible than those that came out of Sharpeville (Notebooks, June 1976, p.221).

Although he found that his work on The Guest helped him cope with the trauma of 1976, it is clear that on completion of this film, he felt it necessary to turn his attention once more to a direct treatment of the political problems of the country. The result was three works over the next four or five years which, though quite different from each other, all involve a specific focus upon the nature and consequences of apartheid in South Africa. Even more particularly, each of these works is located in Port Elizabeth, Fugard's home city, and the setting for his "family plays" of the 1960s, The Blood Knot, Hello and Goodbye and Boesman and Lena. In these new works, Fugard returned, moreover, to the dramatic style and mode of the earlier Port Elizabeth plays: intense psychological studies, informed by the social tensions of the country, and presented in a directly naturalistic manner.

Despite such directness, however, these later works are by no means to be regarded as narrowly political in a propagandistic sense. Like the earlier plays, they focus on the hopes and fears and weaknesses of individual people in all their unique human complexity. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that these works form a response to the events of 1976 and their aftermath, Fugard refuses to be drawn into an endorsement of violence as a political strategy or into a reductive appraisal of the complexities of the South African political situation. Instead, these plays, taken as a whole, consolidate Fugard's belief, based on his consistent commitment to the values and principles of liberalism, that the answer to South Africa's problems must be found, no matter how difficult it may seem, through peaceful, non-violent means founded upon reason, mutual understanding and compassion.

The complex nature of the plays is immediately signalled by their temporal setting. Although the screenplay, Marigolds in August is set in the present, both A Lesson from Aloes and "Master Harold"...and the boys take their audiences back into the past - to 1963 and 1950 respectively. Rather than be seen as a retreat from the immediacies of the current moment, however, as critics like Dennis Walder (1984:119) have suggested, the plays use crucial moments from the past to illuminate the present. Their retrospection is neither an indication of defeated withdrawal nor

an end in itself, but rather an effective means of providing fresh and revealing perspectives on contemporary dilemmas. The success of the endeavour is reflected in the critical and popular acclaim which both these latter plays have enjoyed. After the relative failures of Dimetos and The Guest, both A Lesson from Aloes and "Master Harold"...and the boys met with immediate and lasting success and served to reconfirm Fugard's reputation as one of the most important and accomplished playwrights of modern times. As such, Fugard's second series of Port Elizabeth plays deserve careful and detailed consideration.

(ii)

The Soweto uprising of 1976 was an event that revealed with tragic clarity just how volatile and perilous the South African political situation had become. Political thought in South Africa had throughout the 1970s become increasingly polarised and radicalised, fuelled at the one extreme by a totally intransigent Afrikaner nationalism and at the other by the Black Consciousness movement and the ideology of revolutionary socialism. In particular, the black youth of the country, represented by bodies like the South African Students Organisation (SASO), were adopting attitudes that seemed ever more militant and confrontational. Events came to a head on 16 June 1976 when a protest by Soweto schoolchildren against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools was met by police gunfire. In reaction to this atrocity, widespread rioting broke out in Soweto and soon spread to other parts of the country. Over the next few days, it is estimated that at least (and probably more than) 176 people lost their lives (Davenport 1987:433-434; see also Kane-Berman 1978; Lodge 1983).

In this potentially apocalyptic context, it seemed quite conceivable that the nation would descend into civil war and that the possibilities for a peaceful, liberal resolution of the country's problems would be obliterated. Fugard himself, in moments of pessimism, seemed to believe as much, remarking to Mel Gussow (1982:79) that

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. The possibility of an evolution without pain is irrevocably lost. I think too many people died in Soweto and Sharpeville. The karma is so dark, so locked into a terrible reciprocity. I cannot see sanity prevailing in South Africa.

However, in 1976 at any rate, the beginnings of a popular uprising were summarily halted through a massive and brutal security clampdown, in which close to 6000 people were arrested and imprisoned between 16 June 1976 and the end of February 1977, and over 360 detained without trial under the Terrorism Act (Davenport 1987:434). Among those detained was Steve Biko, unofficial leader of the Black Consciousness movement and former head of SASO, who was violently assaulted under interrogation in

the Security Police cells in Port Elizabeth before being taken by road to Pretoria where he died of his injuries on 12 September 1977. This clampdown, in the course of which the State security apparatus was given greatly increased powers, served to break the Black Consciousness movement and silence virtually all opposition voices. Those leaders not banned or in prison were forced either to flee into exile or to cease all political activities. With resistance of any kind made all but impossible, a mood of despair set in among opposition forces as it seemed that the opportunity for bringing about real political change in the country had vanished.

In all this, the circumstances closely resembled those of the years following the 1960 Sharpeville shootings, when the Nationalist government under Verwoerd had crushed an earlier generation of political activists. In both cases, morale sank to an extremely low ebb, the cause seemed lost, and paranoia flourished in the face of the security forces with their extensive network of spies and informers. In the light of these parallels, it is possible to see the relevance of Fugard's next play, A Lesson for Aloes. Although set in 1963, the socio-political context in which it is located forms an almost exact analogue of the times in which it was written and first produced in 1978, and the play is therefore able to provide clear insights into current circumstances while maintaining some measure of objective distance from the confusions and uncertainties of the immediate moment. It was also able, incidentally, to avoid the censorship which had become a constant threat to engaged literature in South Africa in the 1970s.

The origins for the play date back, in fact, to 1961, when Fugard met the man on whom he based the character of Piet Bezuidenhout, a "red-faced, big-hearted Afrikaner" with a passion for English poetry who had, indeed, while driving a bus on the Cadles route in Port Elizabeth, become involved in left-wing politics through the South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation (Notebooks, February 1961, pp.23-24; see also Fugard 1971:68-69 and 1981:ix-xi). As was the case with his fictional counterpart, the real Piet was not trusted by all his comrades (including Dennis Brutus) and may have been suspected of being an informer, a phenomenon that had become rife since the early 1960s (see Notebooks, December 1966, p.144; June 1970, pp.184-185; Vandembroucke 1986:242). The character of Steve Daniels, too, seems to have been based on an actual person who had been imprisoned after breaking a banning order, subjected to psychological torture, and finally forced into exile on a one-way Exit Permit (Notebooks, September 1967, p.154; Fugard's dating in his introduction to the play (1981:xii) seems arbitrary). And the character of Gladys appears to be based at least partly on Fugard's wife, Sheila. As Fugard explained to the original cast of the play (in Devenish 1979), the Security Branch search in the play derives from personal experience:

Four of them trooped in and went through the house. One of them sat down and was, in fact, the first person to read Sheila's poetry.

More especially, Sheila Fugard has also, like Gladys, suffered

a nervous breakdown (see Devenish 1979; Fugard 1981:xiii), a traumatic event for Fugard himself (see Foley 1994:66-67) which is incorporated into the substance of the play.

Despite their personal origin, Fugard found it difficult to translate these experiences into a complete play. After working on and off for some years on what he variously called the Fairview play or "A man without Scenery" (Notebooks, November 1966, p.143; Fugard 1981:xiii), he finally abandoned the effort in 1971. However, in November 1977, the idea for the play suddenly returned to him, partly because of private circumstances (Fugard 1981:xiii) and partly because the social and political conditions of the time had made the story of Piet, Gladys and Steve highly relevant once more.

A Lesson from Aloes has a somewhat unusual structure for a Fugard play in that it involves three characters each of whose viewpoints is presented with more or less equal weight: Piet Bezuidenhout, an Afrikaner in his mid forties; his wife, Gladys; and their friend, Steve Daniels, a Coloured friend of theirs who had been Piet's mentor in opposition politics. The action of the play is almost entirely psychological rather than physical, as each character is forced to face up to his or her secret pain and guilt. What physical action there is occurs at Piet and Gladys's home, ironically named Xanadu, in Algoa Park, Port Elizabeth, where they await the arrival of Steve and his family for a dinner party. By the start of the second act of this two-act play, it seems as if the guests will not arrive, but as a disappointed Piet begins to pack up, Steve arrives, apologising for his lateness and making excuses for his family. As it turns out, however, Piet is widely suspected among the Coloured community (including Steve's wife, Mavis) of being the informer who tipped the police off about Steve breaking his banning order, which led to a six-month jail sentence, and, subsequently, to his acceptance of an Exit Permit. Even more painfully, Steve confesses that he too has suspected Piet, who, though quite innocent, refuses to defend himself. Having been castigated by Gladys, a shame-faced Steve leaves, his friendship with Piet irreparably damaged. As Gladys prepares to return to Fort England mental hospital, where she has recently been a patient, Piet is left alone in the backyard with his collection of aloes.

The significance of the play is to be found not so much in the superficial plot action as in the underlying psychological conflict. As Fugard has commented in an interview with Jonathan Marks (1979:3), the play shares affinities with "a certain sort of Chekhovian approach to the theatre":

One has to look underneath the relative domesticity of the seemingly bland surface, underneath the level of dialogue, to find the event: the action and the movement and the shift of tensions.

The action and tensions in this play derive primarily from the unravelling of each character's particular secret. Gladys, it so happens, has become mentally unstable since the confiscation of her private diaries by the Security Branch during a raid on the house. The public exposure of her most intimate and personal

thoughts have for her constituted psychological rape:

The violated me, Peter. I might just as well have stayed in that bed, lifted up my nightdress and given each of them a turn (p.28).

As a result, she has become paranoid and delusional, obsessively hiding her new diary and believing that another Security Branch raid is imminent at any time. At the end of the play, she reveals that the new diary is completely blank, an indication of her emotional and expressive paralysis. Even though she was never a political "comrade" like Piet, she has suffered the consequences of his activism. As she tells Steve,

I accept, Steven, that I am just a white fact 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.74).

And, as she tells Piet after Steve has left, the violence and destructiveness of South Africa has, despite her determined apoliticality, infected her nevertheless:

You're a good man, Peter, and that has become a terrible provocation. I want to destroy that goodness. Ironic, isn't it! That which I most hate and fear about this country is all I seem to have learned (p.78).

Piet, too, in spite of his seemingly indestructible nature, hides secret vulnerabilities and pain. His first trauma occurred when drought forced him off his farm and left him "bitter and hard" inside (p.34). This emotional drought was alleviated, however, by his involvement in Coloured anti-apartheid politics, to which he was drawn by seeing the defiance of the bus boycotters when his bus route was coincidentally altered to the Cadles route one day. Even more particularly, he was moved by hearing Steve address the crowd and by the warmth with which he was welcomed into the Coloured community. At the time when the play takes place in 1963, Piet is experiencing a second existential drought, one caused not so much by the Government clampdown which has all but shattered political resistance in the community, but rather by the fact that he is suspected of being the "informer" (p.39) who gave Steve up to the police. Revealing his hidden pain at the end of Act One, he "speaks with deep emotion" and explains to Gladys why he has been unable to share with her his anguish at being considered a "traitor":

That's the correct word. Could you have made a simple entry to that effect in your diary? God! It's the ugliest thing that has ever happened to me. It makes me feel more ashamed ... of myself, my fellow men ... of everything! ... in a way I never thought possible (p.42).

Finally, the admission by Steve of his own suspicions leaves Piet utterly friendless and alone, betrayed by the man he loved and admired most in the world.

For Steve's part, he reveals in the course of the evening his pain at being forced to leave his home and country, at his

political struggle becoming "a lost cause" (p.69), at the whole brutal injustice of a system which destroys communities and which "finished" his father (p.63f), whose despair is summed up in the utterance "Ons geslag is verkeerd" (which Piet translates as "Our generation ... our race is a mistake", p.64). More specifically, he discloses his shame at having been psychologically emasculated (pp.71-72) under police interrogation, during which he broke down and "told them everything" (p.72) only to find that a spy had already given them the information. But Steve's final humiliation comes when he admits his "doubts" about Piet (p.73), eventually asking him straight out if he is, indeed, the informer. Though he comes to acknowledge Piet's innocence, the friendship is "wrecked" (p.77), and when he leaves, Piet offers no characteristic apt quotation from his beloved English poetry. Instead, Piet merely states: "I'd rather remember this as another occasion when I didn't know what to say" (p.77). That statement recalls Piet's inability to find anything to say at the graveside of an African child who had died on his farm as a result of the drought (p.54). It signals the death of Piet's friendship with Steve, his last comrade, and the onset of his own, new personal drought.

The play ends, then, with Piet alone in the backyard with the unidentified aloe which he had been examining in much lighter mood at the beginning of the play. The final sombre atmosphere, following the characters' painful personal disclosures and confessions, would seem to imply that the overall message of the play is a pessimistic one. In one sense, the play certainly presents a bleak view of life in South Africa. The lives of virtually all the characters in the play have been severely damaged, if not destroyed, by apartheid. This is undoubtedly true of the major characters, Piet, Gladys and Steve, who have been reduced to states of isolation, madness and exile. But it is also true of those characters in the background of the play: Steve's father and the rest of the Coloured community forcibly removed from their homes at Fairview to make way for a new white suburb; Steve's own immediate family coerced to give up their house and leave the country of their birth forever; the defeated resignation of the other political activists; the utter hopelessness of the African labourers on Piet's farm. As such, the play reflects the dominant mood of defeatism and despair in the country, not only in 1963 when the play is set, but also by implication in the post 1976 era when the play was first presented. In both periods, the anti-apartheid forces had been routed, and it seemed as if there was little hope of ever establishing a just and democratic political order in South Africa.

