## *PLAYLAND*

*Playland*'s opening performance was on 16 July 1992 at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. This production by Mannie Manim was directed by the dramatist himself. John Kani played the role of Martinus Zoeloe and Sean Taylor that of Gideon le Roux, with Bill Flynn as the disembodied voice of `Barking Barney' Barkhuizen. The play was dedicated to the late Yvonne Bryceland.

Barry Ronge, as cited by Miles Holloway, calls the work a `landmark in the history of South African theatre' (1993:36). It is also the most significant work by the playwright in decades. Just as Fugard was `the dramatist who seemed to initiate and define the theatre of dissention in the "old" South Africa, *Playland* seems to define the path ahead' (quoted in Holloway 1993:36).

Holloway (1993:39) proposes that one may read the drama, with its notions of accountability, reckoning, judgement, confession, expiation, forgiveness and reconciliation, as a `symbolic statement of the moral and psychic condition of South Africa' during the transitional period. The frequency with which the *dramatis personae* refer to each other as `black man' and `white man' implies that they are meant to `represent the South African racial spectrum' (1993:39).

The white man is Gideon le Roux, who is an old soldier. During the period of his military service he was transformed, so to speak, into a `killing machine'. At one stage he had to dispose of the corpses of twenty-seven men shot in combat. An old woman, presumably the mother of one of the soldiers, watched while he was lifting the bodies onto a truck, and it suddenly struck him that what he was doing was a `terrible sin' (56).

In the year that he has been back home, nothing seems to have made sense to Gideon. He has come to the fun fair in the hope of forgetting for a while. Here he encounters the amusement park's night-watchman-*cum*-handyman, Martinus Zoeloe. To Gideon, the black Martinus represents Swapo and he harasses the

latter into granting him forgiveness. Martinus, however, has his own issues with which to contend. To him, Gideon `becomes' Andries Johannes de Lange, the white man who violated Martinus's fiancée and whom he subsequently stabbed to death.

Even though Martinus served a sentence before officially being pardoned, he feels that this is not atonement enough. His actual `crime' is having no compunction for what he has done. Indeed, when the judge inquired during the trial whether he had any remorse, he replied: `If I saw that white man tomorrow I would kill him again' (49). Because he cannot forgive, he cannot expect God to forgive him.

At the end of the play the two men listen to and accept each other's confessions. They then leave the stage together, determined to forget the past and grasp present and future opportunities.

In Miles Holloway's opinion, the sharp delineation and individuation of the two characters diminishes the effectiveness of the parable (1993:30). According to this critic, the characters, who come from a specific class and context, do not embody in any unambiguous way a specific political bias, thus militating against a `metaphoric or representative reading' (1993:39).[1] Andrew Foley agrees: `the intellectual aspect of the symbolic, metaphorical resonances is left to look after itself' (1994:68). My personal conviction, expressed in the words of Holloway, is that the `intermingling of the personal and the typical is (simply) a hallmark of Fugard's work inasmuch as his critique of society is usually obliquely, even tangentially, expressed through an exploration of individual anguish and struggle' (1993:39).

This may very well be the reason for the divided response of critics to the play.

[1] Even the rape of Martinus's betrothed does not necessarily depict `the enforced domination of the black majority by a white minority. The rape might simply be a gratuitous act', performed without political motive. The lust and passion with which De Lange dishonours the woman sustains this interpretation (Holloway 1993:39).

White reviewers were generally in favour *of Playland*, while blacks were more reserved and even negative. The literary academy attacked Fugard for not launching a direct attack on the anomalies in South African state policy.

Fugard wrote the drama, set at the turn of the decade, after the speech of F.W. de Klerk, given on 2 February 1990, in which the Prime Minister announced the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of dissident organisations (such as the A.N.C.) as well as the repeal of all apartheid legislation. In this interregnum, past prejudice was giving way to a more democratic order. Like the *dramatis personae* in the play, the audience - as a matter of fact, all South Africans - were expecting the dawn of a new epoch in the history of their country. Nonetheless, when the drama was staged in 1992, negotiations among the parties to the transition had broken down again.

The action of *Playland* spans the period from the sunset of 31 December 1989 to the sunrise of the New Year and decade. It takes place in the `escapist milieu' (Holloway 1993:38) of a small travelling amusement park on the outskirts of a town which is in the middle of the great pan of the Karoo. Holloway intimates that `the Karoo, geographically and as a literary motif, may be regarded as the heart of [the] country: it embodies the soul of the nation unclouded by the exigencies of metropolitan experience' (1993:38).

The play seems to start in *medias res* with a black man stomping on stage. Among the first words uttered by him are:

> I'll see all of you down there in Hell. That's right. All of you. In Hell! And when you wake up and see the big fires and you start crying and saying you sorry and asking forgiveness, then it's me who is laughing.... You tell lies and cheat and drink and make trouble with the little girls and you think God doesn't know? He knows! He sees everything you do.... (8-9)

This exclamation shows that Martinus believes that an omnipotent force is concerned with him, one that will judge individual actions.

