

1987

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THE EVOLUTION OF ATHOL FUGARD'S THE BLOOD KNOT

by
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A Thesis
Presented to the Graduate Committee
of Lehigh University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in
English

Lehigh University

1987

This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

July 16, 1987
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Table of Contents

Abstract	page 1
Introduction	page 2
<u>The Blood Knot</u> in the Sixties: Roots, Reactions, and Racial Significance	page 3
The Published Text: An Imagistic Reading	page 15
<u>The Blood Knot</u> Reborn in the Eighties: A Reflection of the Artist and his Times	page 31
Vita	Page 54

Abstract

Athol Fugard's play The Blood Knot, written in the early 1960's, responds well to the kind of scholarship one applies to the established literary cannon. Indeed, rather than the political propaganda some critics accuse it of being, this work has value apart from its South African roots. The playwright's use of natural imagery and his skill in blending that imagery with his characters insure the play's survival apart from South Africa's racial injustices. The published script from the 1960's was not to be the last for The Blood Knot, however, and in the 1980's Fugard turned his attention again to this play. This new, shorter version succeeds without the early poetic stance and natural imagery; it relies instead on a more forceful tone and a more clearly political message, both of which comment on the artist and his world.

Introduction

It is a great joy to pay tribute to Athol Fugard by studying his play The Blood Knot. So little has been written about this work, as well as the rest of his plays, and so much needs to be said. I find it particularly intriguing that, of all the plays he has written since the early sixties, Fugard chose to return to this very early portrayal of two brothers struggling with their brotherhood, infusing it with new life. His efforts brought the play back to Yale Repertory Theatre, the home of its American debut in the mid-sixties, and on to Broadway and a Tony nomination in 1985. The evolution of The Blood Knot from its South African beginnings, to Broadway, and back again not only displays the development of a piece of literature as its author seeks to keep its voice heard above the clamor of changing times, but also illustrates the evolution of an artist as he adjusts his ever changing artistic vision to the volatile, darkening political climate.

Chapter 1

The Blood Knot in the Sixties: Roots, Reactions, and Racial Significance

Athol Fugard's The Blood Knot brought the South African playwright international acclaim. After 140 performances in Port Elizabeth, ending in 1962, and a run in London, the play came to New York. In South Africa the play's performance marked the first time that a white man and a black man shared the same stage; those actors were Athol Fugard and Zakes Mokae. Dennis Walder describes the event:

And for nearly four hours the two held their invited, multiracial audience spellbound. Traffic noises drifted up from the front of the building, drumming and chanting from an African miners' hostel at the back penetrated the empty egg-boxes pinned to the windows. But the journalists, theatre people and assorted friends who packed the new 'Rehearsal Room' of the African Music and Drama Association in Dorkay House were gripped as never before by a passionate duet which probed and revealed the feelings associated with that perennial South African subject--race.

(1)

In the words of Derek Cohen, "Those who saw the initial performance knew instinctively that something of a revolution had taken [sic] place in the stodgily Angloid cultural world of South Africa....This was no academic or novelistic description of familiar situations and old

facts, but a charged poetic truth powerfully welded into a harrowing public spectacle" (Drama & Police State, 151). Something powerfully new had happened on that stage, and the world soon came to know of it.

The play held up a vivid mirror to the racial problems brought to light in the sixties, its creation almost concurrent with an incident that brought South Africa to the minds of our whole world. In Sharpsville, South Africa, 1960, police opened fire on a group of black protestors, killing sixty-nine of them. This event marks the beginning of the ongoing struggle of South African blacks for equality and the ongoing negation by white minority rulers of the opportunity for racial equality. Insured by apartheid, the South African government's system of racial segregation, the Sharpsville incident has recurred again and again like some bad dream from which one keeps hoping to wake. In the wave of violence between police and black protestors and between black government supporters and black protesters since September, 1984, more than two thousand people have been killed.

