THE BLOOD KNOT

The Blood Knot, part of the Port Elizabeth trilogy, and the play that made Fugard known (Weales 1978:4), was written upon the playwright's return from England in 1960. At this stage he was twenty-nine and had been active in theatre for only five years.

The Blood Knot opened on Sunday, 3 September 1961 on the third floor of an abandoned factory, Dorkay House, in Eloff Street, Johannesburg. Fugard christened this `makeshift, "fringe" or "unofficial" venue' (Walder 1984:11) the `Rehearsal Room'. The play was presented by the African Music and Drama Association. `On 8 November *The Blood Knot*, cut to two-and-a-half hours, reopened under professional management at the Intimate Theatre, Johannesburg' (1984:2). In March 1962 the final (140th) performance of the play took place in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth. The following year, on 22 February, it was launched - not very successfully - at the New Arts Theatre, Hampstead, London with Zakes Mokae as Zach and Ian Bannen as Morris, directed by John Berry. In this production - the first of Fugard's to be presented overseas - a black man appeared together with a white man on stage whereas in South Africa it had been customary for whites in black-face to play the roles of blacks and `Coloureds'. In this respect, the play defied the ruling South African racialist ideology. In 1964 Berry directed it at the Cricket Theatre, New York, with James Earl Jones and J.D. Cannon. On 12 June 1967, the B.B.C. broadcast *The Blood Knot* in its Theatre 625 series. In 1974, *The Blood Knot*, together with the other two Port Elizabeth plays, *Boesman and Lena* and *Hello and Goodbye*, was published with a detailed introduction written by the playwright.

The Blood Knot belongs to Athol Fugard's chamber theatre period. The works of this phase are often semi-autobiographical. They are also one-set and small-cast. Whereas there are eleven characters in *No-Good Friday* and five in *Nongogo*, there are only two personae in *The Blood Knot*, two in *Boesman and Lena*, two in *Hello and Goodbye* and four in *People are Living There*. Stephen

Gray writes that the dramas of this period in the playwright's career examine `intimate relationships within a small social nexus' (1982:19), and Marieken Swart adds to this that they explore two of the playwright's major concerns: alienation and the consequent search for identity (1983:14). Consequently, overt action is minimal; what takes place is mostly on a psychological level. The time of day, in the four plays, with the exception of one scene in *The Blood Knot*, is late afternoon extending into night; the season is autumn, descending into winter. Wortham believes `the mood projects itself upon and at the same time reflects the state of mind of Fugard's characters in their landscape' (1983:167). The night and winter, besides having literal connotations, also carry spiritual significance: they represent the darkness and coldness of the soul. The themes of existential anguish in microscopically detailed entrapment, the consequence of lost innocence and experience, and of `the inhibiting grip' (Gray 1982:19) of the inescapable past on the present, recur in each one of the four dramas. The characters are all taken to the frontier of self-knowledge where they shed their illusions, accept compromises and face their lives with Camus's `courageous pessimism' (Weales 1978:8).

Gray furthermore suggests:

> All four plays have as their dynamic an enactment of a process of growing desperation, which precipitates emotional crisis, which in turn triggers a leap into self-awareness. This leap is a climactic expansion of the characters' feeling of identity and meaning, a reaching for understanding which makes for a resolute dénouement. (1982:9)

In his introductory note to *The Blood Knot* Fugard states that this drama marks his discovery of himself as a writer (Vandenbroucke 1986:68). He further deems it `the nearest [he has] yet come to [his] one conscious ideal in Theatre. This is a return to what [he] prefer[s] to think of and talk about as "the pure theatre experience"' (1982:39). The work is in the style of `poor theatre', although less a matter of Grotowski's theory, which only reached the South African author in 1970, than a matter of preferred practice (Walder 1984:12). The play's home base is also naturalism, although Fugard departs from it in the imaginative

games the characters play to `while away the uneventful hours in the "labyrinth"' (Seidenspinner 1986:291). During these self-conscious games the brothers break loose from concrete external circumstances, and, with time and space in suspension (Swart 1983:25), they take refuge in illusion. Illusion and reality meld at times to the point where it is impossible to ascertain where one stops and the other begins.[1]

Fugard attributes the improvement of *The Blood Knot* over his earlier plays to his encounter with European theatre. The work established the essentials of Fugard's drama and set the pattern for the dramas which were to follow.

The Blood Knot is deemed the `first fully-fledged example of Fugard's skill as playwright' (Munro 1982:14) and, as it was the first to be staged overseas, it signalled the inception of his international career. James Ambrose Brown declared that `Fugard's *The Blood Knot* ha[d] given the South African play international status' (1982:71). *The New York Times* voted it the best play of the year. Other critics' impression of the drama is detailed on pages 212 and 213 of Appendix A.

The drama's inspiration, setting, dialogue and texture are essentially local. The entire action takes place in a one-room shack, `the equivalent of a cell' (Rae 1971:68), in the non-white shantytown of Korsten (Walder 1984:70), on the northern fringe of Port Elizabeth, a city regarded as a place of the lonely, the lost and the forsaken (Wortham 1983:166). Port Elizabeth represents a South Africa, portrayed here, in the words of Margarete Seidenspinner, as the `land of waste and devastation, as a desert of rubble and ruins where humanity withers and dies' (1986:230). With its confrontation of a `white' man and his `black' brother[2] and `shifting pattern of dominance and dependence between them'

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[1] The function of these games is not only to pass the time, release accumulated pressures, tensions and hatreds, but also to transcend wretched environments and the present, and to recapture the past when there was little conflict between the brothers, when life was better and an equitable and happy world of dreams appeared attainable (Swart 1983:25).

[2] The two brothers, Morris and Zachariah, actually belong to the race of Cape

(Walder 1984:52), the play, on a symbolic level, presents a `microcosm of South Africa's explosive racial situation' (Green 1976:163). John D. Raymer (1976:12) actually conceives of it as a South African parable.

But *The Blood Knot* is far more than this. Dealing with conflict, it focuses on the friction between two entirely different worlds: the white Western, urbanised and technologically-orientated society - worshipped by the manipulative light-skinned brother, Morris[3] - and the pre-industrial Third World, embodied by the black brother, Zachariah (Raymer 1976:50). The play may thus be interpreted as a `parable about Western technology's impact' on a non-Western culture (1976:49). Difficulties arise when the former attempts to `convert the latter to its own self-aggrandising purposes' (Steyn 1988:48). One reading of the play is that it denounces Western civilisation and colonisation (Raymer 1976:27).

Hence *The Blood Knot* revolves around the physical and mental differences between two brothers, differences that are put down as racial (Walder 1984:57). Morris, whose point of view dominates the play as it does his brother and who precipitates most of the action, has a light skin, so light that he has lived in white society - whereas Zach's skin is darker. In the drama Morris has returned to Zach's shanty and has been living with his brother for a year, in a domestic arrangement in which Zach is the breadwinner, while Morris tends house and saves Zach's earnings for a farm where they can live together in tranquillity, free from the indignities they are suffering at present. In the year that they have been together, Morris, the `intruder' (Cohen 1977:78) - yet head of the household - has tried to influence and control his brother's outlook. He has robbed him of carnal pleasures and `offered him, as substitute, an illusionary dream of escape' (Weales 1978:6-7), an `imagined "better" future' (Seidenspinner 1986:289). Acting as a role model, Morris has imparted the `white and civilised' `virtues of routine,[4] discussion and brotherly love' (Walder 1984:57), and sought to make

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`Coloureds'.