As is the case in earlier plays (such as *The Road to Mecca* and *Statements after An Arrest under the Immorality Act*), Fugard presents God, through the eyes of his characters, as not absent from the universe, but as ruthless. He will commit those who sin against him to an eternal inferno: `suffering and agony non-stop' (33).

Martinus Zoeloe, in contrast to Playland's workers and its guests - at whom Barking Barney's `banal promotion of pleasure' (Holloway 1993:38) is levelled - has ostensibly extricated himself from trivialities. He has a solid sense of his own identity. When Gideon informs him, `You haven't got a name. You're just a number. One day I counted you twenty-seven times' (46) and then decides: `I'm calling you Swapo' (46), he rejoins with: `My name is Martinus Zoeloe.' (46)

Individuals who are mindful of their own identity do not repudiate responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Martinus does not deny culpability: `Andries Jacobus de Lange, the Deceased. I killed him.' (48) In addition, being Playland's watchman, he feels himself answerable not only for himself, but also for others. At the same time, he does not surrender himself to conscienceless collectivism (Foster 1982:220) (as the *skollies* and fun-fair-goers seem to do).

On one level, Martinus's guilt may be taken as normal.[2] The playwright has created a character who, upon killing another, understood that he injured, in Buber's words, `an order of the human world whose foundations he knows and recognises as those of his own existence and of all common human existence' (1965:127).

On another level, Martinus's guilt could be regarded as neurotic[3]. He remarks:

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[2] Normal or existential culpability is seen by Tillich as integral to existence (1952:49) as it constitutes a fundamental part of *Dasein* (Yalom 1980:277). It is also `universal in the sense that it characterises every human being in whom self-consciousness has developed' (May in Friedman 1964:449).

[3] Neurotic (or psychotic) guilt anxiety is inappropriate to a situation and may be attributed to an abnormal state of mind. It generally issues from either

`I know I have killed one man, but I have done it too many times. Every night when I sit here I wait again in that little room in the backyard' (58). Holloway maintains that the nature of the offence is also problematic. `Rape evokes opprobrium and sympathy' and Martinus's crime of passion and protectiveness could be interpreted as `constituting a justifiable homicide, which the audience can understand and condone.' (1993:39) Besides, Martinus has served a lengthy sentence for it. Yet, the handyman, in accordance with his literal, almost childlike, Biblical understanding, deems himself doomed:

> He (God) talked to me in a dream....
> `It's no good Martinus. I can see into your heart. I can see you are not sorry for what you did.' So I said `That's true God. I am not sorry.' And He said `Then I can't forgive and you must go to Hell.' (32)

Although Martinus, like Queeny and Helen, acknowledges his sin, he is engulfed by such rage and bitterness that he is unable to atone for and relinquish it. He asks himself: `What is it that makes a man feel sorry?' (54) When Gideon expresses contrition about the men he has killed (55), Martinus is (almost} envious because Gideon is not beyond salvation. Miles Holloway states that the entire encounter between the two *dramatis personae*, Martinus Zoeloe and Gideon le Roux, `rests upon the need for contrition and forgiveness' (1993:40), a need of which the black man, in particular, is acutely aware.

When Gideon orders Martinus to forgive or to kill him, Martinus is tempted to take the second option. Because if he pardons this white man, then he must also pardon the employer of his betrothed who had his way with her: `and if I forgive him, then I must ask God to forgive me ... and then what is left?' (58) His existence would lose its purpose. Besides, he knows `nothing' (58) about granting absolution: `My heart knows how to hate Andries Jacobus de Lange.

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remaining with oneself (Buber in Friedman 1964:224) - as the watchman does - or fraternising with *Das Man* (the collective consciousness of the crowd) (Boss quoted by May in Friedman 1964:449) - as Gideon does. In either case, the potential self is repressed and fullness of being is bypassed (Yalom 1980:147, 285).

That is all it can do' (58).

Martinus therefore isolates himself.[4] He watches the amusement park's visitors who 'come to play' because 'they all want to forget' (16) from a distance and drives those away who venture too close (often with verbal abuse). He apprises Gideon: 'The secrets in my heart got nothing to do with you. So go. There is nothing for you here. This is my place.' (36) Gideon can come back the next day:

> Your Playland is safe. Martinus will watch it for you. Martinus will watch all your toys and tomorrow you can come and play again.
> But now it is my time! Now night-watchman Martinus Zoeloe is in charge. (45)

When Gideon refuses to return to his 'own' (white) people, on the score that there are 'things to settle' (46) between him and Martinus, the latter is made to retort: 'There is nothing between you and me.... To hell with you' (46-7). He has finished with Gideon and Gideon is to get out of his way and leave him alone (47); because, if they 'make trouble for each other', then Martinus knows what will happen: he will kill a second white man. Thus, he will resort to violence should he be forced to go out and have contact with another.