Living in such conditions, Athol Fugard certainly has been touched by the racial issues which are at the root of these deaths. The Blood Knot shows his concern through its exploration of white/black relationships within that specific context, South Africa. Fugard calls himself a regional writer, his Port Elizabeth being akin to

William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. And like Faulkner, Fugard's skill makes art from the life and death around him. His surroundings cannot be separated from the political structure which creates them; Fugard's art cannot be experienced as separate from the political overtones which create it. Yet just as one need not know the South to appreciate Faulkner, one need not know South Africa to be moved by Fugard's drama. As R. J. Green writes, "despite the setting and the pigmentation of the play's two characters, The Blood Knot, is not merely a dramatisation of the evils of apartheid: ...Athol Fugard had transcended the immediate and topical issues of political and racial injustice by writing a play that has universal resonances....it speaks to both South Africa and Everyman" (351). Like all of Fugard's work, this play shows us "not only...the South African dimension of man's inhumanity to man, but also...the secret pain we all inflict upon each other in the private recesses of our closest relationships" (Walder, 2-3).

Not all critics have lauded the play, however. In fact, much controversy surrounded its debut. According to Derek Cohen,

The bleakness of its conclusion which demonstrates the deeply rooted hatred of the black world for the white led Afrikaans critics to nod sagely and declare that Fugard's play had poignantly shown the essential truth of apartheid: that black and white can

never live together in peace--that racial differences are ultimately insuperable obstacles to real harmony. This opinion of the play's 'message' has also found support amongst an influential minority of black critics who regard it as a racist work which shows up whites as preservers of civilization and blacks as primitive brutes who think with their fists.

(151)

It is true that we see Morrie as intellectual and Zach as physical, but I don't think that their characteristics are to be considered stereotypical. As Green asserts, "Morris and Zachariah...are not typical or representative South Africans: they are, first and foremost, men--two human being [sic] involved in a complicated relationship that is made more dramatic and tense--more public, as well--by the undertones of colour prejudice" (331). One Fugard critic, Mshgenu, finds Fugard's treatment of the South African lifestyle weak and asks, "Why does Fugard's depiction of blacks, in particular black workers, suggest a lack of initiative, inarticulateness, an inability to do more than endure--attributes which in reality cannot be generally applied?" (173) Mshgenu believes that the answer to his question lies in Fugard's "race, class and culture" (173). The distance that these put him from the blacks about whom he writes distorts Fugard's vision, asserts Mshgenu, causing, "inauthentic depiction, the propagation of oppressive stereotypes and distorted political meanings" (174).

By remembering that Fugard creates art, not political treatises, we can most effectively answer these allegations. He can present his world only as he sees it or as he imagines others see it, his characters as he knows them or as he believes others know them. In fact, Fugard shows us repeatedly that black and white are equally the victims of apartheid. In this way, we must consider Fugard's depictions authentic. But more crucially, we must see Morrie and Zach as "two human beings, with very different personalities, each trying to impose himself upon the other, to gain that position of dominance that will enable his will to triumph" (Green, 335). Clearly, we don't need racial differences to create a battle of wills. That struggle for dominance will outlive all of our prejudices.

The play's action occurs in one room, a shack with one window, through which both characters gaze from time to time, and one door leading to the world outside. In this room we find Morris and Zachariah Pieterse, sons of a black mother and a white father. But through luck (or fate) their parents' genes produced one dark-skinned son, Zach, and one light-skinned son, Morrie. Zach works as a park attendant, keeping out undesirables, and Morrie stays home and keeps the shack clean, prepares their meals, winds the alarm clock that regularly marks the various parts of the day, reads from the Bible, draws hot footbaths for Zach's aching feet, and saves money for a two-man farm he

intends to buy in the future. They spend their time together talking. Don MacLennan acknowledges the importance of talking to the two men and to all of Fugard's characters when he writes, "Man, if nothing else, is a fabulous voice, an inexhaustible flow of language. In their beginning was the word, consequently Fugard's characters will not be told to shut up" (59). At first we find their lifestyle and their conversations images of domestic bliss; soon, however, even before we have any evidence, we begin to feel an uneasy rumbling within the four walls.