A careful reading of the play as a whole, however, reveals that amidst the gloom there are several elements which provide some sense of hope, no matter how muted, and which therefore suggest that the play's final meaning ought to be seen as one in which the general pessimism is alleviated to some extent by moments of optimism. The effect is what Gerald Weales (1993:506) has termed a "positive negative end". Most obviously, the aloes which Piet nurtures in the backyard function as a resilient symbol of

survival. As Fugard points out in his introduction to the play (1981:xiii-xiv),

aloes are distinguished above all for their inordinate capacity for survival in the harshest of possible environments. In writing this play I have at one level tried to examine and question the possibility and nature of survival in a country for which "drought", with its harsh and relentless resonances, is a very apt metaphor.

The point is clearly made in the play itself. It is the aloes, for instance, which alone survive the drought which drives Piet off the land, and which has led him to cultivate them as a poignant reminder of the potential for survival in other contexts as well:

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.

GLADYS What do you mean?

PIET We need survival mechanisms as well (p.15).

This is the primary "lesson" which the play teaches, as its title suggests. But it is a rather more complex lesson than many readers have recognised (for example, Vandenbroucke 1986:238-240; Walder 1984:110-111). As Gerald Weales (1993:506) observes, "the lesson is somewhat ambiguous". Gladys, it is to be noted, goes on in the interchange quoted above to point out that while aloes may be highly durable, the kind of survival they symbolise may not necessarily be attractive, appropriate or innocent:

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 (pp.16-17).

What the play asks, then, is not merely whether survival is possible, but on what terms and at what price. Part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that Piet is an Afrikaner, a member of a nation whose capacity for survival is unquestioned, but whose determination to maintain its existence has come brutally at the expense of other groups and individuals in South Africa. Piet certainly shares his countrymen's qualities of endurance, but coupled with this he also embodies other qualities which do, indeed, make him the "good man" Gladys acknowledges him to be, and which set him apart from the majority of his bigoted and repressive compatriots. Piet reveals in the course of the play a true compassion for other human beings, a refusal to regard people as members of a particular race rather than as individuals, and a steadfast commitment to the ideals of justice, equality and freedom, even in the face of hardship and pain. Although the character, Piet Bezuidenhout, is based on a actual person who possessed many of these qualities, it is the spirit of another Afrikaner which informs the character and the play as a whole - that of Fugard's mother, who lived to see the play but died shortly before its American première in 1980. The play is dedicated, indeed, "In celebration of Elizabeth Magdalena Potgieter". Moreover, as Fugard remarked in an interview with

Craig Raine (1980:13),

the play tries to do many things, but one very important thing it tries to do is something that seems virtually impossible or foolhardy at this moment, given the state of our country, the way our country is regarded abroad - it tries to celebrate the Afrikaner.

Not only did Fugard's mother share with Piet a "mania for putting shoots and seeds and plants into old tins" (Notebooks, June 1961, p.38), and his instinct for stoical endurance, but also a "capacity for rising above the South African situation and seeing people as people", for being "color-blind" (in Gussow 1982:52). Fugard himself has explicitly drawn the parallel in conversation with Mel Gussow (1982:52):

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 .... She never got involved in politics, but as early as I can remember she had an understanding of the injustice .... [a] sense of outrage and anger over the injustice of that society.

Part of the lesson which the play presents, therefore, is that the solution to South Africa's political problems depends in no small measure upon the ability of the Afrikaner to reject the blind nationalism and racial prejudice which have beset the Afrikaner mentality for so long, and to embrace instead the values of fairness, decency and generosity which are no less part of the Afrikaner's cultural identity (see Angrove 1986, 1989; Combrink 1986). The true survival of the Afrikaner nation, the play suggests, will derive not from the continued violent oppression of others, but from the creation of a society in which all groups and all individuals will be allowed to prosper.

An understanding of this point renders meaningful the play's seemingly inconsequential opening, in which Piet seeks a name for an unidentified aloe. In doing so, he does not wish to lock the plant into a rigid categorisation but rather to provide it with an identity and a sense of individual uniqueness. This is, after all, what he is able to do for himself:

No. For better or for worse, I will remain positively identified as Petrus Jacobus Bezuidenhout; Species, Afrikaner; Habitat, Algoa Park, Port Elizabeth, in the year of our Lord, 1963 (p.5).

In this, Piet's "ontological stability" (Roberts 1980; in Gray 1982a:230) stands in marked contrast not only to Gladys and Steve, but also to Fugard's many other characters whose identities have been destabilised through the absence or loss of a name: Tsotsi, Hester, Lena, Sizwe Bansi, Errol Philander. Throughout A Lesson from Aloes, the act of naming is used as a metaphor for the recognition of the individuality of another human being: Piet recounts how he found his wife's maiden name, Gladys Adams, "a name to conjure with" (p.12); Piet is able to remember, as the less compassionate Gladys cannot, the names of all of Steve's children; Steve's account of his father's demise is given real pathos by his recalling of his father's full name, Willem Gerhardus Daniels (p.62), a name which, incidentally, serves to underline the Afrikaner origin of many Coloured people.

As several critics have pointed out, it is this recognition of the individuality which underlies groups and categories that forms the heart of the play's political vision. In considering the significance of the metaphor of the aloe, Robert Greig (1978:10) comments that

throughout the play, Fugard breaks down the deadly categorisation of human beings. The aloe, the name given to many species, is a symbol of the glorious variety of human kind.

Chris Wortham (1983:180), moreover, suggests that "taken symbolically", the naming of the aloes "seems to be an existential statement of the uniqueness of individual responses to adversity". And Margaret Munro (1981:476) argues that the aloes "do not just teach survival"; rather, "the lesson may refer to the necessary persistence of varieties in man and plants, even under apartheid". Munro appropriately quotes Piet's own comments about his aloes:

The range of variation within a species is quite remarkable. "Nature refusing to be shackled by the fetters of a man-made system" (p.65).

In essence, thus, Fugard's condemnation of apartheid in this play finds its theoretical orientation in the political philosophy of liberalism, which emphasises the cardinal value of the individual, and refuses to permit that individuality to be diluted by any social aggregate, racial grouping or political classification. Moreover, although Piet and Steve's politics are broadly left-wing rather than specifically liberal, one of the most important messages which the play advances is wholly consonant with a fundamental tenet of liberal belief; namely, that unjust political dispensations are neither inevitable nor immutable, and that all "man-made systems" are corrigible and open to amelioration by political action. This is the crucial lesson which Piet learns from Steve even in the face of the failed bus 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 an 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 men. It's as simple as that. We can make this a better world to live in (p.35).

A Lesson from Aloes represents a vital liberal analysis of South African politics in the late 1970s. Using the post-Sharpeville period as an analogue of the problems confronting the anti-apartheid movement in the intensely repressive aftermath of the Soweto riots of 1976, the play offers an unillusioned consideration of the possibilities for continued opposition. Far from naively positing a facile resolution of the problem of the apartheid system, the play candidly portrays some of the hardships facing those who attempt to change that system. Nevertheless, despite its accurate reflection of the pervasive pessimism of the times, the play itself is not ultimately

pessimistic. It suggests not only that survival is possible, but that hope for a peaceful settlement remains viable, as long as ordinary people, including Afrikaners, continue to discover in themselves a desire for justice and freedom. Rather than lamenting the demise of liberalism, as critics such as Munro (1981:474), Walder (1986:119) and Seidenspinner (1986:335) have maintained, the play confirms Fugard's determination, reminiscent of Piet himself, to hold onto his political ideals even in the midst of the current political drought.

The special power of A Lesson from Aloes is demonstrated not only in the numerous productions which the play has enjoyed but also in the fact that it is the most reviewed and critically discussed of all Fugard's plays (see Read 1991). In many ways it remains an essentially South African play about opposition to the specific evil of the apartheid system - even in terms of its production history, it was one of the first explicitly political South African plays to open at the new Market Theatre in Johannesburg in 1978, and helped to usher in a remarkable period of political theatre at that venue. But it is at the same time a play whose message goes beyond the specifics of South Africa, speaking to all contexts where the desire for freedom struggles to survive a climate of harsh political repression. In this, it is a play whose reputation remains high (recently being included by Harold Bloom (1994) in his "western canon") and whose significance persists even into the post-apartheid era.

(iii)

The sombre atmosphere which informs much of A Lesson from Aloes had, by the time Fugard tackled his next project, lightened somewhat, both with regard to his own professional circumstances and with regard to the country as a whole. After the relative failures of Dimetos and The Guest, Fugard admitted that he "suffered a bit of a crisis in terms of my confidence" (in MacLennan 1982:3), but the acclaim with which A Lesson from Aloes was met, especially in America, did much to restore his belief in himself. Coterminously, the mood in South Africa in general was beginning to lift slightly with the turn of the decade. Although the apartheid regime remained firmly in power, the horror of civil war had been averted and there were signs in the early years of new Prime Minister P.W. Botha's government of some liberalisation of official policy. Indeed, by 1982 the Nationalist Party had split after effectively evicting from its ranks the arch conservative, Andries Treurnicht, the man who as deputy minister of Bantu Education in 1976 had been largely responsible for the circumstances which led to the Soweto riots. Treurnicht went on to form the Conservative Party, against which the reforms of the new Nationalist Party seemed to represent a movement in a rather more enlightened direction. In addition, the United Party, which had long been an ineffective and even conservative-minded group, was at last supplanted as the official opposition by the far more liberal Progressive Federal Party, who, taking their lead from those such as Helen Suzman, promised to offer a more dynamic and meaningful challenge to the Government.

This lightening of mood is evident in Fugard's next work, Marigolds in August, which, although also dealing with the central theme of survival, shares little of the sense of embattlement of its immediate predecessor. In working on the screenplay for what would become the film, Marigolds in August, Fugard once again collaborated with Ross Devenish, so that the work may be seen as the third part of a trilogy, though sadly Marigolds in August, despite its more optimistic outlook, is a rather less accomplished piece than either Boesman and Lena or The Guest. The idea for the film stemmed from 1968, and it was originally meant to be made in the mid 1970s, though for a number of reasons - including financial problems and the unavailability of John Kani and Winston Ntshona to play the roles intended for them - the film was completed only in 1979/1980. The film is set in Schoenmakerskop, the little village outside Port Elizabeth where Fugard lived from 1964 to 1974, and much of the natural imagery of the film is imbued with a special sense of personal familiarity, as are the three main characters, Daan (played by Ntshona), Melton (played by Kani) and Paulus Oliphant (played by Fugard himself), who are based on actual persons Fugard had known in Schoenmakerskop.

What the film seeks to do, at least from Fugard's perspective, is to focus on an ordinary black gardener (like Fugard's own gardener, Daan) and to tell his particular story, in an attempt to reveal to other South Africans the reality of a black man's life in this country. As Fugard explained in a press handout for Marigolds in August (in Vandenbroucke 1986:245),

the film's central theme is to present Daan, the mere labourer, the invisible black man, as the real human being he is - in all his complexity - to explore his situation, questions, conflicts and relations with his fellow men.

Daan is a simple black man, who walks the seven miles each day from his home in the squalid Walmer location to work in the white gardens of Schoenmakerskop. Nevertheless, a screen direction states that he "has resigned himself to the little he has, and all he wants is to be left alone ..." (p.5). This state of passive resignation is disrupted, however, by the arrival in the village one day of a younger black man, Melton, who is desperately seeking work to help feed his wife and remaining child after the death of their baby. Daan at first perceives Melton merely to be a threat to his livelihood and tries to chase him away. Slowly, under the gentle prompting of his friend, Paulus Oliphant, Daan comes to acknowledge Melton as a fellow human being in need of assistance. In one heavily ironic moment, for example, after Daan and Melton have almost come to blows with each other, Paulus calls to a group of Abakwetha (young Xhosa initiates) who are camping in the bush nearby:

Come! Come to the fire. Don't worry. There are no men here. Only whitemen's boys. Come and join us. Real men help each other. Real men don't laugh when somebody else is in trouble (p.48).

What Daan has to learn, therefore, is to break off "the crust of selfish indifference" (p.42) that he has acquired and rediscover his own authentic sense of self through the recognition of the existence and the needs of the other man: "Me and you. Ja! There

is me, but there is also you" (p.42). At first, Daan tries to help by offering Melton work for a day as his substitute, but Melton is intent on finding a less temporary solution than this. Eventually, Daan and Paulus counsel Melton to break into the house of some white people who are away, where he steals canned food for his family. This final scene in the film alternates in shot with one of Daan and Paulus pondering the "big questions" in life: "What ... How ... Why?" (p.53), questions which must, of necessity, remain unanswered.

At one level, the film offers a clear indictment of the gross inequalities of South African society, and suggests that unless the desperate poverty of blacks is urgently addressed, the "inevitable" (p.49) consequence will be that of crime - a theme powerfully presented thirty years earlier in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country. In one of the film's strongest moments, Melton, inside the house he is to rob, sweeps to the floor in rage the family photographs, implying both his anger at the decent family life he has been denied, as well as the idea of this individual white family also becoming the victims of the inequitable society in which they live. There is, furthermore, an oblique suggestion in a larger political context of what may well happen to whites in South Africa should the economic and social injustices of the country not be put right by peaceful means.