[3] Raymer remarks that Morris `lives as if he were punching a time-card in a factory' (1976:187).

[4] They always have polony and chips on Fridays, for instance.

Zach - who admires his sibling's pale pigmentation - recognise the finer things in life, such as education and poetry (Cohen 1977:77). The attempt, while partly successful, has also produced resentment in Zach, who has begun to recognise the restrictions imposed by his `manager' (Raymer 1976:28) on his lifestyle (Cohen 1977:77). For one, he no longer has contact with his former companion, Minnie, who `brought music, women and booze in his life - dancing, sex and sweet forgetfulness' itself (1977:77) - to compensate for the `stench and degradation of Korsten' (Seidenspinner 1986:290). The puritanical Morris is appalled by Zach's relishing his sexual exploits. To counteract this and to subdue Zach's sexual frustration and lust and distract him from `immediate gratification' (Weales 1978:7), `Morris suggests the ... substitute of a pen-pal of the opposite sex' (Swart 1983:28). The eighteen year-old Ethel Lange replies to Zach's letter as written by Morris. But Morris's plan backfires with Ethel's second letter. This letter is accompanied by a photograph which reveals that she is white. Moreover, Zach suddenly decides he enjoys the idea of `this little white Ethel better than [their] future, or the plans, or getting-away, or foot-salts, or any other damned thing in here' (44). This, however, is not for long. A third letter conveys Ethel's intention to come on a visit to Port Elizabeth. Zach is terrified as he realises the impossibility of a `Coloured' man meeting a white woman. Ethel's Oom Jakob, with his hairy fists, brings home to him `the menacing reality' of the white world with `this brutal intrusion into [his life] of the sudden and real possibility of physical danger' (Cohen 1977:80). Zach thinks of a way out: Morris can stand in for him by assuming the mantle of whiteness. He then takes the forty-five pounds put by for the farm and spends it on `an outfit for a gentleman' (70) for Morris to wear when he impersonates him. Morris objects, proclaiming that `there's more to wearing a white skin than putting on a hat'; `it's that white something inside you, that special meaning and manner of whiteness' (73), that is, he has to sound and act like a white man. Soon enough, however, Morris switches from resistance to passivity to an active desire to meet Ethel Lange. The two brothers then play a dangerous mini-drama of self-discovery. To add to the dramatic tension, Morris shifts into the antagonist role, that of a haughty and insolent white `baas' (87) who is visiting the park where the black Zach works as an attendant. As Morris starts feeling at home in his role, he

lashes his brother with the tongue by calling him names, such as *Swartgat*. The intelligence that Ethel is going to marry `Luckyman' Stoffel and that the correspondence is something of the past induces the brothers to repeat the game. `Under the strain of the moment [their play] develops into an emotional whirlpool' (Seidenspinner 1986:291) and the two brothers begin to chase after each other, `round and round in a vicious circle' (to quote from Sartre's *No Exit* [1955:31]). The game brings to the surface the deep hatred the `simple, trustworthy type of John-boy' (95) fosters for the whites (Cohen 1977:80). The ringing of the alarm clock catches him on the brink of violence (Walder 1984:59). The dramatist has the play end with the brothers realizing that there is no `future' for them, their money being spent. The only consolation lies in their brotherhood.

When he wrote *The Blood Knot*, Fugard was a self-proclaimed liberal and subscribed to the liberal axiom of the 1950's that all men are brothers, having a universal mother (Rutherford 1976:267). In the play he runs the colour barrier through the nucleus of the brotherhood, depicting with insight and sympathy how the bond can assume the nature of mutual ensnaring. `The theme of universal brotherhood', moreover, is a `seemingly ironic choice of subject' for a country `where the colour of the skin decides its citizens' social opportunities and where a lack of pigmentation is held to be a measure of superiority' (Seidenspinner 1986:252), but it is typical of Fugard that he does not use his South African background simply to concentrate on victims of racial problems and structural violence (Rutherford 1976:267). He sees the human predicament fully and he sees it whole. He `takes a particular South African issue' (1976:267) and applies it to larger and more universal enigmas, such as the wish for escape, independence, identity and fulfilment, these contending with the need to depend on somebody. As Buber would put it, it is the existential quandary of an alienated, isolated and powerless individual who feels accountable for another existence that has been entrusted to him/her (1947:61). This individual tries to cope with and relate to this existence whose suffering is witnessed, whose pain is felt (Vivier 1983:30). It is an existence with which one may clash but which one still cannot shun because one is tied to it, `either with a bond of love or a

bond of blood' (Fugard quoted by Rae in Vivier 1983:31). The futility each of the two brothers in *The Blood Knot* expresses is a reflection of the condition of all men, not simply of oppressed groupings. Due to Fugard's refusal to romanticise the personae, the audience not only witnesses but empathises with them and the issues that agitate them. As a consequence, *The Blood Knot* is not primarily a political play (Wortham 1983:169) and has had local as well as international appeal.

One of the issues *The Blood Knot* deals with is the torment of being different and being regarded as inferior because of this difference. According to Dennis Walder, the play `reveals the impossibility of segregating, without cruelty and violence, people defined as "different"' (1984:62). The brothers in *The Blood Knot*, Zach and Morris, are differentiated by their psychological and intellectual make-up as well as the shade of their skin. Whereas the memory of their mother should give them comfort and fraternal harmony, their `almost complete inability to recognise the same woman as their mother' (Rutherford 1976:270) (`it sounds like some other mother' [48]) increases the tension and widens the chasm between them (Swart 1983:26). Anna Rutherford explains that `it is their colour that has established their identities in the South African society'; these are not innate identities, but have been `created and imposed by outside forces' (1976:267). The `sins of their births' (95) determine their destiny, `fulfilling it would seem Noah's prophecy' (Rutherford 1976:267): `And he said, Cursed by Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren./And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant' (Genesis 9:25-27). Noah's curse is the one that has befallen Zach (Rutherford 1976:26). While `Morris remembers soft hands, journeys to church and a lullaby' (Foster 1982:206), Zachariah recalls `soapsuds on brown hands', crooked toes, skew toenails (47-8), `hardened feet, journeys to the butcher shop and a blues song' (Foster 1982:206). The light-skinned son was also given a top, marbles and tackies whereas the darker child had to experience the `humiliating rejection of a second-class, black identity' (Swart 1983:31).

The brothers' divergent childhood reminiscences substantiate the black-white polarisation that they represent symbolically. Zach, the darker brother, is depicted as the inferior of the two. He is innocent, spontaneous, fun-loving and pleasure-seeking, illiterate, inarticulate; in short, the child of nature. He functions at a basic, almost instinctive carnal level, his chief interests being drink and sex. `He lives only for the warmth and satisfaction of his body' (Raymer 1976:13) and disregards moral and religious demands. As Morris comments: `That's life for you. The passing of time and worthless friends' (13).

Fugard describes the sensual Zach as `the unfettered life impulse, an impulse that resents being dominated by clocks or schedules' (quoted in Rae 1971:75). Zach then also envisions time as a continuum which is to be enjoyed, not as `composed of segments' which must be kept track of and `somehow be made as useful and productive as possible' (Raymer 1976:46, 192). Whereas Zach craves the immediate sensory satisfaction of his needs, his brother, being `white/Western in his linear-time orientation' (1976:46), delays gratification.[5] In the character of Zachariah `the white man's prejudiced, archetypal image of the black man is (thus) reflected' (Rutherford 1976:271).