Each man has desires that the other in effect stops him from fulfilling. Zach wants a woman; he suddenly realizes that ever since Morrie came to live with him one year earlier he has not been with a woman or Minnie, his friend with whom he used to spend weekend nights. Morrie doesn't like the whole idea of Zach's desires, for they conflict with his own. He wants to leave Korsten and secure a future by buying a farm; for that he needs money, money that Zach would squander if he returned to his lifestyle of the previous year. There seems to be no way out of their inability to find mutual happiness.

Morrie tries to reason his way out of this conflict. He decides to get Zach a pen-pal, a kind of replacement for the real woman Zach wants. That way he can satisfy Zach without threatening his own plans. Ironically, they choose the most physically pleasing woman from a list of

advertisements for pen-pals. Writing letters and getting answers through the mail excite Morrie, but Zach, who is illiterate, but more importantly who wants a flesh and blood woman, could care less.

The initial conflict, that of a black and a white brother, yields no problem in and of itself until another, seemingly arbitrary conflict brings the racial one to light. Not until Ethel turns out to be a white woman with a policeman for a brother do we see the effect that skin color has upon the brothers. As a result of their discussion of Ethel's whiteness, Zach sees how imprisoned his blackness makes him and angrily envies Morrie's free skin. Morrie, whose skin makes him almost free, sees how trapped between the two races his mixed parentage has made him and envies, in a painful way, Zach's blackness for the racial certainty it gives him. Deborah Foster interprets this basic conflict:

On the surface level, Zachariah and Morris act out their day to day life as brothers living near Port Elizabeth, South Africa. On the underlying level, Zachariah and Morris relate symbolically to each other as black oppressed and white oppressor. It is from the simultaneous development of these two levels that the audience experiences the relationship between the black South African individual and the system of apartheid in which he lives.

(207).

Clearly, Zach can't meet Ethel; she is just a pleasant illusion to brighten his thoughts. But when she writes announcing her plan to visit, Zach thinks that Morrie could

fool her, could appear to be white. Morrie spent ten years as a white man before being "caught" and remembers that pain; nonetheless, Zach manages to interest him in the prospects of "playing white" one more time. In this they are a team: together they prepare each other, plan, and rehearse for Ethel's visit. To pull it off, Morrie must sacrifice his future, the money he has saved, for clothing, and Zach must sacrifice what he wants, a woman. So neither one gets what he wants, but both of them get caught up in the game of self-delusion: fooling the white world.

All is lost, however, for Ethel cancels her visit since she's getting married soon, and the two men are just as they started--alone in their room without the outside world touching them, yet determining their lives anyway. They need something to keep them going--in place of money for their farm they now have a suit of clothes--so, using the clothes as props, they invent a dangerous game in which they play the roles that their world determines for them. Morrie beats Zach for declaring he will not play the servile black man, but Zach gets the advantage, forcing Morrie down and preparing to beat him in revenge. Fortunately, Morrie's alarm clock rings, awakening them from the nightmare game.

Fugard doesn't leave us there, however, with this picture of brutality; instead the play closes with Zach's asking Morris, "Is there no other way?" and Morris'

proclamation, "No. You see, we're tied together, Zach. It's what they call the blood knot...the bond between brothers" (97). I cannot agree with Cohen when he says, "the play ends on a note of bleakness and despair as one comes slowly to the realization that there is no 'future' for the two, no hope and no happiness" (S. A. Drama, 77). That brotherhood, no matter how strained, forms the center of both their lives; it is the payment for their struggle and the source of their identity. As Jimmy Matyu wrote in an early review,

The play, with poetry stealing its way into its seven scenes, has biting, scathing satire. Humour pervades though the subject matter is of deep seriousness. The production is a serious attempt to mirror some of the obnoxious laws designed to rule our daily lives as well as the strained relationships among the different races that make up our South African society.