Such moments of genuine power are all too few in the film, however, in both a thematic and an aesthetic sense. In some instances, it is difficult to know what to make of the film's underlying message. Paulus Oliphant, for example, seems far too sage a character for someone who lives in the bush making a living catching snakes. And at the end, it is unclear what meaning to attach to the fact that his piece of bush is declared a Nature Reserve, forcing him to move elsewhere. Similarly, it is uncertain whether one is meant to applaud the fact that Daan and Paulus advise Melton in the name of black brotherhood to turn to robbery, or whether this is supposed to be seen as a permanent occupation for him in future. There is a sense here in which Fugard seems to be striving for some kind of radical social statement but losing his way as he ventures beyond the threshold of his familiar ethical principles. But perhaps most fatally, in the character of Daan Fugard fails to achieve the "complexity" he desired. In the space of a mere thirty-six hours, Daan rather implausibly moves from a phlegmatic indifference, or even hostility, to others to a wide-eyed compassion, not to mention a sudden bent for the philosophical (his contemplation at the end of the film of life's "big questions" is excruciating). Despite Fugard's efforts to show Daan struggling to comprehend the charitable attitude encouraged by Paulus, the overall effect seems contrived. In particular, the film provides no sufficient cause to justify why Daan should suddenly, at this point in his life, become sympathetic to the plight of others. In all this, his conversion closely resembles that of the title character of Tsotsi, and it is no coincidence that Fugard had that long lost novel published in the same year that Marigolds in August was exhibited in 1980. In both works, it is evident that Fugard is

attempting to show apparently incorrigible characters finding inner redemption through acts of outer social kindness, thus exemplifying the assertion of the Swedish poet, Tomas Tranströmer, which forms the epigraph to the screenplay:

Two truths draw nearer each other. One comes  
from inside, one comes from outside

and where they meet we have a chance to see ourselves.  
In neither work, unfortunately, is Fugard able to give the concept psychological cogency or dramatic plausibility.

As was the case with Tsotsi, many of the best moments in Marigolds in August occur almost incidentally as part of the backdrop to the main action, particularly the depiction of the ordinary day-to-day hardships of black South Africans deprived of the opportunities to lead decent lives. Scenes that come to mind include those of Daan and the domestic servant, Alice, walking the long road to Schoenmakerskop; the "dumb misery" (p.13) of Melton and his wife as they bury their baby; Melton finding that the water tank from which he tries to drink has been locked; and the constant images of the exclusion of blacks from the lives of whites, who live separated by walls, windows, doors, windscreens of cars. This overall sense of the alienation and displacement of black people within their own country is captured in the image which gives the film its title. Early on Daan bemoans the fact that his white employer makes him plant marigolds too soon in the year:

Marigolds in August. Next month maybe ... October, yes! But August ...? Tomorrow the wind starts, they all die and then who's to blame? (p.13).

At the end of the film, Daan comes to realise that all non-whites in apartheid South Africa - "You ... him ... me ..." (p.52) - are like marigolds in August, trying to survive in a social and political landscape where they have no place to take root and grow, as they wait desperately for the coming of their proper season.

Such horticultural symbolism may seem rather ponderous, however, and representing little advance on the meaning of A Lesson from Aloes. Indeed, Russell Vandembroucke (1986:248) is right to detect a feeling of repetitiveness and staleness in much of the imagery and many of the concerns of Marigolds in August:

Cross-references exist throughout Fugard's canon, but to anyone familiar with his previous work, Marigolds comes across as an encyclopaedia of images, themes and perceptions recycled more out of habit than necessity.

Fugard himself, moreover, remained unsatisfied with the cinematic quality and thematic significance of the final product of the film, noting that he and Ross Devenish "found the metaphor and camera style for The Guest. I don't think we did for Marigolds" (in Vandembroucke 1986:248).

When Marigolds in August was released, it came in for some criticism also from Marxist viewers who found the film's message insufficiently radical, particularly in its concern with a few isolated characters rather than with a representational reflection of the political struggle as a whole (see Devenish

1980; in Gray 1982a:138). On the surface, it may well seem that Fugard's refusal to portray representatives of the Government or of opposition groupings is a limitation in his work. However, as Collieran (1988:191) points out, the focus of Fugard's drama has never been on the obvious antagonisms of the macro-political sphere, but rather on the particular struggles of ordinary, individual people. Ross Devenish, interviewed by Stephen Gray (1980; in Gray 1982a:139), makes the point effectively:

So now some people seem to want types, not individuals. Here, and abroad now too. I refuse to see people just as a collective. In the end the most radical statement Marigolds can make is that these people are individuals with individual problems. Again, people have been saying, Isn't this film out of date now? - because things have moved on. I would say, not. But even if it were, and the times demanded that there were a much more radical statement in the film, that Melton be much more overtly radical than he actually is, I feel that the affirmation of human dignity in dark days is probably the most important thing that we can do, and I firmly believe that Marigolds tries to affirm human dignity at a stage in this country's history where it is very seldom done - certainly in film.

In spite of the criticisms levelled against it in this study, Marigolds in August won several awards, both at the 1980 Berlin Film Festival where it was first screened and then later in South Africa. Nevertheless, considered within the context of Fugard's dramatic work as a whole, the film remains at best a work of uneven quality, which does not merit comparison either with its predecessor, A Lesson from Aloes, or with Fugard's next play, "Master Harold"...and the boys.

(iv)

Before composing "Master Harold"...and the boys, however, Fugard was commissioned to write a playlet for the annual Festival of New American Plays of the Actors Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky (see Gray 1990:12). He submitted a five-minute mime, entitled The Drummer, which involved a bum who discovers drumsticks while searching through a pile of garbage. Gradually, the bum comes "to realize the potential" (p.130) of his find: after practising on a trash-can

he chooses a direction and sets off to take on the city. He has discovered it is full of drums ... and he has got drumsticks (p.130).

In a prefatory "note" to the piece, Fugard recalls the New York original of the character, and particularly his sense of liberty and vitality: "He was very joyous ... defiantly so! ... and seemed to have a sense of himself as being extravagantly free" (p.129). And in a covering letter which accompanied the submitted play, Fugard states (in Vandenbroucke 1986:250):

My mandate to the actor is simple ... find two drumsticks and with the help of these find first joy, and then courage.

As such, The Drummer seems far removed from the mood of pained

hopelessness which characterised Fugard's earlier play about tramps, The Occupation. Instead, this little piece extends and develops the sense of hope and optimism which began to break through Fugard's work in Marigolds in August. It certainly appears to be an example of Fugard's stated desire to celebrate life rather than to focus only on pain (see Vandenbroucke 1986:251), and perhaps anticipates the determinedly positive outlook which prevails in later plays such as The Road to Mecca and A Place with the Pigs. Despite Fugard's rather casual attitude towards his submission, the playlet, which opened on 27 February 1980, was very favourably received and was generally acknowledged to be the best piece of its kind at the festival. Its success was to prefigure in little what Fugard would achieve with his next play, "Master Harold"...and the boys.

(v)

In "Master Harold"...and the boys, Fugard again delved into his own personal history, as he had done with A Lesson from Aloes, though in this later play he went further back in time to 1950, and relied even more heavily on autobiographical actuality. Once more, this re-examination of the past is not to be seen as a retreat from the urgent realities of contemporary South Africa, but rather as a means of providing fresh perspectives on the continuing racial conflicts of the country in the present moment. Strangely, after completing a first full draft of the play, Fugard wrote in a letter to Russell Vandenbroucke dated 8 October 1981 (in Vandenbroucke 1986:251) that he felt it was not a "big" play: "There are none of the resonances of Aloes, for example. In fact, I'm tempted to subtitle it: A Personal Memoir". As it transpired, "Master Harold"...and the boys turned out to be a very important play indeed. It is arguably the best written of all Fugard's plays, the whole work contained in a seamless one-act structure of rich complexity and emotion, ranging from high humour to bitter irony and pathos. More than that, the play functions as a crucial liberal document, most particularly in its exploration of the meaning and implications of violence, both personal and political, and in its final rejection of such violence as a means of resolving crises. At this time, the question of violence had become a vital debate amongst opponents of apartheid. While there was general consensus on the need for the total eradication of apartheid, there was far less agreement on how to achieve this, and the issue of violence tended to provide the major point of division and self-definition between those who refused to countenance violence, including liberals, and those who accepted it. As such, the play represents perhaps Fugard's most scathing indictment of those who espouse violence as a political strategy, and especially of those radical critics who have constantly demanded that the theatre be used as a mobilising mechanism for violent revolutionary change in South Africa.

"Master Harold"...and the boys is probably Fugard's most heavily autobiographical work. Dedicated to "Sam and H.D.F.", the play traces the influence which a black servant of his mother's, Sam

Semela, had on the young Fugard, especially during the time of the illness of his father Harold David Fugard. There are numerous elements in the play which are clearly taken from Fugard's early life. As a boy, Fugard had been known as "Hally", after his initials, "Harold Athol Lannigan", and much of his intellectual precocity is reflected in the Hally of the play. Sam Semela had, in fact, worked for Fugard's mother, first at the Jubilee Boarding House, and later at the St George's Park Tea Room, where the play is set in poignantly realistic detail. Sam was, moreover, a ballroom dancing champion in real life, and had once given Fugard a home-made kite. Most importantly, the spitting incident which forms the climax to the play, and which Fugard refers to as "my guiltiest memory" (in Henry 1989:56), did, in actual fact, occur:

Can't remember what precipitated it, but one day there was a rare quarrel between Sam and myself. In a truculent silence we closed the cafe, Sam set off to New Brighton on foot and I followed a few minutes later on my bike. I saw him walking ahead of me and, coming out of a spasm of acute loneliness, as I rode up behind him I called out his name, he turned in mid-stride to look back and, as I cycled past, I spat in his face. Don't suppose I will ever deal with the shame that overwhelmed me the second after I had done that (Notebooks, March 1961, p.26).

In a sense, then, "Master Harold"...and the boys may be regarded as Fugard's attempt to deal not only with the private shame of that incident, but in a larger context with the guilt, anger, resentment and potential violence which pervades the entire racial confrontation in South Africa. To do so, of course, certain autobiographical details have been modified in the play. For example, Sam is far more articulate and idealised in the play than he was in reality; Hally is made four years older than Fugard himself was at the time of the incident; and their relationship is given rather more weight and depth than it had in real life (see Notebooks, March 1961, pp.25-27). Nevertheless, in keeping to the main autobiographical facts of the case, Fugard is able to construct a drama which is not merely a powerful examination of the nature of South African racism in general, but which also bears the unmistakable ring of personal authenticity.

All of the action of the play takes place inside the St George's Park Tea Room "on a wet and windy Port Elizabeth afternoon" (p.3). As the weather has kept any prospective customers away, the two black waiters, Sam (Semela) and Willie (Malopo), are free to chat about their ballroom dancing pastime - at which Sam is an expert and Willie a novice - as they go about their chores. Upon the arrival of the seventeen year old white son of the owner of the tea room, Hally, or "Master Harold" as Willie respectfully calls him, Willie moves into the background and it is Sam and Hally who take centre stage, engaging in a lively conversation which they both clearly enjoy and which serves to establish the close relationship they share. But looming over the scene is Hally's dread of the return from hospital of his crippled father, whom he will have to nurse and care for. When at last Hally's mother telephones for the second time to confirm that his father will indeed be coming home, Hally takes his anger and frustration

out on Sam in a viciously racist way. Suppressing his urge to retaliate violently, Sam offers Hally forgiveness. But Hally exits the café in despair, leaving the two black men alone to continue practising their dancing to the appropriate jukebox tune, "Little man you're crying".

The core of the drama revolves around Sam and Hally's relationship, and it is out of the interchanges between these two, verbal or otherwise, that the play's central thematic concerns emerge. Early on, for instance, the idea of social injustice - which informs the broader South African context of the play - comes out subtly through Sam and Hally's discussion of social reformers. Sam picks up and reads in Hally's history textbook an extract dealing with the liberal democratic reforms of post-revolution France: "'Napoleon regarded all people as equal before the law and wanted them to have equal opportunities for advancement'" (p.18). From this, they compete to name the person who has most benefitted mankind, Hally citing Charles Darwin, William Wilberforce and Leo Tolstoy, and Sam countering with Abraham Lincoln and William Shakespeare before finally clinching victory with Alexander Fleming, the inventor of penicillin. Hally's delighted reaction is instructive of the inherently patronising way in which he views the older man: "Tolstoy may have educated his peasants", he tells Sam, "but I've educated you" (p.23).

Through this interchange, many of the play's central ironies emerge, adroitly captured in the multiple signification of the play's title. At the crude level of South African racial politics, Hally is the white "master" or baas who is entitled to treat the grown black men as "boys" or social inferiors, even if in a paternalistic rather than an oppressive fashion. At another level, because of the advantages of proper schooling which his privileged status has afforded him, Hally can act as a school "master" to the "boys" in the unofficial classroom of the café. But at a deeper level, the play makes abundantly clear that Hally is still only "Master Harold" in the sense of an appellation given to a mere schoolboy, and it is the black men, particularly Sam, who are in reality his teachers and mentors.

It is Sam, for example, who gently reminds Hally, during their conversation, of the social injustice in their own country to which Hally, in spite of his professed admiration for men of "magnitude" (p.19), remains peculiarly blind:

HALLY ...things will change, you wait and see. One day somebody is going to get up and give history a kick up the backside and get it going again.

SAM Like who?

HALLY (After thought) They're called social reformers. Every age, Sam, has got its social reformer. My history book is full of them.

SAM So where's ours? (pp.15-16).

More personally, it is Sam who has, since Hally was in Standard Four and the family was running the Jubilee Boarding House, befriended Hally, offered him company, and unobtrusively guided his development. It is Sam, moreover, who has given Hally comfort

and support when he became depressed over his father's illness and alcoholism. During the afternoon the two recall the "miracle" (p.30) of the kite which Sam made for Hally as a young boy; at the end of the play, however, Sam explains that he had not made him the kite arbitrarily but to assuage his shame and hurt after having had with Sam's help to drag his drunken father home from the bar:

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...(p.58).

In a very real sense, then, Sam has functioned as Hally's surrogate father, a point emphasised by Hally unintentionally in his comment about the kite:

Little white boy in short trousers and a black man old enough to his father flying a kite. It's not every day you see that (p.31).