Zach is employed as a `watch boy' by the local park authorities, a job reserved for black people. In this menial position, he is treated as little more than a labour unit or worse, a `waste product' (Raymer 1976:27), not only by his employer and whites in general but also by his brother who is `on the lighter side of life' (64) - the reduction of human beings into things (Seidenspinner 1986:316) being a typical Fugard theme (Raymer 1976:186). What his brother cannot comprehend is that Zach relishes the world's momentary delights because he would be glad to forget the hardship which is part of his daily existence.

Since Morris's arrival, Zach has had more time for himself as Morris sees to the household affairs, and is bored, listless and apathetic to most of his brother's

[5] Ideally, one should participate in the present, but not to the extent of existing exclusively in it. Bedford (1972:273) recommends that the present be integrated with the past and the future.

ideas. All he wants to do is to `jump into that lake and swim away' (28), to no particular destination at all. Too much leisure serves as a breeding ground for a sense of meaninglessness (Yalom 1980:447). Zach wishes his circumstances to change, but he is not sure how.

In an attempt to escape from groundlessness and to acquire meaning, Zach constantly recollects the time when he surrendered himself to the collectivism of an existence in *medias res* (Foster 1982:220). That is when he and his mate, Minnie, caroused `together' (7) and achieved the orgiastic states brought on by their hedonistic pursuits of `Golden Moments' (9), women and song. Loath to answer for their existences and keen to forget their individual being, they immersed themselves in everyday, worldly diversions and pleasures. Ultimately, their self or *Dasein* was dispersed in participation and identification with the conformist anonymity of *Das Man* (May's term [1961:78]), so that it became, as Grimsley (1960:51) would phrase it, an `impersonal entity which [was] "everybody" and "nobody"' but never itself. After Morris's return, Zach's peace of mind is shattered. He is confined to the shack and deprived of his shields against meaninglessness. Hankering after his licentious past of no work, worries, or hurry (51) does not really help, for bygones cannot sustain one in the present.

By taking his recourse to others, Zach can make compensation for his insignificance. Raised in an `other-directed culture',[6] the character is a social being. He therefore strikes a dependent pose towards others, who have to complete him, as is seen in relation first to Minnie and later to Morris. For instance, he is `hypnotised' by the sound of Morris's voice (11). Morris is also permitted to construct and develop a world out of his experiences, and to govern his life.

The reliant Zach is shown to have a low self-regard. He says of himself: `I'm a

[6] M. Bedford (1972:5) submits that individuals who are the product of an `other-directed culture' take it that their advancement does not hinge upon how well they perform, but on how well they can co-operate with others.

sort of slow man' (43), and also refers to himself as a `*hotnot*' and `*swartgat kaffer*' (26). He also predicts that Ethel, the pen-pal, would scream should she ever see him, and if she were to smile, it would be condescending (56). Lastly, Zach has to convince himself of his own worth by imploring his mother in a dream monologue: `I got beauty ... too ... haven't I?' (82) and by informing his brother that he is no dog (60); he `may be a shade of black, but [he goes] gently as a man' (44).

Zach's low self-esteem originates from others' treatment of him. He is abused at work (his employer, a white man, calls him `boy' [35]), at the shops (where he is suspected of being an `agitator' [72]), and by a girl who shouts at him that he is a `black *hotnot*' (16). Upon receiving Ethel's reply his own brother alienates Zach further from his environment by drawing his attention to his `ontological dilemma as a `Coloured' in a white-oriented world' (Swart 1983:17-8). When Zach asks: `What is there as black as me?' (62), he is niggled about the pigmentation of his skin (Swart 1983:23):

> What is there `to equal you? To match you? How about a dangerous night. Try that for the size and colour of its darkness. You go with it, Zach....
> Midnight, man! Like the twelve strokes of midnight you stand before my wondering eyes. (62-3)

Morris divulges to his brother in the staged confrontation between white and black in the park: `The sight of you affects me, *Swartgat*' (91) and refers to him as a `mistake' (93), and discloses that he experiences the urge to vomit at the sight of him `crawling around like some ... some ... thing' (91). Poking Zach with an umbrella, he also vociferates: `You're horrible' and

> You know something? I hate you! What did you mean crawling around like that? Spoiling the view, spoiling my chances! What's your game, hey? Trying to be an embarrassment? Is that it? A two-legged embarrassment? Well, I hate you, do you hear! Hate! ... Hate! ... Hate! (93)

It is logical that Zach should incline towards deriving signification from an ideal of white superiority. Zach associates whiteness with rightness and with intellectual

`brightness' (Raymer 1976:21). He blurts out: `The white woman thinks I'm a white man. That I like' (40)[7], and Morris `must be quite a bright boy with nothing on' (65). Externals can `play a role in the establishment of identity' (Rutherford 1976:272) and Zach dons his brother's hat and coat in the hope of acquiring a surrogate identity, that of the white man, and then receiving the treatment accorded to him (1976:271). Yet Zach cannot assume Morris's identity (1976:272): `*the hat is too small and so is the jacket, which he has buttoned up incorrectly, while the trousers are too short*' (81). And `*the final effect is an absurdity bordering on the grotesque*' (81). When he subsequently addresses his dead mother while role-playing, he reveals the efficiency of the white man's propaganda by admitting the doubts which assail him: Morris has been such a burden as a brother because of his fair skin, but, on the other hand, `some things are only skin-deep' (82).

Although merging with others and renouncing the directness of personal decision may create comfort, it makes Zach feel even more unworthy as embeddedness also leads to the loss of self and stagnation. If the wish lays the ground for the exercise of free choice and autonomous action, Zach avoids wishing by not discriminating among wishes, but acting impulsively on all of them. For example, he does not care whether there is jam or peanut butter on his sandwich (14). And when Morris demands that Zach chooses between three women as prospective pen-pals, Zach proposes: `Let's take all three' (23). Yalom (1980:312) advances that `to wish is to lunge into the future', and not to do so betrays the inability or indisposition to project oneself into the future and to convert's one's life. Zach then also exhorts Morris not to give him `all that shit about the future and plans' (45). As he says: `I was in here ten years without plans and never needed them' (13). Zach is the one to throw away the tin with their savings for the farm. Fugard could be suggesting with this action that the elusion of the future is a way of dodging change and shielding oneself against the consciousness of ineluctable mortality.

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[7] According to Marieken Swart, `contact with a white woman would not only provide the character with a novel sensory experience, but would also give him an opportunity' to avenge society's rejection of him (1983:30).

Zach's depersonalisation is aggravated by Morris who has to have absolute power. Zach believes the source of all good is outside himself and he cannot fathom why his brother is so loath to enjoy female companionship. As he observes: `You've been here a long time now and never once did you go out, or speak to me about women. Not like Minnie did' (34). Zach needs others but he does not love them. Like Blackie in *Nongogo*, he reduces others to objects with a function to perform, that of warding off isolation. (Once again Fugard addresses the question of love without need or exploitation.) He tells Morris: `I can't use her (Ethel). You can' (66). He is not interested in the `you' of others. Thus, there is no genuine conversation or dialogical relationship. For instance, Zach falls asleep while Morris is talking to him. This reveals the cause for his poor success in establishing lasting interpersonal unions: Minnie does not come around any longer, Morris has left Zach before and intends doing it again. It appears that others simply grow tired of affirming Zach's existence.

Estrangement from the existential essence can give rise to the disclaimer of answerability and vice versa (Bugental 1976:99). When it dawns upon Zach that he may not cherish `the thought of this little white girl' (44), he articulates: `The whole, rotten, stinking lot is all because I'm black' (62) and `I am too ... truly ... too black' (61). He reproaches his brother: `You see, you were too white, so blindingly white that I couldn't see what I was doing' (63) (when he decided to enter into correspondence with Ethel),[8] in this fashion ascribing his conduct to colour and defining himself as the hapless victim who is incapable of altering his circumstances. The consequence of authorship avoidance is that he is deprived of the opportunity to infuse his life with purpose.