(72)

The humor that Matyu finds helps save the play from utter despair. But the hope that filters through its pores also saves it, a hope that within those walls they might find a way to shatter the need for apartheid.

Fugard's flying imagery bears upon its wings the country's burden, forcing it to submit to the earth's gravitational pull, yet it also carries hope. And this layering of hope and futility provides the tension and power in the characters as well as in the play. Fugard's notebook entries for the years during his writing of the

play explore two of these images--birds and moths. In these, we find the germ for an imagery pattern that takes these two men on frequent trips away from their shack, giving them their dreams and their hopes, yet showing them their restrictions. The moth story Morrie tells Zach, hoping to explain his fear of "playing white" to fool Ethel, comes from Fugard's December, 1960 entry: "This same petrol station about five years ago when I was waiting, late at night, for a lift. Moths--thousands of them--around the lamp in the room where I sat with the night attendant" (Notebooks, 13). And in January of 1961 we see the beginning of a constant fascination with a very different kind of flying creature: "The swift--most aerial of all birds. Gathers all its food and nesting materials flying. Drinks by skimming low over still ponds. They mate in mid-air. Sometimes spend a whole night in the air. Never set foot on the ground" (Notebooks, 15). The contrast between the freedom of the birds, soaring above the earth, taking the resources it offers, and continuing their flight, and the relative dependence of the moths, hovering close to the earth, craving the light it offers, and falling victim to its searing heat, provides the essential contrast between the South African white man's freedom and the South African black man's dependence.

Fugard's further bird study expresses his characters' limits:

...two gulls. Immobility. Occasionally they took a few steps. Once, one actually remembered his wings but all he thought to do was hold them outstretched, like useless arms, while he hopped a few feet forward and then again tucked them behind his back and was quite still. It was a subtle but deep contrast.

(Notebooks, 33)

Although it seems that neither Zach with his black, moth-like skin nor Morrie with his black ancestry can experience a bird-like existence, the gulls' potential for flight leads us to consider their potential as well. By analogy, they need to rediscover their wings, a Herculean task in their Korsten shack.

Interestingly, although Fugard frequently considers nature in his notebooks, he doesn't mention butterflies even once during his years of writing The Blood Knot. I find this intriguing because certainly, as the next chapter will show, the butterfly represents the most desirable but most untouchable image. Growing from the moths, and the birds, and Fugard's patient and thoughtful watching, the butterfly image presents a compromise between the bird's beauty and the moth's death wish. Not until April of 1962 do we find a reference to butterflies; after that date they often command Fugard's attention. In March, 1963, he considers the role of butterflies in this play:

Butterflies on the beach. February-March is obviously their month. A strong, provocative image--skipping over the sand and even quite far out on the water. At one stage I waded out quite a good distance on a gradually sloping rock-shelf.

Several of them flew up to me, turning away only at the very last minute, which prompted the fancy that they had mistaken me for a tree.

A bright scrap of time dancing unconcerned on the face of eternity.

There is a divine madness--almost an extravagance--in the way they used up the day. Their fragility, delicacy, makes them so mortal I think they must almost be conscious of it--accept it and fly away into the sun--a laugh given color and wings.

God, how deep is that image in The Blood Knot.

(77)

Although safe from the moth's self-destructive nature, the butterfly's fragility and its ephemeral nature make it more vulnerable than the bird. All three characteristics of these flying creatures, all three approaches to life, if you will, concern Fugard in The Blood Knot. And as Morrie's and Zach's desires germinate, sprout, and struggle for life in the barren Korsten setting, Fugard's pattern of imagery revolves in a similar cycle, an echo of the human spirit in its journey toward freedom.