It is all the more ironic, therefore, that Hally turns on Sam as a direct result of the fact that Sam tries to defend his father from his insults. Earlier Sam had used ballroom dancing as a symbol of an ideal world:

There's no collisions out there, Hally. Nobody trips or stumbles or bumps into anybody else. That's what that moment is all about. To be one of those finalists on that dance floor is like ... like being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen (p.45).

But after learning of his father's definite return home, Hally lashes out in reckless frustration at Sam:

Do you want to know what's 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.51).

When Sam rebukes him for mocking his father, Hally tells Sam his father's ugly racist joke about life, like "a nigger's arse", not being fair (p.55). Then, after Sam in bitter reaction bares his own backside for Hally's inspection, Hally waits for his moment, and, as Sam passes him, he calls his name, and spits in his face.

Sam's response follows several complex stages. "For a few seconds SAM doesn't move" (p.56); then he berates the boy verbally, before coming close to violent physical retaliation:

And you're a coward, Master Harold. The face you should be spitting in is your father's ... but you used mine, because you think you're safe inside your fair skin ... and this time I don't mean just or decent. (Pause, then moving violently towards HALLY) Should I hit him, Willie? (p.56).

But after Willie reminds him that Hally is just a "little boy", a "little white boy" (p.57), Sam's violence ebbs away into defeat, as he realises that he has failed to mould Hally into the decent man he intended him to become. It is then that he tells

Hally the story of the kite, adding that there was a further twist to that story. Sam was unable to stay with him that day as Hally had sat down on a "Whites Only" bench, being too young to understand its meaning. Now, however, Hally is old enough to understand, and Sam invites him to come down and to help repair their relationship:

You don't have to sit up there by yourself. You know what that bench means now, and you can leave it any time you choose. All you've got to do is stand up and walk away from it (p.60).

But Hally cannot accept the hand of reconciliation and leaves the tea room in despair. The play ends with Willie and "Boet Sam" (p.60) practising their ballroom dancing together in an image both of black brotherhood and of the continuing potential, despite all that has happened, of a dream of an ideal world, a world without collisions.

After its initially slow, though by no means dull, exposition, the play's rising conflict and climax take the audience on a powerful, surging ride of emotions and feelings, which leaves little time until the curtain to consider the lessons which the play brings home. Nevertheless, as Sam tells Hally, "there was a hell of a lot of teaching going on" (p.59), though the work is far from narrowly didactic in tone. Given this, it is proper in analysis to clarify what the play does have to say, particularly as the personal relationship at the centre of the play invites interpretation as a metaphor of the wider political situation in South Africa as a whole. Certainly, in terms of white South Africans, the message is clear: like Hally, they have the opportunity to come down from their position of privilege in apartheid society, and to work with their fellow countrymen of all races to bring about the kind of liberal social justice outlined in Hally's history book - a society in which all people are regarded as "equal before the law" and in which everyone can enjoy "equal opportunities for advancement" (p.18). Although in the play Hally rejects the opportunity for reconciliation offered by Sam, this does not mean that Fugard is suggesting that whites cannot change. After all, as Rob Amato (1984:200) points out, the play is in an important sense "a portrait of the artist as a young man", so that in its very autobiographical basis the play demonstrates how a white South African like Fugard could emancipate himself from the cruel prejudices of his racial heritage. The alternative to such a change on the part of whites means not only maintaining an unjust political system but also condemning themselves to a future of guilty alienation and fear (see pp.58-59). Indeed, as the play makes clear, one major consequence of white intransigence is to perpetuate conditions in which black South Africans at last respond to the political insult of apartheid by means of violent retaliation. Such violence, the play also makes clear, however, will provide not a solution but a final manifestation of disaster for the country. The play's message to those who espouse violent rebellion is that such tactics, however well intentioned, will bring nothing but destruction and suffering to all South Africans.

It is this latter point which provides the most controversial

aspect of the play, as many critics found Sam's reconciliatory gesture to Hally to represent a condonation of the racial insult and humiliation at the play's climax (see Walder 1984:125). More broadly, the implication seemed to such critics to be that the play was supporting a passive acceptance of the apartheid status quo. On the contrary, the whole experience in the play of the distorted relationship between the "boy", Sam, and "Master" Harold makes plain Fugard's abhorrence of the apartheid system and his determination to see it eliminated. But his point is that while apartheid must certainly go, it has to be replaced through peaceful means by a truly equitable social order, and that violence will simply not achieve these goals. In an interview with me in 1994 (Foley 1994:65-66), he explained in some detail the reasons for his rejection of the principle of violence, and how such a standpoint in fact constituted the very core of his liberal political beliefs:

Hally spits in Sam's face. And Sam in response experiences a build-up of emotion which threatens to explode into violence, but which doesn't. 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. It's as simple as that. You get trapped in a karma, you get trapped in a cycle, in a reciprocity that just goes on creating more and more darkness. Sam, at that moment, instead of hitting Hally, chooses to talk (albeit with all that pain inside him because of what has been done to him) and so begins to transform the moment. These are very, very deliberate choices, and they represent the choices we as human beings live with in our lives, and by virtue of which

we either end up a little better today than we were yesterday and make some sort of significant progress towards emancipation; or we end up in chains. We're not born in chains, but our education in society puts us in chains. And violence will only forge more links in those chains. Non-violence. That is the most significant choice we can make - the rejection of violence. That's what defines us as individual human beings.

"Master Harold"...and the boys was at once acclaimed a dramatic masterpiece, first in America where it had its première in March 1982 (thus also cementing Fugard's close relationship with the Yale Repertory Theatre), and then later in South Africa and elsewhere. As Dennis Walder (1984:120) remarks, the play aroused in audiences throughout the world

a painful, shared awareness of the personal roots of racialism, of the secret ugliness we all harbour within ourselves in our most intimate relationships, and which provides the motive force for some of the worst excesses of our time, in the outbursts of hatred and violence with which we are all too familiar.

As such, the play provides in its socio-political dimension one of the most persuasive and moving arguments in contemporary literature for the rejection of racial hatred and violence. Within South Africa, the play did much to bolster the fundamental liberal values which it celebrates, and to keep alive the hope for a peaceful political settlement in the country. In retrospect, it is possible to see the play as anticipating the non-violent political solution which South Africa did, indeed, find in the 1990s - a real example of the sort of "miracle" (p.30) in which Sam believes in the play. In this, "Master Harold"...and the boys stands at the very centre of the liberal literary tradition in South Africa, at once a classic of dramatic craftsmanship and a profound and prophetic political statement.

However, before South Africa's political miracle could be achieved in the 1990s, several years of violent oppression and reaction still lay ahead, including the brutal imposition of the State of Emergency by the Government, and the horrific excesses of the nation-wide unrest of the mid to late 1980s. To deal with these events, Fugard relocated his imaginative world to the Karoo, which, even more than Port Elizabeth, provided him with an ideal setting for his themes of hope and courage and reconciliation in the midst of harsh, destructive extremes.

**The Karoo: The Road to Mecca, My Children! My Africa!, Playland**

(i)

It is probably true to say that for many people the momentous events of 1989 and 1990 came unexpectedly and rapidly - the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries, followed by F.W. de Klerk's landmark speech of 2 February 1990, which effectively ended apartheid and opened the way for the democratisation of South Africa. Within a few months, the face of world politics in general and South African society in particular had been utterly and irrevocably altered. In retrospect, however, it is possible to see that although the final rush of events certainly occurred very quickly, there were signs throughout the 1980s of a general liberalisation of thinking both in Eastern Europe and within South Africa. This is evident, for instance, in the gradual strengthening of the anti-communist popular movements in countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia especially, as well as in the policies of glasnost and perestroika initiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Within South Africa, similar signs of a loosening of the stranglehold of apartheid were emerging. In 1984, the tricameral parliament was established, which, while clearly an attempt by the Nationalist Party to retain power by defusing tensions, nevertheless ended the tradition of a whites-only parliament forever. At the same time, trade union groups such as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) were allowed to be formed, adding weight to the increasingly influential unofficial opposition forces collected under the banner of the United Democratic Front (UDF). Moreover, in 1986 the Prohibition of Political Interference Act, the Mixed Marriages Act, and Section 16 of the Immorality Act were repealed, together with the abolition of the pass laws. And it was during this period that a number of predominantly white groupings and business leaders began to hold talks with the African National Congress leadership in exile.

Coterminous with this groundswell of progressive reform initiatives, however, came other events which seemed to bode far less well for the future in South Africa. Beginning in the mid 1980s, anger and frustration at blacks still being excluded by the revised constitution from parliamentary politics led to violent unrest in the townships which rapidly spread throughout the country. In response, the Nationalist government under P.W. Botha imposed a draconian State of Emergency during 1985 and 1986 in 36 magisterial districts. Such confrontations led to the adoption of radical and extreme political positions from people on both sides of the political spectrum, so that once more the threat of civil war loomed over the country. Furthermore, as the violence continued, the Government halted its reform process and sought to impose even greater restraints on society, which included the extension of the already powerful State security apparatus, huge numbers of arrests, detentions and bannings, and large-scale censorship of the media and the arts.

Despite such extremism and violence, the 1980s witnessed the development of a re-invigorated liberalism in South African political thought. This is discernible in the emergence during the decade not only of the growing influence of self-declared liberals, but also of increasing numbers of leaders in the country who may not necessarily have described themselves as liberals but whose attitudes and values were certainly liberal in essence. Such liberal-minded leaders were to be found both within the ranks of the ruling party and in most of the opposition political groups, but also, importantly, in all sectors of civil society itself: the churches, the press, the legal profession, the business sector, education, and the arts (see Butler, Elphick and Welsh 1987:11-14). In all these spheres, this liberal thinking, which had for many years been under attack from the left as well as the right, now began to re-assert itself forcefully against the prevailing assumptions of both a deeply ingrained conservatism and a strident Marxism which had threatened to become the dominant opposition mode. Instead, encouraged by events at a geopolitical level and steeled by years of critical debate, the liberal analysis of South African political realities started to regain prominence in the critical discourse of the country.

Such a renewed confidence in the validity and pertinence of liberal values and principles for the contemporary South African situation is to be found also in the creative work of many writers, both new and established, ranging from Lionel Abrahams and Chris Mann in poetry, to Mike Nicol, Jenny Hobbs and John Conyngham in fiction, to Paul Slabolepszy in theatre, and to Darryl Roodt in film. It is clearly discernible, moreover, in the work of Athol Fugard himself. After the near-pessimism and gloom of his work of the 1970s like The Guest and A Lesson from Aloes, his plays of the 1980s may be seen to chart the development of his increasing faith in the liberalisation of South African society. In The Road to Mecca, My Children! My Africa! and Playland, moreover, Fugard turns to the Karoo as a dramatic setting to explore not merely the possibilities of survival but more particularly the persistence and eventual triumph of the liberal values of individual freedom, of reason and tolerance, of mutual understanding and reconciliation. As such, these Karoo plays may well be regarded as representing in dramaturgical form the course of contemporary South African history itself.

(ii)

In about 1973, Fugard discovered the little village of New Bethesda in the Karoo while on his way to spend a holiday on a friend's farm. He felt an instant affinity with the place and decided to buy an inexpensive house there as a rural retreat. His response to New Bethesda derives partly from the fact that he was born in the town of Middelberg, about thirty miles away, so that he experienced a sense of completion and home-coming in purchasing a house in the village. More broadly, he has found the Karoo an environment which promotes a clear and uncluttered perspective on things (Fugard 1992c:79; see Fugard 1985:np;

1994:10):

the simplicity of it, the severity of it, the fact that it scales human beings down to the right proportion - [it is] very sobering and very moving. It's not a world that invites or sustains vanity. I think it is the most spiritual of all South Africa's landscapes.

And in terms of his work, the Karoo provides an ideal setting for his later plays, in which, typically, Fugard portrays troubled individuals struggling to come to terms with a world as harsh and violent as the Karoo landscape itself.

Although he utilised the Karoo town of Noupoort as the location for Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act, and allowed the idea of New Bethesda to inform obliquely the first act of Dimetos (see Fugard, Notebooks, February 1976, p.219), it was not until 1985 that Fugard decided to make explicit use of New Bethesda and the Karoo as the specific setting for a play. The result was The Road to Mecca, a play based on the remarkable life of Helen Martins, an eccentric artist in the village, who suddenly at the age of fifty after the death of her husband outraged her conservative and isolated little community by giving up church attendance and starting to sculpt. For the next fifteen years or so, she worked away obsessively at her "personal vision" (Fugard 1985:np), producing a series of Middle Eastern sculptures in her garden, which she called the "camel-yard", and transforming her dark little house by means of candles, mirrors and sculpture into a bright, glittering place that has become famous as the "owl house". As Fugard (1993a:386) observes, she saw the highly creative last years of her life

as a journey to Mecca, Mecca not being the real Mecca of Saudi Arabia, but the Mecca of imagination, that golden city, that other place, that extraordinary world we all want to reach at some point in our lives.

By the time Fugard bought his house in New Bethesda, Helen Martins had become almost totally reclusive so that although he knew of her and her house, he never personally met her. Then about two years later - a period in which her visions ended and she was unable to work, a period of increasing paranoia and depression - she committed suicide (Fugard 1985:np; 1993:386). Fugard felt at the time that the story of Helen Martins would offer excellent material for a story, and thoughts of her recurred fairly frequently in his notebooks (Fugard 1985:np), but it was not until the early 1980s that he began to think seriously about creating a play based on her life.