Jaspers holds that 'there can be no man who is a man for himself alone, as a mere individual' and that *Existenz* can only come to itself through another *Existenz* (1957:77, 92). In other words, Martinus will not have a *raison d'être* if he chooses to exist as a self-contained creature who has to account to no-one but himself and God. Instead of confining his emotional environment - as his physical environment is restricted[5] - the character, in the words of Buber, will have to 'stand up to [others], concern [him]self with them, meet them in a real

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[4] Sören Kierkegaard hypothesises that it is fear of the good that causes certain individuals to 'shut themselves up in their solitariness and cling desperately to the evil which holds them fast' (Grimsley 1967:31). Little by little, they sink deeper into the swamp of their 'sin'.

[5] Although he has been touring for fifteen years with Playland, the company follows the same route and stops at the same spots every year.

way, that is, with the truth of [his] whole life' (1947:166).

The justification for this is that only in genuine, challenging dialogical relations[6] with others can one discover truth (communication is, after all, the form in which truth is revealed [Jaspers 1950:48]) and define the *Dasein* (Bedford 1972:257). Martin Buber rightly predicates that `all real living is meeting' (quoted in Friedman 1964:543).[7] So when Martinus condemns others to hell he dooms himself as well as `every destruction of the other is [his] own' (Jaspers 1957:91). The handyman's sentence is having to live in a shrunken world space, literally the `little room' (60) in which his life has stalled.

On the surface, the other major character in the play seems to be just the opposite of Martinus. Whereas Martinus is overtly distrustful of others, Gideon calls the watchman his friend (9) before even knowing his name, and introduces himself as his `old friend Corporal Gideon le Roux' (28). When he is apprised of Martinus's name, it is: `I want us to be buddies. Me and you. Gid and Marty' (28). In an attempt to humour the black man, Gideon also expresses admiration for him: `That's what I like to hear. Somebody who is not afraid to speak his mind' (9) and `That's a good one. I like it' (14). The aggrieved watchman is also urged to `speak up.... It's the only way to put an end to all the nonsense that is going on' (9).[8]

Although one of the premises on which existentialism rests is that, since others

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[6] An alliance between persons that has an element of inclusion to it is termed a dialogical relation by Buber (1947:97). Dialogue is the basic mode of the `I-Thou' relationship (Yalom 1980:366), a relationship which is typified by turning towards the other (Buber 1947:22) and engaging in `genuine conversation' (1947:97); that is, dialectically participating with and, virtually, *in* the other.

[7] Grimsley affirms that the self is `concerned' (1967:51).

[8] Shortly thereafter, Fugard has Gideon contradict himself when the ex-soldier advises Martinus to carry on with his job `and to hell with everything else' (10). Work has to function as a diversion or escape mechanism so that Playland's night-watchman will not ponder his problems.

are indispensable to personal definition (Bedford 1972:257) and all beings should go out `from their centredness to participate in other beings' (May 1961:78), if this participation and identification is taken too far, individual identity is sacrificed. Gideon was brought up to think of others, and, while doing military service in Namibia this instruction became propaganda: `First thing you learn up there in the bush. Don't ever desert a buddy' (30). Now, at home after the war, he has egged himself on: `Get out Gideon le Roux. Get among the people. Join in. Grab some fun. Look for romance!' (13), and at the amusement park he endeavours to establish communication with as many of the fun-fair goers as possible.[9] He tries `too hard to have a good time' (as revealed by the stage directions to scene 2 [25]). `He tells jokes, tries to sing alone with the music ..., creating an image of forced and discordant gaiety.' (25).[10] During all this, he is painfully aware of not fitting in, of not belonging. This induces him to metaphorically describe the amusement park's guests as a `fucking herd of Karoo Zombies grazing on candy floss' (35) and `a crowd of fat arses ... having joyrides in Playland' (35) and to proclaim that `any resemblance between [himself] and them is purely co-incidental' (35). Still later Gideon concedes that there were lies in his laughter (59). This, of course, distanced him even more from others.

It is feasible to infer from the above that Gideon does not really have in mind another's particular being, nor the intention of getting to know and establishing a mutual relation with another who is not part of himself,[11] but different `in the definite, unique way which is peculiar to him' (Buber 1965:79). Although he does not want to be alone, he has no propensity to participate in another's possibilities, transforming these instead into `dead-possibilities' (Sartre

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[9] However, as Jaspers (in Friedman 1964:203) and Yalom (1980:186) point out, if one suppresses one's separate identity, communication will be thwarted and no meaningful relationships will be found.

[10] Yalom (1980:452) postulates that frenetic activity forewarns one of the collapse or the imminent collapse of the false centre.

[11] Permitting the other to exist only as one's own experience is called `reflection' by Buber (1947:23).