Nevertheless, towards the end of the play Fugard has this character revert from a `state of forgetfulness of being' to a `state of mindfulness of being' (Heidegger's terminology 1962:210-24) (`I'm a man with a taste for thoughts these days' [44]). He suspends satisfaction; when Morris announces that it is

[8] Morris, for his part, transfers responsibility to God: `your sun was too bright and blinded my eyes, so I didn't see ...' (95).

supper time, he receives a curt: `later' (80). Zach also assumes responsibility for himself. This is partly due to the black-man-white-man (`boy-*baas*') game he and his brother play during which the latter prods and pushes Zach to face up to the painful reality of his `black' identity. In Zach's letter to Ethel (the pivotal third party who represents the excitement of `forbidden fruits' and whose existence contributes towards the brothers revealing their aspirations, so precipitating the crisis), Morris will write: `forgive me, but I was born a dark sort of boy who wanted to play with whiteness' (58). In a bitter and savage parody of the Christian marriage ceremony (Swart 1983:32), self-deception is replaced by `reflection and insight' (Vandenbroucke 1986:57) as the fantasy of white superiority is exorcised with Zach enacting the role of the subservient black man. The *dramatis persona* ultimately decides to be what he is (63). He understands that he can never have the `snow white' (61) Ethel because he can never be anything other than what he is and she `wouldn't want [him] anyway' (61). Vandenbroucke (1986:54) believes that there are no choices for this character. Hence he is shown to embrace the `consequences of his blackness' (Rutherford 1976:280) and exult in all his `black days, black ways, black things' because: `They're me. I'm happy' (62). As Swart (1983:17) puts it, Zachariah revels in the positive potential and worth of black consciousness. Vandenbroucke, in addition, conjectures that the identity Zach has found through Morris's aid `may be a limiting one, defined primarily by his race, but, at least, Zach has the security of that identity' (1986:58).

Zach has already explained his altered self to his deceased mother as follows: `I got sick of myself and made a change' (81). And even later he apprises his brother: `I've changed.... I took the right!' (95) He assumes control and will henceforth assert himself in his society.

Zach, attentive to his own presence, now also becomes more responsive towards that of others. He literally places himself in Morris's shoes when he dons his suit. And in the make-believe encounter with his mother he sympathetically asks if her feet still ache (80). His life meaning is attitudinal in that he engages in his own existence and that of others.

One more thing remains for the character: he has to banish the unhappy memories of the past[9], when a washer-woman, his mother, treated him as if he were a base creature, like a caterpillar, whereas his brother was elevated, given the freedom of movement of a moth that could fly `from darkness to light' (90)[10] In an illusion, he upbraids his mother with: `Don't you recognise your own son?' and demands to know:

> Whose mother were you really? At the bottom of your heart, where your blood is red with pain, tell me, whom did you really love? (81)

By the end of *The Blood Knot*, Fugard has Zach chase away his mother's memory, interrupt Morris's musings and get Morris to do the same. No longer does he reminisce about what once was. He is reconciled to the present. As John Raymer puts it, `he wants his life and he wants it now' (1976:51).

If Zach used to be Christmas Past, then Morris is Christmas Future. Morris perpetually reminds his brother: `We're saving for a future' (8). He regards the future as `the most precious thing a man can have' (68-9) and `the best years of a man's life' (30). He has even invented a game of a `white' future (Raymer 1976:35) in which he and his brother are the proud and prosperous possessors of a farm. Even though tomorrow may be deemed the dominant mode of time (May in Friedman 1964:449), Morris's slavish dependence on his dream `exerts a tyrannical control over each moment' of his and his brother's day (Seidenspinner 1986:289), and, in the process, he dissociates himself from the present, and with it from his own being in the present. So Morris, caught as he is

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[9] May remarks that one cannot let oneself `recall the significant events of [the] past and re-experience them until [one] is ready to make some orientation to the future on the basis of these memories' (in Friedman 1964:450).

[10] The moth, of course, symbolises Morris's trying for white (Raymer 1976:43). Moths are attracted to light (39), and so is the character to the `light' of white society.

a time warp, is estranged from his existential sense and consequently does not get the most out of life. Evidence for this is found in the way he spends his days: in a one-room shack, withdrawn from the world, communicating with nobody but his brother, a brother who should also have no-one else.

It is not surprising that Morris feels as if he is in darkness (70). Whether Fugard consciously intended this or not, he has fashioned a character who is lost to the world because he is lost to himself, as self-realisation in the world is the only road to existential self-realisation (Jaspers 1950:39).

As purposelessness is often the aftermath of excessive leisure, one may take it that Morris smarts under existential meaninglessness. At the beginning of the play, the dramatist has him walking aimlessly about the room (3). Morris later mentions previous meanderings through the `big, empty world' (10) which also led nowhere and to nothing:

> The road goes on and on, passing all the time through nothing.... I'm telling you, man, it was nothing instead of something, some any old thing like a donkey, or a dog, or children kicking an empty tin ... There was nothing.... (74)[11]

Because the character has so little to live for but does not want to change; he clings to routine and his few possessions with might and main. Among his prized possessions are an alarm clock and a Bible (Walder 1984:57), both of which he uses to avoid `getting desperate' (20) and to imbue his existence with some consequence - both terrestrial and cosmic.

Besides the future, Morris also endeavours to locate meaning, happiness and hope in the past. Therefore he persists in the `quest for a childhood' (Rutherford 1976:270) - or rather `memories of affection and happy days' (Cohen 1977:80) - that both he and Zachariah can relate to. He strikes a point of common ground

[11] Many existentialists hold that in this historical hour there is no guidance from or participation by God. In fact, God seems to be absent from the universe (Bedford 1972:253-4).

in the sentimental recollection of the two of them playing around in a derelict Chevrolet (Rutherford 1976:270). Then they took their time and chances (51) and could refashion their lives. In contrast to their present predicament, in the `remember-when-life-was-better' (Raymer 1976:30) or `happiness game' (Seidenspinner 1986:291), they are going somewhere. They have a destination: `slipping through the streets, passing homes and people ...' (49-50) until they can say: `We've found it' (50).[12] Unfortunately, the harmony and joy attained by these reminiscences vanish when reality returns.

In addition to the `sentimental and loving recreation' (Cohen 1977:80) of an Edenic past, Morris also engages in fantasy and day-dreaming, for instance, that all men are brothers and can live in peace together. This pastime provides a respite from reality, so making it more bearable.

One of Morris's visions is of progressing up the social ladder. For this reason he adheres to the Western work ethic of ambition and self-sacrifice, as well as a Puritanical attitude to the flesh and its desires. That Morris has ambition is made apparent by his aspiration for a pastoral retreat. He also works rigorously: he cleans his and Zach's abode like a dutiful wife, and prepares food and a footbath for his brother. He disapproves of Zach's former friends as well as his appetites, and imposes an ascetic, puritanical lifestyle on the latter in an attempt to preserve the purity of his body. (For example, Zach is not to mention Connie Ferreira, the girl he raped.) Other activities that supply Morris's life with a goal are dedication to a cause - his brother - and altruism. For this reason Morris needs to be assured that his presence profits his brother. He pathetically seeks acknowledgement, reassurance and gratitude (Swart 1983:29). Initially he reminds Zach: `If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have nothing (11), only to plead later: `I'm helping you, aren't I, Zach?' I want to believe that' (18). He also points out that it pays to have a brother who can read (55). One may infer that,

[12] However, according to Raymer, this `imaginary journey back in time and through space .... symbolises the absurdity of Zach's and Morris's situation. Doomed, they are "passengers" (residents) in a "vehicle" (pondok)' (1976:49). Their lives are heading nowhere.

in his mind, being needed will justify his existence; thus, he does his utmost to make himself indispensable to his brother (23). Yet it is only his assistance that he makes available to Zach, not his self. Nor does he expect mutuality; he is concerned with Zach but does not wish Zach to be concerned with him as well.