As Fugard is quick to point out, however, The Road to Mecca is by no means a documentary (1993a:386-387). Although the play obviously makes use of the broad outline of Helen Martin's life, and her friendship with a young woman from Cape Town (see Fugard 1985:np), Fugard nevertheless allowed himself far more liberty in creating his own story than he had done with either Mille Miglia or The Guest, for instance. Rather than seek biographical accuracy, he took advantage of the story of Helen Martins to explore at least three interlinked, central ideas of his own: "the genesis, nature and consequences of a creative energy" (Fugard 1992b:76; 1993a:387); the recognition and acceptance of

the need for "renunciation" (Fugard 1992b:77) in both an artistic and an existential sense; and, at a more specifically political level, the question of the freedom of the individual within a society which demands order and conformity. Each of these ideas will be examined in the course of the discussion which follows.

The Road to Mecca deals with a single late afternoon and evening in the life of Helen Martins, or Miss Helen as she is known in the play, and yet it succeeds in bringing into summarised focus her entire life - her dreams, her fears, her pain, but most of all her inextinguishable spirit of courageous individualism. In this, Emily Dickinson's poem, "The soul selects her own society" forms an apposite epigraph to the play. The initial conflict in the play, set in 1974, arises from the urgent visit of Elsa Barlow, Miss Helen's friend from Cape Town, who has come in response to a letter in which Miss Helen expresses her despair and anxiety at the prospect of losing her house and her art by being persuaded to move into the Sunshine Home for the Aged by her long-time friend, the Reverend Marius Byleveld. When Byleveld arrives at the house to collect her signed consent form, in the second act of the play, he reveals that it is more than just the community's opprobrium at Miss Helen's idiosyncratic lifestyle and sense of creativity that lies behind his wish to have her leave her house. Instead, it turns out that Miss Helen has become a danger to herself, with her failing eyesight, arthritic hands and generally poor health - in fact, she almost burned to death in her house after knocking over a candle. At the end of the play, however, with the help of Elsa's rather less than gentle support, Miss Helen finds the strength to resist Marius, and, lighting the candles which transform her house into a place of magical splendour, she re-asserts her faith in her artistic vision and in her own unique self-identity.

In so doing, Miss Helen not only affirms her own sense of meaning and purpose, but also manages to restore Elsa's battered confidence and self-belief. Elsa is a rather brash twenty-eight year old English language teacher at a Coloured school in Cape Town, who brings to New Bethesda several problems of her own besides her concern for her friend. Her liberal political views have got her into trouble once more with the Education Department; she has ended her relationship with her married lover, David; and, it is later revealed, she has had an abortion upon discovering after breaking up with David that she was pregnant with his child. Furthermore, her personal crisis is exacerbated in terms of her social conscience by her encounter with a young Lena-like Coloured woman and her baby. Although Elsa gives her a lift, and some money and food, she remains painfully conscious of the woman as a symbol of the hopeless suffering of so many people under the apartheid system in South Africa. All these events have brought Elsa to the brink of despair, unable to hope or to love or, most importantly, to trust any more. But Miss Helen's triumphant explication of her creative vision renews Elsa's faith in herself, in her life, and, most particularly, in her friendship with Miss Helen, to whom she offers herself in a relationship of total trust at the end of the play after Marius's departure.

Marius Byleveld is not to be regarded, however, as a unidimensional villain. He too has suffered, losing his beloved wife twenty-one years previously, an event which led him to come to New Bethesda in an attempt to escape the world. But the village helped to restore him, and he is able to find, as Elsa cannot, a source of comfort and sustenance, spiritual as well as physical, in the arid soil of the Karoo, as he demonstrates with his gift of potatoes and other vegetables to Miss Helen. He acts, moreover, out of genuine concern for Miss Helen, and even, as Elsa guesses at the end, out of a secret love for her. But he cannot escape his narrow puritanical Afrikaner prejudices, admitting his hatred of the idea of individual freedom (p.69), and his utter inability to comprehend, let alone appreciate, what he terms the "nightmare" (p.67) of Miss Helen's "cement monstrosities" (p.69). Yet, in spite of this, Henry (1989:58) is right to point out that Byleveld at the close "seems tragic rather than contemptible", a figure for whom, as Fugard (in Henry 1989:58) suggests, the audience should grieve rather than judge.

The central character remains Miss Helen, however, and it is through her finely pitched long speech towards the end of the play (which several critics have appropriately described as her "aria" - see Fugard 1994:38) that the major concerns of the play emerge. In this speech, she recalls how her widow's grief was not so much for her husband, Stephanus, whom she never really loved, but rather for what seemed the end of her own life. But she goes on to describe how, sitting in the dark after the funeral, she discovered in a flickering little candle an emblem of the courage to fight against the darkness and find meaning in life. In particular, she explains how that little light led her to a radiant vision of the potential for beauty and joy in the creative imagination, which she visualises as a personal "Mecca":

A city, Marius! A city of light and colour more splendid than anything I had ever imagined. There were palaces and beautiful buildings everywhere, with dazzling white walls and glittering minarets. Strange statues filled the courtyards. The streets were crowded with camels and turbaned men speaking a language I didn't understand, but that didn't matter because I knew, oh I just knew, it was Mecca! (p.72).

As she speaks, she gets Elsa to light all the candles in the room, which reveals "its full magic and splendour" (p.72), allowing her to declare exultantly, "This is my world and I have banished darkness from it" (p.73). Even after she concedes that her created world could not possibly live up to her transcendent vision, and that her journey has come to an end, it is clear that she has done enough to convince Marius that she could never allow her world to be reduced to a small room in an old-age home. Marius leaves, a defeated man, who has had to acknowledge how little he has ever understood her: "I've never seen you as happy as this! There is more light in you than in all your candles put together" (p.74).

In performance the scene is extraordinarily powerful, especially when played by the actress for whom the role was intended, Yvonne Bryceland. Her reading in the theatre was of the highest order,

as witnessed, for instance, by the leading American reviewer, Frank Rich (1988:14), and it has been luminously captured and preserved in the excellent 1991 film of the play, which was completed shortly before the actress's death in 1992. As Rich (1988:14) proceeds to note, Miss Helen's speech also establishes the connection between Miss Helen and Fugard himself, so that the play may be regarded as

a career summation, its author's own "Mecca". The stage is flooded with light - literally and figuratively - as Mr Fugard finds in Miss Helen's artistic credo, a cathartic statement of what it means to be a true artist in any place, at any time.

Fugard has, indeed, admitted that Miss Helen "is actually a self-portrait" (1992b:77), and that the play is an attempt "to understand the genesis, nature and consequences of a creative energy" (Fugard 1992b:76; 1993a:387) which drives writers like himself. Like Miss Helen, Fugard finds his inspiration, his artistic vision, appearing mysteriously but obsessively, and the creation of art, like the lighting of a candle, fills his life with understanding and comprehension (see Foley 1994:67).

The Road to Mecca also serves, however, in a rather more sombre way as a means for Fugard to explore one of the greatest fears of his life,

the possible drying up of my creative energy. What would I do if I ever found that I could not write again and there was still a lot of time left to live? (Fugard 1992b:76).

Fugard has more than once experienced the anguish of writer's block: after Boesman and Lena in 1970; again after the collaborative plays in 1974; and, perhaps most acutely, shortly before rediscovering the story which would become A Lesson from Aloes (Fugard, Notebooks, May 1977, p.229):

These past few months I have been trying to live through one of the most intensely experienced crises of my life. If Sheila and Lisa were to read that sentence they would stare at me in amazement, so effective has been the disguise of my inner agony, my death in life. As I write this there is still no light. But maybe tomorrow ... Who knows.

The "crisis" is, quite, simply, the total extinction of my creativity. Without it I find living a pain I can only describe as intolerable. I have feared for my sanity.

These fears resurfaced when he gave up alcohol in 1982 after writing "Master Harold"...and the boys. Having relied for so long on alcoholic stimulation to inspire his creativity, he now seriously feared that he would never be able to write again, or, even if he did, that his work would never be of the same quality (see Freedman 1985:1; Fugard 1994:39).

The Road to Mecca does not end, therefore, with Miss Helen's radiant vision of the power of the creative mind. Instead, after Marius has left, Miss Helen reiterates the fact that her journey to Mecca is over and with it her life's purpose. Having earlier found in a single lighted candle a sign of the start of her period as an "apprentice" (p.72), she now blows out a candle as a symbol of the end of her apprenticeship:

I was wrong to think I could banish darkness, Elsa. Just as

I taught myself how to light candles, and what that means, I must teach myself now how to blow them out ... and what that means.

(She attempts a brave smile)

The last phase of my apprenticeship ... and if I can get through it, I'll be a master (p.78).

The play implies that the final mastery of life consists in facing up to and understanding not merely the end of one's creative career, but the end of one's existence. Fugard, through Miss Helen, suggests that the ultimate lesson in life involves learning how to acknowledge, fully and honestly, the ineluctability of death. It is a moment in the play, to use Gerald Weales's phrase (1993:513), made "richly amorphous" by the knowledge that the real Helen Martins chose to commit suicide (see Fugard 1985:np). In the full context of the play the idea of death is not so much frightening as poignant, conveyed in a mood which is redolent of the music of Mahler to which Fugard was listening at the time, particularly the final "Farewell" song in the cycle, "Das Lied von der Erde". As Fugard (1992b:77) has pointed out, such music, like The Road to Mecca itself, recognises "the need for renunciation. The affirmation in my play is Miss Helen's recognition and acceptance of that necessity". In this conception, Fugard's work seems to have come full circle, recalling the Camusian existentialism of his plays of the 1960s and the "Heroic Pessimism" of characters like Milly, Hester and Lena; indeed, the very image of "the candle in a dark room" stems from the early 1960s, where a notebook entry of August 1963 (p.96; see also September 1962, p.64) could well serve as a tribute to Miss Helen's final bravery:

Proud not because we've won - how can we ever? Isn't losing inevitable? - but because of his lonely heroism, his courage. We haven't won; maybe we'll never win but nothing in life has fought as man has fought oblivion and nothingness.

If the play moves towards a consideration of such philosophical issues as the significance of art and the acceptance of death, this does not mean it has no specifically political dimension. Instead, the play's political vision emerges organically from the focus on the uniqueness of Miss Helen as an individual, and her determination to think and express herself freely in whatever ways she chooses. In general terms, then, the play may be viewed as a meditation on the liberating potential of the individual mind. At a more specific level, the play explores the direct confrontation between the right of the individual to freedom of thought and expression and the demands of a conservative society for conformity and order. Though Marius Byleveld is not a bad man by intention, he nevertheless is to be regarded as a representative of the kind of society, founded upon the rigid authoritarianism of Afrikaner nationalism, which seeks to curtail individual liberty and reduce all difference and deviation from the mean to conformity with its own social norms. On the other hand, Elsa Barlow represents the values of liberal society, reflected in her desire to create "opportunities to make those young people in my classroom think for themselves" (p.28), rather than merely accept everything they are told. The play's overall

ideological dynamic thus involves a struggle between the reactionary conservatism of Marius and the liberalism of Elsa for possession, literally, of Miss Helen's mind. It is a choice between the control of the authoritarian state and the freedom of the open society. In the end, of course, Helen's decision to retain her house and with it her sense of self-identity serves as a vindication of Elsa's praise of her as "the first truly free spirit I have ever known":

She didn't resign herself to being the meek, church-going little widow you all expected her to be. Instead she did something which small minds and small souls can never forgive ... she dared to be different! Which does make you right about one thing, Dominee. Those statues out there are monsters. And they are that for the simple reason that they express Elsa's freedom. Yes, I never thought it was a word you would like. I'm sure it ranks as a cardinal sin in these parts. A free woman! God forgive us! (p.66).

The story of Helen Martins thus provided Fugard with an opportunity to explore how the notion of individual creativity is grounded upon, and indissolubly bound up with, the fundamental liberal principle of freedom. The uniqueness of Miss Helen's vision, and its power for emancipation and even redemption, not only of Miss Helen herself but also of others like Elsa, underlines the crucial importance of the concept of the individual in moral and political philosophy. In this play, Fugard highlights the fact that at the core of a social theory like apartheid lay an utter disregard for the moral worth of the individual and for the idea of personal liberty, and that it was this, more than anything else, which underpinned apartheid's capacity for evil. The play's central theme proved to be particularly germane in a South Africa which had begun in the mid 1980s to embark on an unprecedented curtailment of freedom of expression, whether personal or in the media or the arts. But the desperate measure of the State of Emergency of 1985 served only to underscore how impossible it was to create a stable apartheid society, and how powerful the desire was in the country at large for freedom. Of course, at a time when Marxist theory held much appeal for black South Africans, the political vision of The Road to Mecca may be seen to apply with equal validity to all authoritarian systems, including Communism, which place social or collective interests above those of the individual. Ultimately, however, the power and clarity of the play's message - particularly conveyed through Miss Helen's victory - suggests that by this time writers like Fugard had regained their confidence in the capacity of liberal values to prove decisive in the eventual transformation of South African society.

The Road to Mecca is unique in Fugard's oeuvre in that it dramatises and celebrates the relationship between two women. In the past, Fugard had written about strong women, but only in relation to men. Here, he sought to depict the loving friendship between two different though, in their own ways, equally strong women. The success of his endeavour is reflected in the acclaim the play has enjoyed, both in South Africa, and particularly in America, where, according to Henry (1989:58), it has "come to

rival Master Harold as Fugard's most popular play in the U.S. as well as the most critically esteemed". Its success also helped to convince Fugard that he could continue as a playwright without the stimulation of alcohol, an idea he would articulate in his next play, A Place with the Pigs, produced in 1987. This play, which deals in a parabolic way with Fugard's emergence from the pigsty of alcoholism, was discussed in an earlier section of this study, together with Dimetos and The Guest, and requires no further explication here. It is a very personal play, though it does share with the Karoo plays under discussion here a belief in the possibility of the self-redemption of the individual. But the next play to be considered in this section is one that deals perhaps most overtly and directly of all Fugard's plays with the political specifics of the time: My Children! My Africa!