Chapter 2

The Published Text: An Imagistic Reading

Fugard writes in his notebooks, "the stage and the writing for it only becomes compulsive when I approach it with images not ideas" (144). I think that is also an excellent prescription for approaching The Blood Knot as it appeared in 1964, affording a many layered treatment of Morrie and Zach, South Africa, and the author's vision of humanity. Although the play primarily treats the two brothers and their relationship, it is never far from the principal conflict of black and white and all the other traditional clusters of ideas that go with that conflict: light and dark, clean and dirty, safe and dangerous, spirit and body. Fugard manipulates this chiaroscuro of images, blending the lake, the darkness, and Zach, and the birds, the light, and Morrie, using the butterflies and moths as signifiers of both their ephemeral dreams.

The play begins and ends with the image of a lake. This particular lake is unlike one we might think of--that is blue, clear water sparkling under a similarly colored sky. Instead, it is a dirty lake--muddy, brown water under a smoke-filled sky. Fugard ties the lake to Zach who is also brown and accused by Morrie of being unclean ("You're still using paper the way I showed you, hey?" (7), Morrie asks him). Morrie, on the other hand, uses paper, acknowledges the need to borrow a bath from time to time, and is clean

skinned, white, like the white birds that visit the lake.
Seeming to acknowledge that parallel, Morrie says to Zach,

Have you noticed it never changes colour?
On blue days or grey days it stays the
same dirty brown. And so calm, hey, Zach!
Like a face without feeling. But the mys-
tery of my life, man, is the birds. Why,
they come and settle here and fly around
so white and beautiful on the water and
never get dirty from it too!

(13-14)

In Morrie's image, the "dirty brown" lake doesn't touch the
clean white bird. Derek Cohen notes the parallel to the
South African subtext when he writes, "like the white
people in this world, they [the birds] are untouched by the
filth and misery which pervade the lives of the blacks" (S.
A. Drama, 79). As representatives of apartheid's racial
divisions, Morrie and Zach claim images that enforce
their separation.

Zach's reaction to the lake is somewhat different from
Morrie's. He tells Morrie that he would like to jump into
it and swim away, suggesting that he too would like to
escape from the confines of his life. But unlike Morrie's
white birds, Zach can not escape. Diving into the lake will
only immerse him further into its confines. Morrie's
follow-up on that image also connects Zach and the lake.

Just a dead bit of water. They should
drain it away, now that winter's coming
and the birds are gone. Pull out the
plug and fill it up with fresh.

(28)

Zach wants to understand why Morrie feels the way he

does about the lake, so he asks him, "You say a thing about it. The one that gives me the creeps" (28). We realize that he has asked to hear this before, and Morrie's response completes the ritual.

'No fish nor fowl,
Did break the still hate of its face.'
(28)

Feeling the hate coming from Morrie, Zach yells, "Hell!" But like the birds above the water, Morrie is untouched by the lake's problems. Accepting the lake as his self-image, Zach also accepts his inability to fly as the white birds of Morrie's self-image do, images of the spirit. When Zach looks out the same window, he sees two donkeys mating, images of the body.

Although as Cohen points out, "Zach too loves words for the comfort they can provide him, for the way in which words name things, feelings, attitudes" (S. A. Drama, 78), Zach does not live on the level of spiritual imagery. He is a picture of bodily comfort instead, as he displays when he falls asleep during one of Morrie's monologues on spiritual brotherly love. We might assume that Zach's dreams return him to the times when his friend Minnie used to visit and they would go out and drink and find women--a time which ended with Morrie's return after ten years of being on the road.

Finding himself without an audience, Morrie becomes more contemplative, and in a connection probably spurred by

his earlier talk of the white birds, his mind travels back to the day of his return to Zach.

The sun was on my back. Yes! I left the road because it went a longer way around... and I was in a hurry...and it was autumn. I had noticed the signs on the way. Motor-cars were fewer and fast. All of them were crowded and never stopped. Their dust was yellow. Telephone poles had lost all their birds...and I was alone...and getting worried. I needed comfort. It's only a season, I said bravely.

(20)

Since we know that Morrie finds a parallel to birds' lives, we know that the season for their migrating marks something similar for him. Indeed, Morrie finds himself "alone and getting worried," a confusion similar to that of a lone goose separated from its "Vee." But the conflict for Morrie continues even when he returns to Zach, for his blood matches Zach's, though his skin matches that of the white world.