Morris ostensibly grasps that man is a social creature and that others are essential to his self-realisation. His greatest desire is to be at home in the world. Because of his light skin he has never quite belonged to the `Coloured' community in which he grew up. Swart (1983:30, 37) hypothesises that his unstable position on the fringes of the two racial groups and his consciousness of dissimilarity have deprived him of self-confidence. His yearning for acceptance and affection and a place of warmth and security where he will fit in both physically and spiritually (1983:20, 38) induces him to embark on a physical as well as emotional pilgrimage. Yet, he cannot make one friend in Oudtshoorn or even find one friendly face, and by the wayside he is chased away by a white man standing by a fire and holding a stick in his hand. This man looks down on Morris literally and figuratively, for he is situated at the top of a high hill and he is white (Raymer 1976:46-7). The latter incident causes Morris to return to Korsten and the brother with whom he shared a carefree youth and who has always been accepting of him. Yet even in the safety of the limited environment of the shack where he is not required to experience life at first hand, he still dreads the outside world which has rejected him[13] and the disillusionment which follows in the wake of reality.[14]

This is so since Morris, in spite of the religion he seems to espouse, does not really have a `stabilising belief on which to build, no faith to justify his existence

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[13] Compare this with Bedford's view (1972:276, 259) that people should reconcile themselves to the factual reality that they have to live within a community, and that it is their obligation to open themselves to and establish close relationships with their neighbours as they rely on others' judgement to discover their own identity.

[14] Swart (1983:32) observes that although a dreamworld may function as a refuge from pain, an identity based on illusion or pretence is tantamount to psychological suicide.

or explain his fate' (Swart 1983:38). In fact, Fugard portrays him as so concerned about losing his own conflicted centre that he rigidly refuses to go out and actualise his potential. So he holds fast to routine and adjusts to a shrunken world space. In other words, he surrenders part of his potentialities to save what is left, his means of alleviating *angst* without directly dealing with it. Another way in which the character copes is to `concentrate on the blood-line that links him' to his brother (1983:20). Brotherhood, although an `ill-fitting jacket' (1983:22) is a retreat from the outside world, providing comfort and meaning. Because this brother exists, to quote Buber, `in the darkness the light lies hidden, in fear salvation, and in the callousness of [his] fellow-men the great Love' (1967:98).

For this reason, Morris informs Zach that `of all the things there are in this world I like most to hear you call me that' (brother) (19). He is preoccupied with the word `brother' and extracts various connotations from it. In Scene One it is `brotherhood.... Brotherly love' (19). The familiar combative `men-at-arms' is changed to the unified `brother-in-arms, each other's arms' (19) because, as Swart notes, `"armed" with Zach' Morris will conquer his fears' (1983:21). In Scene Two of Act I `brothers' is a `woolly' word `like old brown jackets a size too big. But what does that matter as long as it keeps (*sic*) out the cold (of old age), and the world?' (27-8) To Morris, the word has a `broody sound' (19). Marieken Swart (1983:21) proposes that words such as `broody', `breeds' and `eggs in a nest' reveal the character's horror of exposure as well as his overwhelming need for security and sense, giving rise to a `naive longing to return to the uncomplicated, embryonic state that precedes awareness'; to regress rather than to progress. `If given a choice he (Morris) would probably crawl back into the womb' where he and his brother both began life (1983:21).[15]

It is beyond doubt that the relation Morris has with Zach, like Zach with Morris, is

[15] Morris could be classified as `a fate-trapped victim'. Avid to adopt `Sisyphus's down-to-earth perspective', in the hope of acquiring an `intimate knowledge of his surroundings, ... identify his position and disentangle the paths of the past from those leading towards the exit' in order to reach an advanced stage of the journey, `his attention is distracted from the way out' of the labyrinthine existence (Seidenspinner 1986:281).

`not the *you* and *me*; it is the *we*' (cf. Sartre 1958:246). Neither can make do without the other. After all, they have the same background. Morris uses memories and games to establish the dependency of two brothers who live in harmony and unity. Furthermore, he slips Zach's coat on when the latter is asleep, this becoming a kind of communion with the other (Swart 1983:22):

> You get right inside the man when you can wrap up in the smell of him.... It helped a lot. It prepared me for your flesh, Zach. Because your flesh, you see, has an effect on me. It feels, you see. Pain, and all those dumb dreams throbbing under the raw skin, I feel. (21)[16]

But Morris does not feel at one with his sibling's flesh only, but also with his mind. He accuses Zach: `What about your dreams? They kept me awake these past few nights' (58). He takes it that dreaming is dangerous: `All they (the police) need for evidence is a man's dreams' (9). He therefore insists on Zach sharing everything with him and is offended and wounded when he does not:

> Who would have thought it? That one day, one of us would come in here with a secret and keep it to himself. If someone had tried to tell me that, I would have thrown up my hands in horror. This is how friendships get wrecked, in secrecy. (53)

In this way Morris endeavours to become more and more the object of Zach's consciousness, and, additionally, to be in command of his mind.

Morris, claiming that he is on his brother's side (6), is the one who sets out the rules of the game (Swart 1983:29). In order to escape an unaccommodating past and present and to protect his own interests, he selfishly imposes his viewpoint and vision on Zach.[17] In other words, Zach is not accepted or even

[16] Morris's desire to become flesh of his brother's flesh has strong biblical connotations and confirms, according to Marieken Swart (1983:22), that brotherhood has become Morris's religion.

[17] Considered from an existentialist point of view, even if Morris's convictions are valid in his own situation, he still may not force them on his brother (Bedford 1972:257).

recognised in his otherness but has to exist only as part of his brother's experience - he is not given the freedom to find his own being. Hence there is no true communication or equality, only domination and objectification. For instance, Morris will write on Zach's behalf that `Zachariah' has a brother who has been to Oudtshoorn twice (32). That is also why Morris resents it so much when Zach refers to himself as a `*hotnot*' or `*kaffer*' (26) and why he considers the insult to his brother (`Go to the gate or go to hell' [6]) as an insult to himself as well. It also explains his hostility when his brother does not share everything with him. Zach furthermore is forced to share his sibling's isolation (Swart 1983:20), and any contact with an outsider who might usurp Morris's position is perceived as a threat. On this score, Morris deflates his brother's reveries of `Golden Moments at two bob a bottle' (9) with Minnie. However, in a such a state of fusion neither party is free or whole. Ironically, Morris insists that fraternal feelings exist between him and Zach. Notwithstanding this, Martin Orkin argues that Morris's effort `to invade his (brother's) body is not ... an attempt primarily to dominate so much as an attempt to understand his brother's body in a way the state has forbidden - that is, not as impure but as the body of a brother related to him by blood' (1988:28), a brother who can make Morris's own self present by accepting and affirming his existence.