1958:288). For instance, he is not `remotely interested' in the troubles of the neighbouring village, Noupoort. As far as he is concerned, `they can drop an atomic bomb on that dump' (20). The watchman's supposed political convictions are made out to be `all that one-man-one-vote-kak' (18) and his utterance regarding the fires of Eternal Damnation is treated in similar vein: `I suppose if you believe in that Bible stuff it could be, but speaking for myself ... [*Shakes his head*] ... no thank you.' (15) Gideon further expounds:

> [G]uess what, my friend ... there's no sign of your Heaven and Hell anywhere! Put that in your old Bantu pipe and smoke it. (19)

When Martinus insists that the Day of Judgment is coming, he is again scoffed at (`it happens to be fairy stories my friend, stupid fairy stories'), then to be requested:

> So if you don't mind, keep them to yourself please. This is supposed to be Playland, not Sunday School. I came here to have a little bit of fun.... (16)

Camus (1971:247) claims that where there is no free exchange of conversation, there can be no communication. Instead there is chatter or the `utterance of the everyday world', which, as Grimsley submits, `seeks to obscure the *Dasein*'s abandonment and blocks the way to an understanding of being' (1976:56).

It is apparent that Gideon has trouble entering into a `real relation of being to being' (Buber 1947:167) where there is no `you' and `me', but a `we' (Sartre 1958:246). It is safer to have his experiences as an `I'. This may very well be the reason for Martinus's reluctance to reveal anything about himself and, as Maree conjectures, his assumption of the black person's `traditional mode of resistance to white domination and intimidation' (1995:31): that of withdrawal and avoidance.

Meaning, however, is located in the `between' and *Dasein*'s potentiality for being `there' and whole lies in the acceptance, appreciation and confirmation of another, as Buber (1965:71) avers. Even though Martinus may be just as limited and conditioned as Gideon is, the two together may attain to the unlimited and

the unconditioned - meaning - as it appears to be the case at the end of the drama. For this reason, I disagree with Maree (1995:31) who avers that neither of the playwright's two protagonists can be the confessor of the other.

In the light of the view that truth, in the interhuman realm, presupposes establishing contact and communication with another and granting to the other a share in one's being (Buber 1965:77), Gideon's assertion that he is in possession of `the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' (30) is ironic. Even though Martinus is instructed to `spill the beans' (34), he is originally not permitted to participate in Gideon's being in turn. When he learns that Gideon has committed `Number Six' (36) - murder - and that he will not be the only one to go to hell, the handyman is notified: `mind your own business, Martinus Zoeloe. The secrets in my heart have got nothing to do with you or anybody else' (36). Still later Martinus has to hear that there is `nothing' between him and the white man (53).[12]

Gideon's contention that he is aware of the truth is further ironic because, in order to protect himself, he deceives himself. For example, when he returns to the watchman after having tried `too hard to have a good time' (59), he mentions that he has forgotten all his troubles: `[his] sick Ma, [his] stupid job, the stupid bloody foreman at [his] stupid bloody job, [his] stupid bloody car that [he] already know[s] won't start when [he] want[s] to go home....' (29), whereas the list is testimony to the contrary.

These issues Fugard depicts Gideon as dealing with are but the symptoms of a more serious, underlying condition. The character has difficulty appreciating his liberty in an altered universe and coming to the realisation that he creates his own feelings and suffering; in short, he denies that his *Dasein* has to choose and realise itself without guidance.

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[12] An inquiry into his own being, however, will also not elicit the truth as it entails turning back on the self and exhausting the energy that could be spent on `the Thou' (Friedman 1964:519).

Because he is unable to face the implications of suddenly being absolutely answerable for his actions,[13] Gideon denies having decision-making ability. He apprises the watchman: `We've got no choices man' (58) (just to gainsay himself when he informs Martinus that the latter indeed has a choice [58]). Existentialists, in contrast, aver that `human reality can choose itself as it intends but is not able *not* to choose itself' (Sartre 1958:479) (italics mine), the ground for this being that `only in the moment of ... choosing and acting does one most truly exist' (Bugental 1976:43). Indeed, as Grimsley (1967:24) puts it, the medium of existence is personal decision. Thus, not to choose is not to be - and non-being is indeed the intention of Gideon le Roux who wants to go `round and round and up and down' until he can forget `who the bloody hell [he is]!' (29), or not be who he is (57), that is, he desires to be disoriented and dispossessed of his identity.[14] He defers the rather dubious decision to Martinus: `Forgive me or kill me. That's the only choice you've got' (58).