(iii)

After allowing himself the opportunity to explore the generally personal concerns of A Place with the Pigs, Fugard returned in My Children! My Africa! to a direct examination of the political turmoil in South Africa. My Children! My Africa! appeared in June 1989, at a time when the nation-wide unrest in the country had been ongoing for several years, and was threatening to spiral out of control into open civil war, despite the countervailing signs of the possibility of an opening up of political dialogue between the Government and opposition forces, most notably the ANC. The play is set, though, in 1984, the year of the beginning of the boycott of schools by African, Indian and Coloured pupils in reaction to the establishment of the tricameral parliament. In so doing, the play seeks to address not just the consequences of the political violence in the country, but also some of the motive causes behind the violence. Ultimately, however, My Children! My Africa! is concerned not only to condemn the injustices of apartheid which have led to the violence, though it certainly does that in unambiguous terms, but also to condemn those who have resorted to violence in a misguided and self-destructive attempt to overthrow the apartheid regime. Fugard uses the play to argue for the power of dialogue, of reason, of words, as a means of resolving the crisis and bringing about a peaceful and just settlement in the country.

By Fugard's own admission, My Children! My Africa! is his "most confrontational work", one in which he enunciates his political beliefs unequivocally, and tells off "critics from both the white right and the black left": as he comments, "I wanted to say, 'I am going in there, and you cannot stop me'", pointing out, moreover, that in this play "I take my detractors head-on. Writing it was an act of defiance, which I performed with absolute glee" (in Henry 1989:56). The play duly provoked heated reaction, especially from radical critics, and served, furthermore, as an implicit rejection of the kind of political theatre in South Africa, which, having begun as fresh and challenging, had by this time become stale, repetitive and often unthinkingly radical in its message (see Fugard in Foley

1994:64).

My Children! My Africa! revolves around three characters whose views, as in A Lesson from Aloes, are presented with equal weight, if not equal cogency. Unlike A Lesson from Aloes, however, the central question of this play is not so much how to survive under apartheid, but rather how true liberation from apartheid might most effectively and properly be achieved. The play opens in medias res during a school debate between the white Camdeboo Girls High School team, led by Isabel Tyson, and the black Zolile High School team from the neighbouring Brakwater township, headed by Thami Mbikwana. The debate is chaired by a teacher at the township school, Mr Anela Myalatya, or Mr M as he is affectionately known. Such is the success of the debate, and particularly the two main protagonists, that Mr M arranges for the two to team up for an English literature quiz at the Grahamstown Schools Festival. Politics intervenes, however, in the form of the "unrest" and the schools boycott (p.178), which have reached this "small Eastern Cape Karoo town" (p.134), causing Thami, who supports the boycott, to resign from the team. As the violence in the township escalates, Mr M, sitting alone in his empty classroom day after day, at last attempts in a desperate and confused way to "stop the madness" (p.184) by giving the police the names of the activists he believes are behind the disturbances. As a result, he is killed by a mob using the "necklace" technique of a tyre filled with petrol forced over the victim's head and set alight. Despite the horror of this atrocity, the overall tone of the play's ending is not pessimistic. Thami, who had tried to save Mr M, decides to leave the country and join "the movement" to avoid becoming part of the mob, taking with him at least some of the values Mr M sought to instil in him. And Isabel is left to affirm that, in spite of everything, Mr M's hope for his "children" (p.191) in South Africa remains valid: in the final line of the play, she states with quiet certainty, "The future's still ours, Mr M" (p.198).

The image of the debate with which the play opens contains both a structural and a thematic purpose. Structurally, the play itself as a whole may be viewed as a form of debate, in which opposing ideas and beliefs are ranged against each other and contested. In fact, the main action of the play is interrupted throughout by several short scenes in which each character in turn is given the opportunity in monologue to explain himself or herself to the audience. Thematically, the idea of the debate represents the ideal means of resolving conflict (including political conflict) against which other strategies are measured and evaluated. In the opening moments of the play, Mr M brings the school debate to order during an unruly moment and reminds the contestants, and the audience, what a true debate is supposed to be, quoting its definition from his dictionary:

'The orderly and regulated discussion of an issue with opposing viewpoints receiving equal time and consideration'. Shouting down the opposition so that they cannot be heard does not comply with that definition (p.135).

In the light of this definition, the play explores some of the alternatives to rational debate which were adopted in the 1980s by the liberation movements in the country in an effort to end apartheid. Far from setting such alternatives up as worthless tactics to be dismissed out of hand, the play presents them as understandable and at least potentially viable. Thus Thami is permitted to express his belief that Mr M's "ideas about change are the old-fashioned ones" (p.169) which have accomplished nothing in the course of anti-apartheid protest. And he goes on in one of his monologues to explain his increasing frustration with the Bantu Education system, and his reasons for rejecting the township schools for what he regards as the more effectively liberating role of popular activism:

We don't need the Zolile classrooms any more. We know now 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 ... anywhere the people meet and whisper names we have been told to forget, the dates of events they try to tell us never happened, and the speeches they try to say were never made. Those are the lessons we are eager and proud to learn, because they are lessons about our history, our heroes. But the time for whispering them is past. Tomorrow we start shouting.

AMANDLA!

Similarly, he provides a moving explanation of the circumstances which can cause a desperate, alienated and frustrated group of people to turn into a mob that takes the law into its own hands against an informer, such as Mr M was believed to be:

Try to understand, Isabel. Try to imagine what it is like to be a black person, choking inside with rage and frustration, bitterness, and then to discover that one of your own kind is a traitor, has betrayed you to those responsible for the suffering and misery of your family, of your people. What would you do? Remember there is no magistrate or court you can drag him to and demand that he be tried for that crime.

There is no justice for black people in this country other than what we make for ourselves. When you judge us for what happened in front of that school four days ago just remember that you carry a share of the responsibility for it. It is your laws that have made simple, decent black people so desperate that they turn into "mad mobs" (p.195).

Ultimately, however, Thami cannot reconcile himself with Mr M's murder or with the politics of the mob, no matter what the motive causes might be. Admitting to Isabel that he too "loved" Mr M (p.196), though he did not fully agree with him, he reveals that he cannot allow himself to be dragged down by the mob mentality which can express itself only in blind violence and destruction. He intends to join the liberation movement outside the country and be a "fighter" (p.197). It is interesting that the term, "fighter", is left deliberately undefined so that it could be read figuratively rather than literally. However, even if the reference is indeed to the armed struggle, the implication is still that Thami's involvement will be of a more principled kind

than that pursued by the mob. Either way, the irony is that his decision seems to provide proof of Mr M's claim to have "liberated [his] mind in spite of what the Bantu Education was trying to do to it" (p.181), and, consequently, of how misguided and self-defeating was the boycott of the schools, which Fugard himself has described as "one of the greatest social disasters of recent South Africa" (SABC TV 1992).

This is not to say, however, that Mr M's ideas and actions are vindicated in every respect. The play makes clear, for instance, that Mr M's authoritarian teaching methodology (see pp.153-154) is nettlesome to Thami and inhibits the development of true critical thinking in his pupils. More specifically, Mr M's action in providing the police with information, however well intentioned it may seem to be, in truth springs from confused and ill considered motives. What the play does endorse, however, is Mr M's faith in the power of words as a means to true individual and, indeed, political emancipation. Set against the empty slogans and call to armed violence of the Comrades, Mr M advocates the use of words, which bring with them the power to think, to reason, to persuade:

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 among the Comrades .... If the struggle needs weapons give it words, Thami. Stones and petrol bombs can't get inside those armoured cars. Words can. They can do something even more devastating than that ... they can get inside the heads of those inside the armoured cars (p.182).

In the central image of the play, Mr M holds in one hand a stone that has come crashing through the window of his deserted classroom, and in the other his beloved English dictionary, and tells Thami:

You know something interesting, Thami ... if you put these two on a scale I think you would find that they weighed just about the same. But in this hand I am holding the whole English language. This ... [The stone] ... is just one word in that language (p.186).

As Fugard (in Henry 1989:58) has noted, that is my lament. The glory of dialogue has been replaced by the sound of bombs and guns, and both the government and its enemies say I am irrelevant because I cannot accept violence against human beings.

Ultimately, then, the play condemns the use of violence from whatever quarter, insisting that it is not only immoral but also ineffective in bringing about a resolution of ideological or racial conflict. Far from achieving democratic justice, violent confrontation will bring only destruction, instability, and tyranny. Instead, the play maintains that it is only through rational debate and peaceful negotiation that a lasting and just political settlement can be achieved in South Africa. It is not insignificant that Isabel, the young white girl from the sheltered town is able at the end to identify herself fully with

the "extended family" (p.149, p.198) of Mr M, the black teacher from the township, not because of violent coercion but because of the force of his ideals and values.

My Children! My Africa! met with a highly favourable response when it opened in Johannesburg, even from critics who had been hostile to Fugard's work in the past or who did not share his liberal views. Ian Steadman (1989:21), for example, writes:

It has become 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.

Despite such general acclaim, the play has also come in for some severe criticism, especially from Marxist critics, and a consideration of one such critique, by Nicholas Visser (1993), may help to clarify how the Marxist-liberal debate over work such as Fugard's has developed in the 1990s. Visser concludes a series of carping criticisms with the claim that "by far the most significant distortion" (1993:497) of the play involves its focus on the necklacing of a teacher (even though based, apparently, on an actual incident), because this serves to obscure the far greater violence perpetrated by the State. As such, according to Visser, the play stands as a gross misrepresentation of the period in which it is set, and especially of radical opposition politics of that time. Such criticism typifies Marxist analyses of Fugard's recent work. Unable, because of the play's tough-minded, informed and overt political focus, to condemn Fugard for evasiveness or naivete, as earlier critics had done, Visser needs to demonstrate that Fugard's political analysis is, in fact, distorted and inaccurate. Put another way, since Fugard has in this play met the challenge of Marxist critics like Visser to produce work which directly reflects historical reality, those critics have now to show that the play's representation of history is wrong. But Visser's critique fails, largely because its own analysis of the play and its historical setting are inaccurate and, at times, even wilfully distorted. Visser deliberately ignores the fact that My Children! My Africa! explicitly highlights and condemns the many acts of violence meted out against black South Africans by the apartheid State, not merely in Mr M's harrowing description of the Government's armed invasion of the township (p.184), but also in the innumerable instances of enforced inequality between black and white in terms of housing, services, wages, living standards, and, of course, education. But the inaccuracy of Visser's account of the historical period with which the play deals comes most clearly to the fore in his implication that the play's condemnation of opposition violence and its plea for peace and rationality was supported only by self-interested, bourgeois whites (see 1993:486-487, 500). One has only to think of the then Bishop Desmond Tutu's consistent excoriation of all acts of violence, including attacks on people believed to be collaborators: indeed, in one celebrated incident in July 1985,

Tutu risked his own life to save that of a suspected informer. Similarly, "City Press" editor, Percy Qoboza, repeatedly called for an end to the violence, not least of all that between rival opposition groupings such as the UDF and Inkatha or the AZAPO-led National Forum. Zwelakhe Sisulu, moreover, then editor of "New Nation", unequivocally condemned "the setting up of kangaroo courts by bands of youths who handed out punishment 'under the control of no one, with no democratic mandate from the community'" (in Saunders 1992:482). And, most memorably, there was virtually universal reprehension among black leaders at Winnie Mandela's infamous remark at a political gathering on 13 April 1986 that "together, hand-in-hand with our sticks and our matches, with our necklaces, we shall liberate this country" (in Saunders 1992:483). Far from representing a minority white view, then, My Children! My Africa! seems demonstrably rather to speak for most South Africans, black and white, who viewed the continuing violent unrest as inherently self-defeating and destructive, and who desired instead a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the country. This fact was most emphatically borne out within a few months of the play's opening when the Government, under new State President F.W. de Klerk, together with all but the most extreme of the opposition groupings, agreed to enter into peaceful multiparty negotiations. Indeed, while it is important to acknowledge the role played by mass action in bringing about political change in South Africa, it is vital to distinguish between the destructive and self-destructive effects of violent action, and the progressive effects achieved by non-violent popular strategies, including strikes, boycotts, stay-aways and marches. These latter strategies, which are fully consonant with liberal democratic principles, served, along with international economic and cultural sanctions, to bring South Africa's apartheid economy to a virtual standstill, and helped to impel the Government to the negotiating table (see Fugard 1993a:382).

Visser acknowledges that the success of My Children! My Africa! bears evidence of a "liberal resurgence" but claims that it is mainly limited to "white middle-class circles" (1993:489). A more careful and accurate analysis of the historical developments of the period reveal that this liberalisation of thought was a far more general phenomenon, in which political opponents from across the ideological board found that they shared common values in the middle ground of liberalism, and, rejecting violence as an option, agreed to seek a negotiated political settlement. Visser is correct, therefore, to see that "My Children! My Africa! is a central cultural expression of resurgent liberalism" (1993:489), but he fails to see that the play also serves as an incisive prognosis of the future political development of the country.

Part of the problem with recent Marxist criticism such as Visser's is that it is based on an ideology which has failed in practical reality, which may explain the defensive and resentful tone of Visser's article. In 1989, Communism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries collapsed spectacularly, with dictators being toppled by popular revolt, the notorious Berlin

Wall between East and West Germany being broken down, and democratic governments being established in virtually all the former Soviet-controlled countries. At about the same time, P.W. Botha, whose autocratic State Presidency had blocked the reform process for some time, suffered a stroke, and was soon succeeded by F.W. de Klerk. For many Nationalists, this confluence of events seemed to offer the perfect opportunity for breaking out of the violent deadlock which threatened to destroy the country at large. Nevertheless, for a country long used to the evasions and half-measures of the Government, the extent of the changes came as a shock to many people. On 2 February 1990, new State President F.W. de Klerk, in his speech at the opening of parliament, repealed all apartheid legislation, unbanned all political organisations, and announced the release of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela. This speech effectively ended apartheid, and opened the way for the establishment of a democratic order in South Africa.