Morris's desire to merge may be imputed to possible perturbation at the thought of the finitude of all things and the conviction that fusion with his brother will bring about safety. We are told that Morris's mother died when the brothers were relatively young. This may account for Morris's apprehension of death. He utters that he and his brother did not say the word `Mother' enough and he now experiences a certain sadness whenever he is reminded of her demise (19). There is now nothing between him and the grave. Fear of death is also reflected by Fugard in his obsession with time. Morris melancholically mentions that Autumn is `the beginning of the end of another year' (20) and asks: `Where do they go? The good times in a man's life?' (52) Seidenspinner sees Morris's conviction that the `exertion of a purely mechanical control over each second' by means of the alarm clock, so limiting time to the `moments of the "now"' `suffices to master the present and the future' (Seidenspinner 1986:291, 295). This is

suggestive of his terror at time passing and the meaninglessness of life in the face of mortality (which, nonetheless, could be *Dasein*'s `*ownmost* and uttermost' possibility as it learns about itself in the anticipation of giving itself up [Heidegger 1962:307]). Morris then also muses that it is bitter that neither he nor Zach can recall on which day he returned, a day when he was not recognised by anyone and felt like `a stranger in [his] old home township' (20). Lastly, after Zach complains of a taxing day at work, his brother induces him to think of his own finitude too by asking him if his heart is still beating (37).

Zach is Morris's rationalisation - or rather excuse - for not pondering the possibility of his own dissolution and for remaining innerly static. The relationship he has with his brother is dramatised as based on need and not on love. It may be described as `I-it',[18] functional[19] and exploitative.

In this alliance of theirs, the *dramatis personae* are presented as fluctuating between active and passive roles. In a childhood game, Morris was Tarzan and Zach his ape (51). At the outset of *The Blood Knot* these roles are reversed. Morris, masochistically, casts himself as Zach's servant: he makes him food, kneels before him and washes his feet - so `proving' that he is a `gentle Jesus, meek and mild' (80). It is also possible, Raymer argues, to view the character as representative of the `guilty white liberal attempting to allay his guilt by being a do-gooder' (1976:17). Morris even offers up his own meal to Zach after the latter has smashed his plate to pieces in a fit of fury. But Morris's subservience is only a charade for the manipulation and exploitation of the other. The role of servile underdog is one he has chosen for himself and Zach simply has to play the part assigned to him. Zach is to work while Morris stashes the earnings away for the farm he covets. It is evident that Morris supports the `white European-American code of putting off present pleasures' for illusory and far-off gratification (Raymer

[18] Zach is reduced to an `it' due to Morris's refusal to accept that his brother is existentially different from himself. Since he does not experience Zach's side, he does not direct his words to the person Zach is. As a consequence, the character will not overcome his `solipsistic predicament' (Friedman 1964:543).

[19] Zach's function is to listen to his brother and do his bidding.

1976:51).

`Although Morris maintains that the existence he [envisages] is for both of them, Zach has nothing to do with its conception or its design' (Foster 1982:206). However, as Zach is the financial backbone of the plan and it would be unrealisable without him, Morris has to exercise control over his brother's money, time and thoughts. So he devises artificial shackles, such as mockery, humiliation, psychological blackmail and the restriction of individual freedom to chain his brother to him (Swart 1983:15) and to convert him into a `more "functional" work-machine' (Raymer 1976:183). In essence, Morris manipulates Zach by means of his verbal proficiency. He grasps the `potency of words' (Cohen 1977:79) and with these he can create `scenes of their past whose beauty (comforts his sibling and) inspires him with fondness and love', so distracting him from his own desires. At other times these words induce insecurity (1977:78). The second way in which Morris controls his brother is by the rigid, military routine neurotically maintained with the aid of the alarm clock; the third, by the calendar; the fourth, the Bible - and the narrow Calvinistic religion it represents in South Africa[20] - and the last, the remote pleasure of a pen-pal who is to divert Zach's attention from immediate gratification.[21] When the illiterate Zach grows too self-assured and independent for Morris's liking and withholds Ethel's letter, Morris psychologically assaults him by calling upon him to spell his name. When Zach cannot do so, Morris gleefully proclaims his supremacy in this struggle for domination: `I win!' (55). And when Zach proudly recognises the name on the envelope as his own, Morris again undermines his confidence by: `Since when are you the only thing that begins with a Z?' (55) Zach is to rely on Morris exclusively so that Morris will have a reason for being and for being as before.

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[20] God, apparently, is watching Zach with `His Secret Eye to see how far [he goes]' (46).

[21] Foster (1982:203) remarks that `substituting a pen-pal for solving the need for female companionship is equivalent to Morris's attempt to deal with the issue of being black in South Africa by passing for white. Both are futile solutions for real problems and the parallel relationship between them is evidence of the absurdity of both.

The ambivalent way in which Morris treats Zach is a measure of the dichotomy in his own nature and the conflicting emotions he experiences in relation to his skin colour and that of his brother. He cannot approve of himself as either `Coloured' or white - that is why he gets undressed in the dark (65). Morris's is an insecure identity, a `divided self' at ease in neither role (Vandenbroucke 1986:55). He professes that to know and accept oneself completely is to be at peace, happy and whole, yet his sensitivity about his sibling's pigmentation and his own betrays that he himself is not at peace (Swart 1983:31). Morris associates `black with "darkness" and loneliness' and white with `"light" and life' (Seidenspinner 1986:308): `Always to light, I thought, Everything always flying, or growing, or turning, or crying for the whiteness of light' (69). He even confesses that he is critical of colour (73). `White is right' -the white birds that fly to light are `untouched by the filth and misery which pervade the lives of the blacks' (Cohen 1977:79) - and `Coloured is wrong' (Raymer 1976:15) and to be shunned.[22] During the perilous `"search-and destroy" game' (1976:31) which churns up the rough memories of the past (Seidenspinner 1986:291), he apprises his brother:

> I feel your presence. So I think, I'll move further on. You see, you bothered me as I passed. Moments of recognition, you know, at first sight, and all that. So I'll take this road. I mean ... I'll have to get away if I want to admire the beauty, won't I? Yes. It's a good road.... so I'm climbing up the hill in this road, putting miles between us; and now, at last, there ahead of me is the sky, big blue; and I hurry on to the top where I turn against it and look back at you... far behind me now, in the distance, outside the gate. (90)[23]

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[22] This is a comment on South Africa's socio-political situation at the time in which whiteness meant opportunity and privilege.

[23] Ironically, as Morris recalls:

> I touched the other thing [beauty] once, with my life and my hands, and there was no blood, or screaming, or pain. I just touched it and felt warmth and softness and wanted it like I've never wanted anything in my whole life. Ask me what's the matter with me for not taking it when I touched it. (34)

That Morris looks down upon Zach is again exhibited by his use of the word `bruise' in: `I wish that old washerwoman had bruised me too at birth.' (63) The bruise is Zach's dark skin, and, as Rutherford (1976:279) contends, as a bruise it must be a flaw. Morris feels contempt for his brother and forces him to suffer the indignity and degradation of a black man by exploiting his ignorance and gullibility (Raymer 1976:16). He diminishes the latter's self by forcing him, for example, to take a closer look at the treatment he receives as a park attendant, and derives sadistic pleasure from the other's existential confusion and pain. Zach shows his resentment in an indirect manner by complaining about the foot-salts, about Morris's food, and by relishing past delights. The situation with the white pen-pal is a weapon wielded against Morris. Fugard has Zach take charge when he appropriates the `future' tin and spends his savings on an expensive outfit for Morris that will enable the latter to pass for white. The second and last time the brothers re-enact the South African ritual of the white `baas' abusing the black `boy', Zach is disingenuous. When he compliments his brother on his appearance in the suit, saying `It made me feel good' (87), he is not interacting spontaneously but plotting to vent his bitterness (Rutherford 1976:281).