In the past, when he was in the army, Gideon could disown the `directness of personal decision' (Buber 1947:202) and the assumption of authorship for the actions of the group (Bedford 1972:277). Since he was under orders and subject to propaganda and religious sanction, *das Man* exercised a `tyranny over [his ...] outlook' (Grimsley 1967:51) and oppressed his *Dasein* until he surrendered and dispersed it in the fallen Being of `the Others' (as Heidegger [1963:164] would put it), or the nameless multitude. The soldier, at that time no more than an `impersonal entity which [was] "everybody" and "nobody"' (Grimsley 1967:51) with no volition of his own, was carried along by the conscienceless crowd, or the army authority, who made the judgments on which he relied and created the rules to which he conformed. Thus, the mainspring of his actions was outside himself and he existed in a `fallen state' (Buber in Yalom 1980:370), of collective amnesia or `forgetfulness of being' (Heidegger's terminology, in Yalom 1980:30)

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[13] Among the implications of accountability are exposure to existential groundlessness, isolation and dissolution.

[14] Ironically, it is here, at the fun fair, that an appeal will be made to his sense of individuality: `Gideon le Roux! I say your name. Please now, listen to me' (47).

in *Lord of the Flies* fashion (`The only thing going on inside you is a sort of wild feeling.' [55]). He became `a drab automaton, merely a cog in the wheels' (Bedford 1972:255) in this *medias res* existence of complicity (Foster 1982:220), committing atrocities against his fellowmen in the ruthless perpetuation of a policy of white supremacy.

However, as Bedford (1972:256) points out: there are no compelling external situations; nothing foreign can ever determine what we feel, who we are and how we live. In spite of our social situation, we are *not* morally impotent and it is still by our *own* agency that everything happens. We are, after all, as responsible for the `war' as if we ourselves declared it, because we had - and still have - the freedom to behave `like a fool or a machine, free to accept, free to refuse' to respond to social expectations (Sartre 1947:289).

After returning from the border, Gideon's alternative to the tragedy of war is to live casually, forgetful of being - in short, in bad faith. (Nevertheless, he claims that he is `not bosbefok[15] or anything like that' [12].) He eludes confronting his culpability and attributes his actions to the `Law of the Jungle! Kill or be killed ... and don't think about it.' (36) He even attempts to make light of the slaughter of the Swapo soldiers:

> "Twenty-seven Swapo cabbages in the garden Sir!" That's a joke. Didn't you get it? Swapo cabbages. I counted the dead men like my Pa use to count his fucking cabbages. So don't just stand there and stare at me like a bloody baboon. Laugh! (52)

Gideon, who is initially indisposed to confront the challenge of life, takes the attitude of a self who has to answer to no-one (Buber 1965:108) and does not seek forgiveness from those whom he has injured. Consequently, the call of his present being - `Where art thou?' - does not receive the reply: `Here am I' (Buber 1947:166), and Gideon is unable to answer for his existence and make the most of it.

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[15] `Bosbefok' is army slang for the emotional instability which could ensue from witnessing and committing atrocities in a war situation.

Like the *skollies* at whom Martinus yells at the beginning of the play, Gideon is portrayed as fascinated with certain finite experiences. Instead of coming to grips with his existential anguish, this war casualty tries to use the world - possibly symbolised by the fun fair - as a tool and absorb himself in its various transient diversions and tranquillisation, dissolving his *Dasein* into `the Others' in such a way that `the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more' and the dictatorship of the *Dasein* `of everydayness' becomes prominent (Heidegger's notion 1963:164). He even contemplates casual sex, that is, spontaneously responding to the desires and needs of the moment which then take precedence over moral and religious considerations (Grimsley 1967:20).

Even though Gideon le Roux is able to distinguish between right and wrong, he is at first averse to admitting spiritual values. Probably sensing that reason, as grounded in existence, is salvation from nihilism (Jaspers 1960:46),[16] he requires the answers to life's questions to be formulated in reasonable terms. He explains his philosophy to Martinus: `Real is what you can believe because you can touch it, and see it, and smell it ... with your eyes wide open.' (33) It is the ex-soldier's point of view that one does not need to wait for

> Judgement Day to find out what that word means. Hell is right here and now. I can take you to it. It's called the Operational Area. (35)

The devil is also real and `here and now' as `he wears a khaki uniform, he's got an AK47 in his hands.' (35) Thus, what *is* for Gideon must manifest itself within the temporarility of the world. (Christian existence, on the other hand, according to Grimsley, is an `absurd' paradox as it is not based on `objective certainty' and cannot be `probed by the understanding' or contained within the limits of intellectual concepts [1967:33, 37].) So when Martinus quotes the Sixth Commandment: `Thou shalt not kill', Gideon refutes both religious and personal

[16] Nonetheless, when reason is not supported by intuitive feeling, it may give rise to emotional detachment (Grimsley 1967:7). Like Fugard's Gideon, the individual will then not make a decision nor take action.

responsibility by rationalising his actions as follows:

> everybody knows there's times when you got to do it.
> What about self defence? Or protecting women and children?
> What about Defending Your country Against Communism? (17-8)

When the morose Martinus warns:

> You can try to forget as hard as like but it won't help, because all the things you did are written down in the Big Book, and when the day comes you will stand there and *He* will read them to you (16-7),

his reply is literal: `try to imagine just how big that book has got to be if what everybody is doing wrong down here is written in it.' (17)

Gideon then also hurls defiance at the values that could constitute a spiritual centre. He makes numerous derisive references to religion throughout the play. These include: `This is now the Big Baas himself we're talking about' (32) and `I'm gat-full of the Bible' (18). The disillusioned former soldier maintains that Martinus's problems come from `those black crows up there in the pulpit taking advantage of simple-minded people like [him]'. Martinus is exhorted to swear that his

> New Year's resolution for 1990 is ... No More Dominees! No More Sermons from the Dominees! No More Bible Stories from the Dominees! No More Bullshit from the Dominees! Hallelujah and Amen! (30-1)

and to `forget about Him (God) man. He's forgotten about us. It's me and you tonight. The whole world is me and you' (58).

The quotation above is evidence of Gideon's resistance to Martinus's insistence that putting others to death is Biblically proscribed. Gideon is a rebel. To him, there is no direct assistance from God and everything depends on people themselves who are responsible for fashioning their own fate during their finite existences. By inference, Gideon could contemplate that the black man - who

believes that God created the world and therefore remains passive to a certain extent - will also have to answer the existential question of what he has made of himself. `He who asks him is his judge, namely he himself, who, at the same time, stands against him.' (Tillich in Friedman 1952:58)

According to Yalom (1980:50), religious individuals do not dread dissolution as much as non-believers do. Agnostics are deemed forlorn, because, along with God, perceptual frameworks and systems of values which could give significance to existence disappear (1980:221). As Gideon expresses it, quoting the Bushman tracker of his unit: `When we die, we die. The wind blows away our footprints and that is the end of us' (18-19). There is no Judgement Day, neither is there a heaven and a hell.

To my mind Fugard's ex-soldier may be suffering from a sense of what Heidegger termed *Unheimlichkeit*[17], that is, he feels foreign in the world due to the exphemerality of existence. Gideon's first encounter with the distinctive possibility of *Dasein*'s finitude was when his father passed away: `The only dead person I had ever seen was my Pa when we all said goodbye to him in his coffin.' (51) Then, he found his and his father's pigeons lying around in pieces in their cage after a cat had sown destruction among them. He compares the end of these birds to that of the `fucking freedom fighters' (12), the Swapo soldiers whom he decimated while defending the border. During this time there was only one thought churning in his head: `You're alive Gid! Stay fucking alive' (55).[18] It is logical that the character should return from the Namibian frontier, terrified by the thought that he, too, will one day die.

Heidegger postulates that when *Dasein* perceives itself as the `possibility of no-

[17] `*Unheimlichkeit*' translates roughly as `unhomeliness' or `not being at home'.

[18] The arrival of the New Year is marked by a cacophony that `imperceptibly begins to suggest the sound of battle' (41), and that gets progressively more violent. Gideon, in his imagination, is back at the border, and, to remind himself of reality, reassures himself: `Easy Gid ... you're alive! ... easy does it ... you're alive ... it's over ... it's all over and you're alive ...' (41).

longer-being-there', it is liberated from its lostness in the `they' as well as the multiple possibilities which present themselves to it, such as taking things lightly and avoiding authorship. Heidegger further intimates that anxiety in the face of death is `anxiety "in the face of" that potentiality-for-Being which is one's ownmost possibility' (1963:294-5). *Dasein*'s uttermost possibility for existence, that is, for achieving fullness of being therefore lies in surrendering itself to the inevitable (1963:435). Gideon le Roux, however, does not appear to accept the inseparability of life and death (Bedford 1972:61), death being the very summit of life (Heidegger quoted in Friedman 1964:542). This could account for his not realising himself and drinking `life to the lees'.

Gideon's sense of *Unheimlichkeit* also indicates an existential vacuum of meaninglessness. (Meaninglessness is often concomitant with a dread of death.) The symptoms of this condition, as specified by Yalom (1980:449), are boredom, listlessness, cynicism, a lack of direction, questioning the point of one's activities, emptiness and an identity crisis (1980:449). Gideon undeniably finds life monotonous. He confides in Martinus:

> Hell, this year now really went slowly hey? I thought we'd never get here. Some days at work it was so bad I use to think my watch had stopped. (11)

This is because he has a `stupid job' and there is a `stupid bloody foreman at [his] stupid bloody job' (29). Without a religiously-based meaning system, Gideon furthermore is cynical about Martinus's convictions. That he lacks direction is disclosed by his words: `Believe me I tried, but I just couldn't get things going again' (11).

However, by identifying the problem, it is incontestable that the character suspects that there must be a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings. As Buber affirms: `in the darkness the light lies hidden, in fear salvation, and in the callousness of one's fellow-men the great Love' (1947:98). Gideon's approaching the watchman may thus be interpreted as an enterprise for light, for salvation and love.