Shortly after this speech, on 29 March 1990, Fugard spoke at a University of the Witwatersrand graduation ceremony, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate. His opening remarks (Fugard 1992a:65) could well serve as a summation of the manner in which the political vision at the heart of My Children! My Africa! had come to actualisation:

There is now every reason to believe that we South Africans are at long last going to abandon bombs and bullets and banning orders and try talking to each other ... that civilised dialogue is going to replace the barbarism of violence in an effort to resolve the issues that have so far divided us as a nation. If we succeed in that effort, then we will most certainly have broken with our past and its hallowed traditions in a way unprecedented in the history of our country.

Within a matter of months, at the end of 1991, the Nationalist Party, the African National Congress, and sixteen other parties confirmed their commitment to the principles of reason, dialogue, peaceful negotiation and mutual co-operation by forming the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), which would in time set out the guidelines for the final transformation of the country into a truly democratic state.

In a talk at Rhodes University in 1991, Fugard recalled his play, A Lesson from Aloes, which, like My Children! My Africa!, dealt with the issue of informers and the destructive effects of apartheid oppression. Turning to the present, however, Fugard (1992c:80-81) spelled out how much times had changed since he wrote that play:

In any case, a lot of my own thinking and feeling about South Africa is very different now. I was on the brink of being a pessimist - that is why it is a very sombre play - and although it doesn't totally hand itself over to pessimism, there is a very sombre note in it. It is very dour, very hard. The Athol Fugard that is talking to you now has a hell of a lot more hope and optimism. Not naively so - I am aware of how precarious our movement towards a new reality, a new dispensation in our society is - but I

would be dishonest with you if I did not say that I was one of those people who believed that we are going to win in the end.

One of the key elements in finally achieving that new reality, as Fugard well knew, would consist in overcoming the bitterness, resentment and guilt of the past, and learning the new lessons of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is these lessons which Fugard would explore in his next work, Playland.

(iv)

With the establishment of CODESA, South Africa was placed firmly and irrevocably on the path to a negotiated political settlement. Instead of the cataclysm of a violent revolution or civil war, the transformation of South Africa from apartheid to democracy was set to take the form of what historians would term a "silent revolution" (Kane-Berman 1991) or a "negotiated revolution" (Sparks 1994). As the inevitably slow process of multiparty talks began, however, the country continued to be beset by incidents of violence and by the threat of armed rebellion, particularly by those extremist groups which had excluded themselves from CODESA, such as the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). Violent clashes continued to occur, moreover, between rival groups of the ANC and the Zulu-centred Inkatha Freedom Party, while allegations of a government-sponsored "third force" involvement in the ongoing violence became commonplace. In all this, Athol Fugard could see that the successful creation of a stable democracy in South Africa would take more than a change in the political structures of the country. What was needed was the ability on the part of the South African population in general to overcome the hatred and mistrust of the past, and to learn to promote a new social order based on mutual understanding, tolerance and a commonality of interests. In his next work, entitled Playland, he set out to explore the possibilities for individual and collective reconciliation in what had become known as "the new South Africa".

The title of the play derives from the name of "a small travelling amusement park encamped on the outskirts of a Karoo town" (p.8). The idea actually originated from the itinerant "Playland" funfair to which Fugard used to take his young daughter at Happy Valley near Port Elizabeth's Humewood beach (Notebooks, December 1966, p.145). But by setting the play in the Karoo, Fugard is able once more, as he had done with The Road to Mecca and My Children! My Africa!, to create a microcosmic representation of the country as a whole out of the remote isolation of the area. More than that, the desolate physical landscape, especially as the sun sets, enables Fugard to evoke images of both the Namibian war zone and the biblical Day of Judgement, images which haunt and torment the play's two protagonists. In the play the sun sets, in fact, on New Year's Eve 1989, the last day of the decade, on the very brink of the end of apartheid and the creation of the new South Africa. Though the characters do not know this, of course, their progress towards the dawn of the new day and year, and the resolution of

their personal yet interlinked crises, reflects at a symbolic level the potential redemption of the country as a whole.

What the play records is the meeting of "two dark, disturbed, violent men" (Fugard 1993b:528), each of whom harbours a secret trauma which can be relieved only through interaction with the other man. On the one hand, Martinus Zoeloe is a black night-watchman at the Playland amusement park. His speech is filled with references to the bible, God's commandments and eternal damnation, as he sees in the Karoo sunset a prefiguration of "Hell Fires on the Day of Judgement" (p.15). He eventually admits that he has broken the sixth commandment, having killed a white man who had over a period of time repeatedly raped his fiancée, Thandeka, while she was employed as the man's domestic servant. Worse than that, even after fifteen years' imprisonment, Martinus is unable to feel any remorse for murdering "Andries Jacobus de Lange, the Deceased" (p.48), and so cannot avail himself of God's forgiveness and mercy. He is left, it seems, to spend the rest of his life alone, "brooding on the mystery of repentance" (Fugard 1993b:527).

On the other hand, Gideon le Roux is a white man who has come to "Playland" and its "happiness machines" (p.16) in an attempt to shake off the malaise which has plagued him since his discharge from the South African Army a year earlier. But his desperate efforts to have a good time only create "an image of forced and discordant gaiety" (p.25), reinforced by the banal exhortations to pleasure of "Playland" announcer, "Barking" Barney Barkhuizen, and he keeps returning obsessively to Martinus's night-watchman's hut. Gideon, it turns out, is tortured by the guilt he feels over the men that he killed with his platoon from Base Camp Oshakati during the war with SWAPO (South-West African People's Organisation) on the Namibian-Angolan border. He confesses that he finally snapped one day when he was assigned to bury twenty-seven SWAPO soldiers whom his platoon had killed (an incident which Fugard based on a graphic photograph in the Eastern Province Herald, included in the frontispiece of the published text, of South African Defence Force "Koevoet" soldiers burying combatants from PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) in a mass grave - see Fugard 1993b:533). What finally drove Gideon over the edge was the silent, sorrowful presence during the internment of an old black woman. Though Gideon does not consciously comprehend that the woman figures as an image of the Virgin Mary at the foot of Christ's cross ("'Stabat Mater dolorosa', stood the mother full of sorrow" - see Fugard 1993b:533), he is filled with a desperate and devastating need to receive expiation from her:

I wanted to tell her about [myself as an innocent] little boy. I wanted to tell her that he knew what was right and wrong. I don't know what happened to him, what went wrong in his life, but he didn't want to grow up to be a man throwing other men into a hole like rotten cabbages. He didn't want to be me. And when I had told her all that, I was going to ask for forgiveness ... but she was gone (p.57).

By chance, then, these two broken, alienated men meet at the Playland amusement park. After spending the better part of the night concealing their true feelings - Martinus through sullen imperturbability, Gideon through forced jocularity - each man finally reveals "the secrets in [his] heart" (p.36). More than that, each man realises that the other has come to embody the means by which his own personal crisis must be resolved: as Gideon puts it, "The whole world is me and you. Here! Now!" (p.58). Thus, Gideon calls on Martinus as a vicarious representative of the black men he has killed: "Forgive me or kill me. That's the only choice you've got" (p.58). Martinus, in turn, realises that if he forgives Gideon, a white man like the man he murdered, then he will by implication be forgiving Andries Jacobus de Lange as well. No resolution is explicitly verbalised. But as the dawn breaks, it is clear that the two men have achieved a profound mutual recognition and understanding. Through the confession of their secrets, both men have experienced a cathartic release from the psychic traumas which have reduced them to little more than ghosts. Through each other, each man has found the forgiveness and the repentance he has needed, but also, as a consequence, the will to construct a more meaningful existence for himself in future. The point is illustrated in Martinus's urging Gideon to rebuild the pigeon hok which he had told him about, so that when "Playland" returns the following year Martinus will be able to share the sight of Gideon's pigeons flying in the Karoo sky. This image provides in the first instance an effective indication of the potential capacity in both men's lives for psychological reintegration and even joy. The image of the pigeons also functions as an appropriately localised version of the symbol of the dove of peace, as the two men have come to terms with, and overcome, the violence and racial hatred which had threatened to destroy their lives. Indeed, in the full context of the play, the final image of Martinus helping to push-start Gideon's car is transformed from a metaphor of the familiar South African master-servant relationship to one which suggests a new relationship based on true mutuality and co-operation.

Through its themes of reconciliation and regeneration, Playland clearly invites interpretation as a relevant commentary on contemporary South Africa as a whole. But the precise nature and significance of this commentary is one which has been misunderstood by a number of critics, who continue to demand, from outdated socialist realism paradigms, that political drama in South Africa function as some sort of comprehensive plan of action for socio-political reconstruction. Myles Holloway (1993:40-41), for instance, asserts that the failure of Playland, which he describes as a political "parable", to incorporate "practicable programmes of economic and social upliftment" into its dramatic content, "seriously undermines the efficacy of its message". But Playland does not purport to offer pragmatic guidelines for socio-economic amelioration, or, as Fugard (1993a:384) puts it, "a blueprint for a better and juster South Africa". Neither is the play to be read as a political parable or allegory in which the action on the stage bears a one-to-one correlation with socio-political events in the country at large.

Instead, it is a drama which tells the story of two particular individuals, one black, one white, who have been psychologically maimed by apartheid but who manage together to find the means to heal themselves and each other and thereby to achieve emancipation from the past. Now, from the full dramatic experience of this particular story, certain aspects resonate at a symbolic level, so that in some respects the play may be seen to hold implications for South African society at large. In these specific respects, the play may offer some valuable insights for a population in general struggling to come to terms both with the past and with the demands of a new political dispensation. Far from attempting an exhaustive social scheme, however, the play chooses to focus upon a specific psychological dimension of liberation and reconciliation, namely, the need for repentance and forgiveness. Thus, Gideon le Roux is by no means to be regarded as a stereotypical representative of all South African whites (as Holloway (1993:39-40) seems to demand), but through him Fugard suggests that many whites need to confront and acknowledge, and in this way assuage, the guilt they feel at having been members, willing or not, of apartheid's racial oligarchy. Similarly, Martinus Zoeloe is not intended as an archetypal black South African figure, but through him Fugard is able to make the point that many blacks will not be able to free themselves fully from the horror of the apartheid past unless they bring themselves to forgive those who imposed that horror upon them. In making this latter point, Fugard doubtless had in mind the future President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, whom he cited in a talk at New York University in 1990 (1993a:389) as an exemplification of the qualities of "love and tolerance and forgiveness":

How that man, having had twenty-seven years of his life taken away from him, could come out and forgive, and then sit down and talk to, and listen to - provided that they in turn did some listening on their side - the very people who had taken away the best years of his life! I think we'd be hard pressed to find a more extraordinary example than Nelson Mandela of just how generous and forgiving the human soul can be.

In broad terms, then, Playland is able to provide insight into the kind of psychological transformation that South Africans in general need to accomplish to ensure that the continuing effects of apartheid are finally overcome. For generations immersed in, and separated by, the mentality of total onslaught or armed struggle, such transformation is not easy, but it is necessary. It ought to be noted that it is precisely this sort of transformation, or "change of heart", that liberals have long insisted must form a vital part of any real liberation of the country. And yet it is a viewpoint for which liberals have been much criticised, especially by Marxist opponents, who have insinuated that calls for a change of heart actually belie a desire not to change the political status quo (see, for example, Seymour 1980:286-288; Mshengu 1982:169; Walder 1984:76). It is a source, therefore, of some irony, firstly, that the political status quo in South Africa changed through peaceful negotiations rather than through a Marxist-style revolution; and, secondly,

that the need for psychological transformation should prove to be so integral a component of the nation-building drive of the new South Africa. As Playland makes clear, such fundamental liberal values as tolerance, compassion, altruism and mutual understanding are the cornerstones of the kind of stable democratic society to which South Africa, in the post-apartheid period, is aspiring.

Playland does not only present a forward perspective, however. In many ways, the play also serves as a summing up of the traumatic lessons of the past. In this, as Fugard himself acknowledges, the play can usefully be compared with The Blood Knot, his first successful drama, so that the two plays together may be seen to bracket the body of work which he has produced under apartheid. In conversation with Mary Benson, he remarked that the two plays convey an idea of "Warning ignored, prophecy fulfilled" (in Benson 1993:460). Benson (1993:460) explains:

The warning was The Blood Knot, in which Morrie and Zach were a metaphor for black and white: unless they accepted their brotherhood, they would destroy each other. They...were innocents and were linked by brotherhood. Now, after more than thirty years of escalating violence in this country, Martinus and Gideon in Playland are strangers who have broken the sixth commandment.

As Fugard himself (1993b:534) points out, 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.

Fortunately, the story of South Africa has not ended in violence. Instead, the country has moved, in a way which Playland suggested was indeed possible, towards a fully democratic dispensation; a dispensation, moreover, which has proved in virtually all respects to be quintessentially liberal in nature.

## Conclusion

In 1992 and 1993, the multilateral negotiations at CODESA proved, despite numerous problems and delays, to be successful. The fundamental political system to be adopted in South Africa was established, and the guidelines for South Africa's first democratic elections were set in place. In April 1994, South Africans of all races went to the polls to elect a government of national unity which would serve until a second election, to be held within five years, would bring to power a fully democratic government. In the 1994 election, Nelson Mandela, widely regarded as perhaps the statesman of the century, became the country's first democratically elected president, and he, more than any other single person, has helped to bring about the remarkable reconciliation of South Africa's diverse population into a unified citizenry. Though social and economic problems persist, the question of the country's political dispensation has effectively been resolved.