Although Morris is the stronger, he bears the burden of existential self-condemnation. This accounts for his contradictory conduct. In the scene where he dons the suit Zach has bought for him, he is simultaneously `performing an emotional striptease', peeling away his interior defences and laying bare his innermost desires (Swart 1983:37). Morris is remorseful because he, Judas-like, betrayed Zach when he deserted him in an attempt to break the barrier of his `Coloured' identity and identify with the oppressor (Raymer 1976:183), in the process casting behind him his origin, their fraternity and his race (`Didn't you see how I turned and looked back at you, at all that is past and forgotten? [90]).[24] In Angove's view, `Zach is the physical reminder of Morrie's limitations'. His dark flesh is the `concrete representation of the reality of Morrie's (contemptible `Coloured') heritage' (1987:26), that is, his African roots (Seidenspinner 1986:294), and this illumines why the `hotnot joke always gets'

[24] Yet, as Raymer (1976:25) makes known, the power of the past cannot be underestimated.

Morris (27).

Morris further sees himself as a modern, vagrant Cain who `wandered away, a marked man, on a long road' (19),[25] the mark being his guilt (23) for not confronting the challenge of his individual existence. On the road without end, he was, to use Sartre's words, `enveloped in this monstrous silence, free and alone, without assistance and without excuse, condemned to decide without support from any quarter, condemned ... to be free' (1947:290). That is to say, having severed himself from the `familiar security of the everyday world' (Grimsley 1960:28) in order not to see his brother's eyes and to be free (90), he found himself an `abandoned and isolated possibility in a finite existence' (Grimsley 1960:66) - the inevitable aftermath of absolute freedom, according to Sartre (1949:290). Then, for the first time, it dawned on him: `why men build homes, and the meaning of that word "home"' (75). And in the silence he heard `the voice of [his] brother's blood [crying] unto [him]' (19), like that of Abel. He returned for the following reason:

> I couldn't stand that look in your eyes any more. Those bright, brotherly eyes in my dreams at night, always wet with love, full of pity and pain.... God, such lonely eyes they were! ... watching and sad and asking me, why? softly? why? sorrowfully, why? ... Why did I do it? (79)

This one extreme experience has made Zach present to Morris for all time. His conscience - crying `Where were you? - imparted to him that his resentment of and conscious rebellion against his negritude made him a `Judas to his own flesh and blood' (Raymer 1976:22). In addition, he had desecrated the blood relationship and transgressed against his integrity and true self as represented by the person he left behind (1976:36) - `too high a price to pay for acceptance' (1976:234). Swart goes further than this when she postulates that `the

[25] `Allegorically speaking, the road is similar to the one' travelled by the Boer pioneers `into the South African interior'. The Boers hoped the road would take them away from English domination. But `the road just [went] on and on, passing all the time through nothing' (75). As Morris's attempt at turning tail fails, so did that of the Afrikaners (Raymer 1976:37-8).

attainment of an ideal of whiteness would have been fatal because it would [have meant] the denial of an essential part of [Morris's] being' (1983:35).[26] That Morris appreciates the danger he was in is illustrated by his drawing on the image of the moth to depict the quest for lightness and whiteness and the associated freedom (Raymer 1976:43): `Look at me, will you please! I too flew from darkness to light, but I didn't burn my wings' (90). He has earlier mentioned that `a man can hurt himself' (46) and that he `sustained eternal injuries' (61) when he made an effort at being what he was not. Raymer confirms that the character's `wings [were] singed in the flight' to white (1976:45).[27]

The self-destructive games in which Morris engages are indicative of his contrition, born of the apprehension that his mistake could have constituted a destiny for him. His regret is also personified by the spectre of the mother who haunts him `all day, all along the road, the long, unending road' (91) and, now, from where she hides behind a tree, is a sad `spectator' to his and his brother's final game (Swart 1983:42). To free himself of the inhibiting presence of his conscience he reviles the memory of her with his brother in racially-loaded role-play:

> Morris: *Voetsek* off! We don't want you! You old bitch!
> Zachariah: Bugger off!
> You old bitch! You made life unbearable! (92)

Together they stone their mother, who is really a `unifying force' in their enactment of apartheid (Swart 1983:42). However, as Swart (1983:42) hypothesises, the devastation of the source of origin is also a negation of themselves. Morris is at last caught by his sense of shame (Vandenbroucke

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[26] Consciousness, however, may entail turning against and denying one's self (May 1961:84).

[27] Raymer (1976:29) draws a parallel between butterflies and South Africa's whites, as Morris - a light-skinned `Coloured' - compares himself to a black moth that cannot `resist the fatal attraction of the white, luminescent lamp' and is scorched by the flame (Seidenspinner 1986:289). In his childhood, Morris and his brother chased butterflies, but the insects remained `always just out of reach, soaring easily, beautifully through the soft South African air' (Raymer 1976:28).

1986:56). By going full circle and returning to the lowlands of Korsten, Morris does what he feels ought to be done, and by caring for his brother he seeks expiation and atonement for his erroneous conduct. Looking after Zach is also looked upon as his divine mission which is to dispense significance to his empty existence (1986:23).

Even though Morris has come back to his brother due to guilt (Fugard quoted by Rae in Vivier 1983:31), the dark shadow of responsibility, he does not appropriate authorship for long. This is evidenced by the following interchange regarding the letter they have written, on his suggestion, to a white woman.

> MORRIS: You know what you done, don't you?
> ZACHARIAH: Me?
> MORRIS: Who was it then? Me?
> ZACHARIAH: But what?
> MORRIS: Who wanted women?
> ZACHARIAH: Me.
> MORRIS: Right. Who bought the paper?
> ZACHARIAH: Me.
> MORRIS: Right. Who's been carrying on about Minnie, and Connie, and good times? Not me. (40)

Shortly hereafter, Morris poses the rhetorical question: `I'm to blame, am I? All right. I'll take the blame. I always did, didn't I? But this is where it ends. I'll say I got nothing more to do with it' (43). Ironically, this is also where Morris's development comes to an end. At a later stage it is his deceased mother and Ethel who are accused (85). Even later Fugard has him even brand God with reproach: `your sun was too bright and blinded my eyes, so I didn't see the notice prohibiting' (95). He presents himself as the innocent victim, so depriving himself of the opportunity to transform his destiny.

The `notice' is the law prohibiting a black man from passing for white, which is what Morris has done. He has indulged in illusory dreams by trying to `whitewash away his facts' (58) and has flown away like one of the white birds (Cohen 1977:79). He justifies his deception of himself and his brother as follows: `It didn't seem a sin. If a man was born with a chance at change, why not take it'

(79). Although it is commendable that Morris has aimed at his own `improvement' and confronted the `injustice at large in the world with his own principles of justice' (Camus 1971:29), one cannot disavow one's true identity or establish it at the expense of another.

Another technique used by the playwright through which his characters may acquire a meaningful identity and perspective as well as an understanding of each other is through the games they play. As time and space are suspended during these games (Swart 1983:25), they `serve as balm against the present and reality' (Cohen 1977:80). That is to say, they `keep the world at bay' (Seidenspinner 1986:291). With the exception of one, these games are initiated by Morris.