Thus, Fugard has created a character who is, unwittingly perhaps, in search of a context in which he can encounter and experience existential guilt (May in Friedman 1964:445). In this context he will be able to recall and re-experience his past,[19] the past being a constituent of the present. Furthermore, since the past is neither fixed nor finite, it can be composed and reconstructed (Yalom 1980:348). Once the playwright permits Gideon to alter the significance of his memories, he will be able to confess, repent and beg forgiveness, so liberating himself from yesterday's captivity and unresolved guilt and consigning both to oblivion. Only then can he advance towards - and enter - a future that promises reconciliation. (This, of course, applies to other South Africans as well.)

Near the beginning of the drama Gideon has appealed to Martinus to let bygones be bygones (28).[20] He decides that now is the time to settle matters between them (46): `It's me and you tonight. The whole world is me and you. Here! Now!' (58) Hell also happens to be `right here and now' [35]), not on Judgement Day. Hell is having been to the border and surviving with shame. (Ironically, Martinus has remarked earlier that today was the `Day of Judgement' [14], the red and black colours in the sky suggesting to his mind the Fires of Eternal Damnation.) Notwithstanding Gideon's conviction, the past cannot simply be effaced; it must be accounted for - otherwise it will haunt one in the present and arrest future progress.

The disinclination to grasp the significance of the past, so conceiving of and establishing a basis for future existence, lies at the root of spiritual *malaise*

[19] Gideon prefers to remember only the pleasant parts of the past and to forget the rest as is notable from this recollection of the pigeons he shares with Martinus:

> I'm sitting up there on the Border one day - and this is now years later, remember - and I suddenly find myself thinking about them and how lekker it would be to start up again....
> From then on that was all I use to think about. (12)

[20] Existential beings, *per contra*, abide in a combination of all three the tenses (Bedford 1972:316).

(Eugene Minkowski quoted by May in Friedman 1964:450) and, in fact, moral despair. Despair brings the `vanity of all finite things' to mind (Grimsley 1967:26), and Gideon is disgusted with the `bloody world' in which `there's no respect left for nothing no more', only `nonsense' (9).

Not only does the character view the world with disfavour, but he also hates himself; `everything else is just pretending' (59). Yet he cannot act on his self-loathing, so he pushes the caretaker of Playland to the edge. When physical violence does not elicit the desired response, Gideon turns the other's life story into ridicule. He remarks that it is `a fucking joke', `a bad joke' (49) that the black man murdered Andries Jacobus de Lange just for `screwing [his] woman' (49). Not only does he dismiss the validity of motives for and underplay the severity of this offence (Maree 1995:31) in comparison with the homicides he, Gideon le Roux, has committed, but he also presents himself as all white men while Martinus becomes Swapo:

> If screwing your woman is such a big crime, then you and your brothers are going to have to put your knives into one hell of a lot of white men ... starting with me!
> We've all done it. And just like you said, knocked on that door in the backyard, then drag her on to the bed and grind her arse off on the old coir mattress. That's how little white boys learn to do it. On your women!
> And you want to know something else, Swapo? They like it from us! Your woman was crying crocodile tears. I bet you anything you like she had a bloody good time there with the baas humping away on top of her.
> Now do you understand what I'm saying? If you want to kill that white man again, now's your chance. He's standing right here in front of you.
> Try to make it two. You got nothing to lose Swapo. You already got your one-way ticket. You can't go to Hell twice.
> You're an amateur, man. What you did was child's play. I was with the pros and for ten years we were up there on the Border sending your freedom-fighting brothers to Hell....
> Those brothers of yours were full of shit.... (50-1)

When his taunts are all in vain, Gideon once more expresses his desire for death, but more explicitly this time. The moment of crisis occurs when Martinus

is confronted with the odd choice: `Forgive me or kill me' (58). Gideon has to be either pardoned or damned by his confessor and judge. It has dawned on him that existing without exoneration is not living; it is like being in hell.

Martinus is defeated by the decision:

> ... kill you? No. I don't know if I can do it again. I know I have only killed one man, but I have done it too many times. (58)

As a last resort, he listens to what the other has to say, turning from an `unwilling confessor into an interested one' (Maree 1995:31):

> you tell me you are laughing at dead men but I can see it is a lie.
> Why are you trying so hard to make me believe it? (48)

At a later stage he questions Gideon again, now more directly:

> Are you hiding something away like little Martinus?
> I am going to ask you, but you must tell me no more lies. What is the true feeling inside you? (53)

When Gideon rejoins with a `Leave me alone', Martinus insists:

> No, you must tell me now. You must speak the truth. What is the feeling you got inside you? (53)