We see Morrie's conflict explicitly when he tells Zach about his first meeting with the townspeople of Korsten. Upon seeing him on the road, they couldn't tell if he was white or black, and therefore they didn't know how to address him. He asked them the time.

It's not late, they said. Not really dark, don't worry. It always gets this way when the wind blows up the factory smoke. The birds are always fooled and settle down too soon to sleep.

(20)

Again the bird imagery expresses Morrie's dilemma. It is likely that he feels the darkness of Korsten has fooled

him, grounded him, and tied him to Zach with the trick of darkness.

But only through Fugard's imagery do we know that Morrie feels anything like that regret. He speaks to Zach of their leaving Korsten together, of their saving money and buying a two-man farm. This idyllic dream belongs to Morrie alone. It is he who saves the money Zach makes, he who keeps the dream alive. Although Morrie can't capture Zach with the dream of the farm, he finds that the reality of a woman gets his full attention. Again, though, Zach's physical desire is answered only by Morrie's spiritual, disembodied solution: Need a woman? Get a penpal! Zach, disinterested at first, allows Morrie to compose the initial letter without his help.

Imposing his spiritual ways upon his earth brother, Morrie confirms his refusal to get dirty in the Korsten shack. But his plan backfires when Ethel Lange, eighteen years old and well developed, sends a photo proclaiming her whiteness. Zach, thoroughly pleased at the thought of a white woman's writing to him, attempts to convince Morrie that no harm will come from continuing the correspondance. In a striking reversal of the first letter writing scene, Zach begins composing a letter in reply. Dictating to his brother who is literate, Zach suddenly uses Morrie's imagery, showing that he understood the implications of it all along. Talking to Ethel with what he seems to consider

"white" phraseology, he tells her why he can't send a photo of himself.

It's winter down here now. The light is bad, the lake is black, the birds have gone. Wait for spring, when things improve.

(45)

Zach's words echo the imagery of the white world; he has learned to see his life as dark and dirty from Morrie's quotations and reflections. All that is clean, light, and good has left and Zach remains.

From the tension that Ethel's whiteness brings to the brothers, a new image, butterflies, surfaces in the play. Like birds, butterflies fly in the light of day, but unlike birds, who live on seeds and bugs, they live on nectars from flowers. It is a romantic image, but for Zach and Morrie the butterfly's beauty remains elusive. Unlike their view of the birds on the lake, their scene from the window affords them no glimpse of butterflies. The play only treats them as they are in dreams or in fantasy.

Butterflies first invade the play as an image of importance during the very memorable car ride scene, in which both brothers search their memories for a common image from their childhood together, a childhood of innocence in regard to the meaning of skin color. It makes sense that the most romantic of images flutters through their little play. At first we begin to doubt they will find a common memory. Finally, however, they strike upon

it: While Zach pretends to drive the car, Morrie tells him what they pass by; it is their game, a common memory.

Morris. Look! There's a butterfly.
Zachariah. On your side?
Morris. Yours as well. Just look.
Zachariah. All around us, hey!
Morris. This is rare, Zach! We've
driven into a flock of butterflies.
[Zachariah smiles and then laughs.]
You remember, hey! We've found it, Zach.
We've found it! This is our youth!

(50)

This common image of their youth brings them together, however briefly.

The butterflies re-enter later on in the play when for a change Morrie falls asleep first and Zach tries on the suit they bought for Morrie to wear when Ethel visits. It is a "butterfly" costume, the dress of a white man, and Zach thinks that Morrie will be fully transformed into a gentleman when he dons it. In this night time scene Zach, wearing the ill-fitting clothes, addresses his mother:

Didn't think I could do it, did you?
Well, to tell you the truth, the whole
truth so help me God, I got sick of
myself and made a change...Look! I
brought you a present, old soul.
[Holds out a hand with fingers lightly
closed.] It's a butterfly. A real
beauty butterfly. We were travelling
fast, Ma. We hit them at ninety...a
whole flock. But one was still alive,
and made me think of...Mother...So I
caught it, myself, for you, remember-
ing what I caught from you. This,
old Ma of mine, is gratitude for you,
and it proves it, doesn't it? Some
things are only skin-deep, because I
got it, here in my hand, I got beauty
...too...haven't I?