It is important to acknowledge that the political system which has been established in South Africa is, in essence, a liberal democratic one. To say this is not to indulge in what has been termed liberal triumphalism, but simply to state a matter of fact. In virtually every respect, the South African political arrangement corresponds to the basic precepts of the liberal state. The government is elected through regular free and fair elections which are contested on a multiparty basis. The power of the government is limited by a series of checks and balances, including a formal constitution, a bill of rights, and an independent judiciary, all of which are designed to protect the rights of the individual and provide justice for all under the rule of law. Such mechanisms, furthermore, serve to promote a free and open society, in which freedom of religion, association and speech (including the media and the arts) is guaranteed. After the many years of struggle between Afrikaner and African nationalism, or between reactionary conservatism and revolutionary socialism, from which liberals often seemed excluded, the country at large has adopted the very socio-political system which liberalism endorses.

This is a fact which has not been lost on Athol Fugard. In an interview with me on 3 June 1994 (Foley 1994:64), shortly after the general elections, Fugard noted that the traditionally liberal Democratic Party had done badly because the major parties on both the left and the right had "stolen their policy", and he went on to remark with some irony that

it's very interesting to see that now that the political situation has begun to level out, everybody's talking like old-style liberal politicians.

Fugard's wry tone is understandable. After all, he, more than any other writer in South Africa, has been criticised over the years from both the conservative right and the radical left for being inaccurate in his political analysis, naive in his political hopes, and unrealistic in his political vision. In the end, his unwavering commitment to the values of liberalism, and in

particular his belief that South Africa's problems could be resolved through non-violent means, has been vindicated.

Indeed, it is true to say that through his plays Fugard has made a highly significant contribution to the process whereby these problems were resolved. By focusing stringently and continuously on the horrors of apartheid, Fugard did as much as any South African writer to expose that system for the evil that it was. But more than that, by maintaining a constant and resolute faith in the value of reason and tolerance and dialogue, he helped to preserve the belief that apartheid could and would be peacefully replaced by a just and equitable social order. In all this, he has also helped to demonstrate what a powerful force for social change art, and in his particular case, theatre, can be. From the very outset of his career, Fugard (1962a:29) has asserted his belief in the power of the theatre experience "as a means to approaching and transmitting truth, and in a way and with a force unique to the drama". He remained true to this belief throughout the worst years of apartheid, affirming several times (in Walder 1984:125; in Gussow 1982:76; in Momentum interview 1984:27) his belief that "theatre is an inordinately civilising factor in any society", especially in its ability to "provoke people to think and feel, sometimes about things they don't want to think and feel". As the country did, indeed, begin to undergo real change, Fugard's faith in the transformative power of theatre was given further impetus, particularly in terms of theatre's capacity to contest and oppose the use of violence as an agent of change. As he commented in an article in Time magazine in 1989 (in Henry 1989:58),

for me, art must transform, I don't want to be served up life as it is. I know that. I want to be served up that alchemical transformation that turns gunmetal into gold.

As the writer of that article, William A. Henry (1989:58) confirms, Fugard's success in this endeavour has been acknowledged as without peer among contemporary writers:

His passion and his artistry have made him, more plainly with each production, the foremost active playwright in the English-speaking world.

Even though the struggle against apartheid, to which Fugard devoted the better part of his working life, has ended, there is no sense in which his writing career is over. Far from lapsing into artistic passivity, he has helped to direct a workshop play entitled My Life (in 1994), based on the life stories of five South African teenage girls of different cultures and backgrounds. Moreover, he has written a new original play, Valley Song, which opened in Johannesburg in August 1995. A full discussion of this play, whose text has not yet been published, lies beyond the scope of this thesis, which has been concerned with the liberal response to apartheid in the years 1948-1990. Nevertheless, it is useful to note that although this new play shows signs of continuity with his previous work, there are also indications in it of a fresh momentum to Fugard's play-writing. The play, like The Road to Mecca, is set in New Bethesda, and tells the story of the love between an old Coloured man, Abram Jonkers, and his granddaughter, Veronica. It focuses on the

attempt by the old man to understand and appreciate the dream the girl has to become a singer, and to forge a new life for herself beyond the little village. As such, the play carries resonances of South Africa's own voyage into a new and different, though perhaps no less demanding, future. As Fugard (in MacLiam 1985:6) has recently commented,

what the play is really about is the old and the new. When you see it you'll realise it is a departure for Athol Fugard because what I've tried to do, at this incredibly exciting and challenging time in our lives is to bring that challenge and the possibility of new beginnings into my work as a writer.

As South Africa enters this new phase of development, there can be little doubt of the continuing relevance and significance of Athol Fugard's work. In such a time of transition from apartheid to democracy, it is vitally important that the lessons of the past be heeded and not repeated in the future. In this regard, the writing of Athol Fugard offers a formidable critique of the meaning and consequences of authoritarian rule, particularly in the form of the racial injustice and social inequality that was practised in South Africa under apartheid. More than that, Fugard's work also serves to illuminate the fundamental liberal values that are crucial to the establishment and entrenchment of social and political justice in a country like South Africa. But most of all, perhaps, it is Fugard's rare gift to be able to convey these ideas with a dramatic skill capable of moving his audiences and readers, in spite of themselves at times, to understanding and compassion.

## **CONCLUSION**

The motivation for this research emerged out of a moment of crucially decisive historical change in South Africa: the effective dismantling, in the early 1990s, of the apartheid system, and the prospective creation of a new and utterly different political dispensation. What made this change all the more remarkable was that it came about not, as had been anticipated in many quarters, through violent uprising and revolution, but rather through largely peaceful and negotiated means. Furthermore, the political system which came to replace apartheid was not that of the one-party socialist state which several of South Africa's neighbours, including Mozambique and Zimbabwe, had adopted, but instead an authentic democracy founded upon the basic tenets of liberalism. This thesis has in broadest terms argued that an important factor in the liberalisation of South African society may be found in the way that liberal values and principles were kept alive throughout the apartheid era by a variety of liberal individuals and organisations, not necessarily in formal politics, but in a range of social spheres, including, most notably for the purposes of this thesis, the creative arts. In the light of this contention, the focus of the thesis has fallen upon the work of perhaps the two foremost liberal writers in South Africa during the apartheid era, Alan Paton and Athol Fugard.

By concentrating on the concept of liberalism in the creative writing of Paton and Fugard, this thesis has been able to offer a perspective on the nature and development of liberalism in South Africa not usually available to research of a more narrowly political character. In the first place, Paton's and Fugard's work conveys an intimate and immediate understanding of how the destructive cruelties and injustices of apartheid were actually experienced by ordinary individual people, and how liberal beliefs and values were challenged and tested in specific ways at the level of individual lives. More than that, however, their writing also provides a direct and specific portrayal of the practical meaning of liberal political philosophy, which is seen to afford a viable and progressive alternative to the totalitarian ideologies of both apartheid on the one hand, and Marxism and its variants on the other. Collectively, Paton's and Fugard's work embodies and expresses the fundamental values and principles of contemporary liberalism: the liberty of the individual, based upon the premise that the individual, and not the society or any other social grouping, constitutes the primary source of human value; the equality of all persons in terms of moral worth, with the consequence that all citizens are entitled to equal, fair treatment by the legal and political systems of their country; and social justice, which implies the creation of a society in which all people may live with dignity and decency. The achievement of these goals, as Paton and Fugard again make clear, necessitates the rejection of violence and coercion, from whatever source, and the promotion instead of the values of reason, compassion and tolerance.

In providing a close and detailed analysis of their writing, this study has attempted to demonstrate that Paton and Fugard have not merely supplied an arid and abstract statement of these central

liberal tenets in their work. On the contrary, their understanding of liberalism emerges from plausible and memorable stories of authentic individual characters responding to complex problems of their social milieu, and struggling to work out a way of living freely and decently in the face, very often, of a socio-political context that would deny them that opportunity. Far from offering facile solutions to difficult situations, part of Paton's and Fugard's achievement lies in the way they have explored and helped to elucidate the complexities of South African apartheid society with honesty, clarity and insight.

Furthermore, by charting the development of Paton's and Fugard's writing careers, in terms of both their choice of subjects and the reception of their work, this thesis has sought to illuminate the changing conflicts and dilemmas which confronted liberals during this time, and to record the ways in which liberals resisted and rejected the ideological basis and practices of apartheid. In an important sense, Paton and Fugard stand not only as two of the most outstanding chroniclers of liberal resistance to apartheid, but also, indeed, as exemplars in themselves of such liberal resistance. At the same time, their refusal to abandon their liberal principles (especially those of reason, dialogue and non-violence) in the face of what was often vehement criticism from the radical left, ought to be recognised as a significant contribution to maintaining the hope and the capacity for peaceful change in South Africa.

No less importantly, the liberal political focus of the literary critical appraisal of Paton's and Fugard's work has facilitated a direct and systematic engagement with what is, in fact, the very core of each writer's vision. Given the politically saturated nature of South African society during apartheid, no study of committed literature can escape the need to take into account the question of political allegiance. Previous studies of Paton and Fugard have frequently tended, however, to offer judgements which have derived from the critics' own antagonistic or incomplete comprehension of liberalism, and so have failed to approach the subject of Paton's and Fugard's political orientation on its own terms. This thesis has endeavoured, by providing a precise and detailed delineation of each writer's liberalism, to come to a clearer understanding of the actual nature of their political thought, and, hence, of the full significance of their work as a whole.

Much work still needs to be done. Although a very useful biography of Paton was recently completed by Peter Alexander in 1994, no like attempt has been made to write Athol Fugard's life. Such an endeavour is, perhaps, unlikely while Fugard remains an active dramatist and while his embargo on his personal diaries and notebooks (currently held at the National English Literary Museum) remains in force. Obversely, while Fugard's writing has been the subject of some critical scrutiny, Paton continues to be under-researched and many aspects of his literary work have yet to be adequately addressed. Little attempt has been made, moreover, to provide a synoptic view of the collective work of liberal writers like Paton and Fugard in general. Perhaps this

thesis may supply some impetus in encouraging and stimulating further studies in this direction.

Other areas of interest related to this thesis have also suffered from insufficient attention. The worth and meaning of many other South African liberal writers remains only partially appreciated and apprehended. A list of such writers would range from Thomas Pringle and Olive Schreiner, through to William Plomer, Jack Cope, Dan Jacobson, Guy Butler, Anthony Delius and Richard Rive, and would include the many contemporary writers whose liberal political perspectives have not received adequate explication. Virtually no effort has been made to account for the shared liberal vision of writers such as Lionel Abrahams, Christopher Hope, Patrick Cullinan, Mike Nicol, John Conyngham, Jenny Hobbs, Michael Cope, Jonty Driver, Sheila Fugard, Sheila Roberts, and Paul Slabolepszy. A further area of research involves writers whose work has seldom for a range of reasons been labelled liberal, yet whose political values, ideals and principles seem closely affined to those of liberalism. Writers who come to mind in this regard include Wilma Stockenström, Elsa Joubert, Karel Schoeman, Etienne van Heerden, Ahmed Essop, Achmat Dangor, Adam Small, Christopher van Wyk, Gibson Kente, Sipho Sepamla, Njabulo Ndebele and many others. It would, moreover, be an illuminating exercise to gauge the actual political ethics and aesthetics of a number of well-known South African writers who have publicly declared their rejection of liberalism, but whose work continues to express many of the basic tenets of liberal democracy, especially and most notably writers such as André Brink, J.M Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer and Esk'ia Mphahlele. A more objective appraisal of their political vision may reveal that what such writers have rejected is not political liberalism per se, but rather a set of negative characteristics simplistically associated with some white South African liberals. It may be found that the work of these writers, especially in the 1990s, and with regard to such issues as the rights of the individual, the rule of law, and freedom of speech, is much more liberal than is generally supposed.

As this thesis has revealed, much of the antagonism towards liberalism in South Africa derives from ignorance and misunderstanding about what is actually meant by liberal political philosophy. It is hoped that further studies, not only in the field of political science specifically, but across a range of disciplines, will continue to clarify and refine our understanding of the history and nature of liberal thought. The urgency of this research is underscored by the fact that many South Africans have not come to a full or proper understanding of the meaning of liberal democracy or the processes of a free and open society, and so continue to misconstrue key liberal values and principles. Such antagonism was recently illustrated in the acrimonious debates surrounding the clauses on education, property and labour relations before the finalisation of the South African Constitution on 8 May 1996, and particularly in the illiberal positions adopted by various political parties, cultural organisations and trade unions, from both the left and the right of the political continuum. It is clear that democracy

in South Africa remains a new and fragile concept and that much effort must be expended before all South Africans come to understand and embrace the processes and principles of a democratic state.

It is hoped that this thesis makes some contribution to strengthening and deepening the liberal democracy that has been established in South Africa. Despite the liberalisation of the political structures of South Africa, it remains a fact that a democracy can survive only if the citizens of a country consciously and actively will it. As such, this thesis has sought to demonstrate that literature can play a vitally important role in clarifying political issues and in advancing political understanding. In particular, literature enables the reader or the audience to experience directly the actual consequences of social injustice and to recognise the necessity for fundamental rights and freedoms. Literature, it may be said, invests political philosophy with an individual human content. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the work of writers like Alan Paton and Athol Fugard, which has fused an acute political consciousness with a deeply compassionate human understanding. At a time when the true meaning and importance of liberal democracy within the South African context needs to be communicated as clearly and as widely as possible, it is probably true to say that there can be no better source of reference than the fiction of Alan Paton and the drama of Athol Fugard.

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