From the moment Zach decides to hold on to Ethel's letter (`We done it, and now I got it and I'm keeping it' [44]), he becomes more and more assertive. Morris's confession enables him to take revenge by effecting a reversal of their roles so that he becomes the inquisitor, giving his brother, the defendant (Swart 1983:36), the benefit of his eyes. Stripping his brother of all protective layers, Zach notices for the first time the `Mr Hyde in Morris, that ugly white supremacist aspect Morris had hoped to hide' (Raymer 1976:15). `Zach now has all the positive answers' (Munro 1982:16) and he manipulates Morris into the archetypal role of the white man. In this fashion, the `full range of white anti-black phobias' is exposed (1982:16). Morris's aspiration of a white future is wrecked as he gains the insight that the black man is an inescapable part of his identity - past and present. The real bastard is Morris himself (90). The `nightmare park fantasy' game (Walder 1984:62) - in which Zach's deep hatred for the whites is exposed (Cohen 1977:80) - increases in intensity until violence threatens to erupt. The once arrogant white oppressor who proudly paraded in front of the oppressed black man now begs for mercy in an adapted version of the Lord's Prayer. Before Zach can become Cain, the murderer, the two brothers, `like boxers in a ring are saved by the ringing of [the] alarm clock' (Swart 1983:43). The action shifts back to the surface structure and Morris and Zach are `jerked back into historical time' (Rutherford 1976:282-3) and plunged into reality, and along with

this, `their established identities within South African society' (1976:277). They come to the conclusion that they just got carried away by the game and should be `all right' as long as they `play in the right spirit' (96). The black brother once more submits to the white one's authority and things are as they were.

However, there is one major difference. Morris has learnt to be more objective towards himself, self-critical, and he begins to recognise himself for who he really is. If there is one truth the play stresses, it is to accept oneself as one is, and not to try to change because it is impossible (Vandenbroucke 1986:65).

When Morris accepts himself and his culture, he becomes more like Zach. Zach has exorcised the past and now lives in the present without hope or illusion but with courage, and so Morris relinquishes his future fantasies: that of passing for white as well as owning a two-man farm (a vision for which he has traded the first dream). His acquiescence in spending the farm money is the first sign of his willingness to reconcile himself to present time, and face the limitations and hopelessness of the future. When he lets go of the game of the future (Raymer 1976:35), self-delusion, unfounded faith and naive optimism give way to perspicuity and subjectivity (Vandenbroucke 1986:46), and Morris discovers himself as a free spiritual being. Hence he resets the alarm clock that used to direct their daily routine (Seidenspinner 1986:289) but now has stopped like the old Morris, and proclaims: `I'm Morrie' (86). Having previously hesitated,

> I'm not just going to jump right in. Men drown that way. You must paddle around first (73),

he now, like the clock, will make a fresh start as he is `wound up' again. He will set the time, as he and his brother are now in control of the clock, and not it of them.

Morris might not be able to alter his circumstances, but he can learn to live with them; he will not be defeated by his predicament (Seidenspinner 1986:337). Besides, as Paul Tillich imparts, `man's predicament do[es] not necessarily deny his personal responsibility' (1968:65). This is because decisions carry more

weight than conditions or one's environment as there are no compelling external situations; individuals are ultimately self-determining (Bedford 1972:256). Fugard has this character, then, forsake the belief that there is a supra-human being who creates and guards him. Morris accepts accountability and his constitutive function in an indifferent and contingent universe (Yalom 1980:357, 423). From now on he will no longer simply witness the life process; he will actively partake in it - in its pleasures as well as its pain.

The play ends the way it has begun: the two brothers in their shack at the end of the day. The repetitive, circular structure (Walder 1984;62) of the drama underscores the fact that their bleak lives will continue, as the lake `never changes colour.... like a face without feeling' (13-14).[28] Fugard describes them as heavy, hopeless and `almost prostrate on the earth' (quoted in Weales 1978:8), in an inimical and absurd world. Locked into `a dreadful routine of simply carrying on' (Cohen (1977:72) - with their games, foot-salts and the alarm clock (Vandenbroucke 1986:61) - they have no happiness or hope. Like Vladimir and Estragon, they are unable to `draw any comfort from the traditional Christian doctrines of divine preordination and salvation' (Swart 1983:38). As Morris seems to be saying: `Now we know'. What they know is that there is nothing for them to cling to: the future is an `empty symbol' (Cohen 1977:77) and so is the after-life. Neither does the past afford mental support (Seidenspinner 1986:296). `The only certainty they can rely on is their intuitive understanding of "now"' (1986:264). Save this, they are forlorn and all is futile. (At least, for Estragon and Vladimir a little hope remains in that Godot may still come.) Yet the characters do not simply surrender to despair and die. As Zach exhorts Morris:

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[28] The lake, in which huge `industries disgorge their poison' (Cohen 1977:78), is reminiscent of Dante's lake of fire and brimstone (Raymer 1976:40). The brothers think of the lake as a malignant being (it has `a face without feeling' [14]). `Given its stagnation, its active hatred of people in Korsten, its stench, its death-like stillness', there are two feasible interpretations: the lake represents South Africa's apartheid policy - which cannot be eschewed - and, `on a more personal level', the lake symbolises the `mysterious and often disconcerting human condition' (Raymer 1976:40).

> A man can't just stop like that, like you. That's definitely no good, because.... You want to know why? Because a man must carry on. Most certainly. Otherwise who is going to sweep the floor? *Ja*. Ever think about that? If everybody just gave up, just sat down and couldn't carry on ... why, nothing would happen. Isn't that so. One by one we would just topple over and nothing would happen. So that proves it, doesn't it? We *must* carry on. (83-4)

To Derick Cohen (1977:77), what is so affecting and inspiring is the way they cope with their situation. They are resigned to their situation but not defeated. The rephrasing of the familiar `tomorrow is another, yet another day...' (60) suggests the burden of acceptance they will bear. `"Stoic endurance" is the key note' (*sic*) (Edmans quoted in Mshengu 1982:171).

The brothers finally come to comprehend that when all else fails, they still have each other, entangled as they are, however much they may even resent it, in a symbiotic, unbreakable knot, on the one hand sustaining and unifying and, on the other, constricting the flow of life and, as such, destructive. The bond between them is based on `their need to be respected' and, more importantly, to have life in the eyes of another (Hauptfleisch 1982:187). It is an invisible bond of love and hatred that, because it will remain, precludes complete independence and freedom (1982:187). As Morris announces: `anywhere, any place or road, there [is] still you' (79); `We're tied together, Zach. It's what they call the blood knot -, the bond between brothers' (97). The drama ends with the psychological recognition and reaffirmation of the fraternal, mutual dependence of the one on the other, the way in which the one complements the other (Rutherford 76:283). Meagre as this may be, it is more than many of Fugard's subsequent characters will have.

The harmony and camaraderie experienced during the brief escapes from reality shed light on the decision to `make cathartic fantasy a permanent part of their lives' (Swart 1983:28). So the brothers take refuge in illusion (1983:26), this being preferable to the comfortless reality of life which is increased by the

disparity of their personalities[29] and the complexity of their social and political situation (1983:28). They also succeed in inventing meaning for themselves. They cherish the very vortex of their groundlessness, come to grips with their absurd condition and assume a bold, heroic stance in facing their destiny. As Morris wryly comments: `I think there's quite a lot of people getting by without futures these days' (96). He even succeeds in mustering some enthusiasm: `we got a lot left, you know! [*Little laugh*]. Almost a whole life ... stretching ahead ... in here ... [*Pause*]' (96). This Sisyphian insight is the basis for the play's resolution.

[29] According to Seidenspinner, the original function of the games was to `assist the two brothers in reaching a deep understanding of each other' (1986:291).