`The humanitarian impulse prevails' (Holloway 1993:39), and the white man lowers his defences and openly and honestly communicates with the black man. Gideon recognises that he has `fucking feelings for Africa man' and inquires: `Which ones do you want? Bad feelings, sick feelings, hate feelings?' (53) At the confessional climax of the play he admits that he has just been dissembling and that he is consumed by culpability. He has already disclosed, `I bury you every night in my sleep' (46) and at the beginning of the play claimed that Martinus would send him to hell if he knew what he, Gideon, had done. Gideon's existential regret stems from the sense of being bound up with all living things, and yet it seems to him that, whenever he gets the chance, he deals a death blow to them. He recalls a holiday spent in Mossel Bay when he was `still

just a little outjie in a khaki broek' (56):

> So one day I catch this lekker fat little fish and I'm all excited and I start to cut it up and then - *Here*! man, hundreds of little babies jump out of its stomach on to the rock....
> I just knew that what I had done was a terrible sin. Anyway you look at it, whether you believe all that stuff about Heaven and Hell and God Almighty or not it makes no difference. What I had done was a sin. You can't do that to a mother and her babies. (56)

His insight into his `sin', nonetheless, did not prevent him from repeating it again, many years later:

> So then what the hell was going on man? There I was on the back of that lorry doing it again, only this time it was men I was sommer throwing into that hole. (56-7)

At the limit-situation of the decimation of the Swapo insurgents, Gideon tore off the mask and gloves he had been wearing. This symbolic gesture marks his realisation of the import of his crime and the rediscovery of himself as having a nature common to those of other humans. It constitutes a revolt against indoctrination and unjust laws, aimed at instilling terror.

After unmasking himself, Gideon went looking for an old black woman, who he presumed was the mother of one of the soldiers, and who had been quietly watching from a distance.

> I wanted to tell her about that 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 her for forgiveness ... but she was gone. (57)

The ex-soldier confides in Martinus: `Kill somebody and sooner or later you end up like one of those landmine wrecks on the side of the road up there on the Border - burnt-out and bloody useless' (58), and `Inside me I'm still at that hole outside Oshakati. That's where I go every bloody night in my dreams ...' (59). He parodies himself: `You're alive Gid!', and bitterly adds: `What a bloody joke.

I'm as dead as the men I buried and I'm also spooking the place where I did it' (59).

Martinus has also acquired insight about himself and changed. No longer is he the subservient black worker.[21] His response is: `To hell with spooking! You are alive' (60). Gideon is not to squander his life; instead, he is to plunge into it and live it spontaneously and creatively. He is to switch from being a spectator of the life process to being an active participant. As a start, he has to commit himself to the future and plan for it.[22] He must go home and `do it. Get some planks, find some nails and a hammer and fix that hok. Start again with the pigeon-birds.' (60) When Playland returns to the village the following Christmas and New Year, Martinus wants to do `like [Gideon] said ... look up in the sky, watch the pigeon-birds flying and drink [his] tea and laugh!' (60) He, in turn, will leave his room and, as Gideon puts it, let `old Andries spook there by himself' (60).

Both characters thus succeed in transcending their socio-political situation and projecting themselves upon a more equitable, brighter future. While the *Dasein* of each moves `ahead' of, `beyond' and `outside' itself, it also moves toward itself (Grimsley 1967:46). The crisis is resolved and the *dramatis personae* `find a new understanding and appreciation of each other in a world that holds more than just [their] individual catastrophes, hurts, regrets and sadnesses' (Manim 1992:xiv):

> Martinus: Do you hear what I am saying Gideon le Roux?
> Gideon: I hear you Martinus Zoeloe.
> Martinus: Do you understand what I am saying?
> Gideon: Ja, I think so. And you also hey.... Do you understand me Martinus Zoeloe?

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[21] Holloway, nonetheless, divines that the `white man will continue to occupy his position of privilege, while the black will loyally remain the good and faithful servant' (1993:41).

[22] Eugene Minkowski maintains that the `inability to conceive of and live in the future is the fundamental condition of depressions and other forms of psychological unhealth' (quoted by May in Friedman 1964:450).

Martinus: Ja, I understand you. (60-1)

The protagonists also no longer consider each other as a fictitious `court of appeal' whose sole function is to listen, but they direct what they say to the other `as the person he is', to use Buber's words (1965:79). This acceptance of each other, again, frees them to become attentive to their own beings (May in Friedman 1964:448).

The taking on of responsibility for each other's existence furthermore evinces that Fugard's *dramatis personae* are becoming the authors of their own destinies. Gideon's *Dasein* has been wrenched away from the `they' and, like Martinus's, has been liberated and individualised. It can now comprehend itself `on the basis of its (distinctive) existential possibilit[ies]' (Grimsley 1967:54). Martinus's potential being, again, has been exhumed by the white man, and by granting Gideon a share in his being, he may be seen to embrace the universe as a whole. It is therefore possible to conclude that both characters, Gideon le Roux and Martinus Zoeloe, as they leave the stage together, have resolved their inner conflicts, overcome their seemingly `fixed' natures and are redeemed in this, probably the most optimistic of Fugard's plays.