(81-2)

Zach's gift of a butterfly shows his desire to wear his brother's white skin. This represents a new facet of Zach; until Ethel's letters began arriving, he didn't even recognize Morrie's whiteness and therefore didn't desire it himself. But the butterfly holds the essence of the beauty and the freedom he now sees in his brother's skin, as opposed to the bile and the entrapment he comes to see in his own.

The final reference to butterflies comes toward the end of the play. Here too butterflies have no bearing on reality, much like those they encounter in their car-ride game. At this point, Ethel has written to announce her engagement and her subsequent inability to visit as planned. From the absolute emptiness that her letter leaves, the brothers create a new, vicious game to keep them busy, but without the threat that Ethel represents, they can both think of it as play. Derek Cohen sees the game as "The confrontation between white and black South [Africa]" (S. A. Drama, 81). But the beauty of Fugard's play is that this scene, like many others, functions gracefully on several levels, for this meeting is just as inevitable for Morrie and Zach as it is for two races living under apartheid. In the game, Zach pretends that he does his job keeping black children away from the gate of the park, while Morrie plays a white man. Each one plays the role of his desires. Zach feels his anger at

white man, and Morrie feels the glory of breaking away from the bonds of his birth. He says,

In fact, I'm almost free...because down hill is always easier! I can run now! So I turn my back and away I go, laughing, over the green spring grass, into the flowers and among the butterflies....I too flew from darkness to light, but I didn't burn my wings. [Pause.] Now I'm tired. After so many years so much beauty is a burden.

(90)

Unlike the butterfly imagery which remains always unreal, the moth imagery always grounds itself in experience, and once it comes into the play, it takes a central part in the remaining action. Moths fly in the danger of night, and, unhappy with their plight, they always seek the safety of light, ramming themselves against the source of light as if trying to become part of it, or flying into an open flame as if wanting to sacrifice themselves to its power. Generally, Zach ignores this image--he refuses to see the danger of Morrie's life as light-skinned--he can only think of him as a lucky butterfly. Morrie, however, having tried to live the white man's life, knows that at best he can be a moth, never the butterfly of illusion.

In scene four when Ethel's letter announces her plan to visit her penpal, Morrie wants to talk about moths. Any light Ethel may have brought fades to darkness, and Zach's imagery mirrors that change. Zach doesn't want to listen and keeps interrupting:

Zachariah. Ethel...?

Morris. Is coming here.[Puts down
the letter and stands up. A false yawn
and stretch before going to the window.]
I've noticed hardly any moths....

Zachariah. Coming here!

Morris. As I was saying. Hardly any
moths I've noticed have....

Zachariah. Ethel!

(56)

Morrie doesn't finish what he has to say about the moths. Instead, he deals with the reality of Ethel's visit and its meaning. While questioning Zach and trying to get him to see the problem in keeping up correspondence with Ethel, Morrie forces Zach to admit that her whiteness, along with its reflection on him, drew Zach to her. Morrie stresses the danger of a black man courting a white woman. Painfully, Zach acknowledges the danger and responds with anger:

The whole, rotten, stinking
lot is all because I'm black!
(62)

In his telling Morrie why he had thought that he could get away with writing to Ethel, Zach shows that he views Morrie in much the same way as Morrie views himself. It could be a fantasy, confusing them both, a white bird (an albatross?) weighing them down, or a white moth flying blindly into its own destruction.

You see you were too white, so blindingly
white that I couldn't see what I was doing.
(63)

R. J. Green writes that Zach's ability to accept his

blackness makes Morrie jealous (34), since he has never been that sure himself about his own color. He truly wishes that "that old washerwoman had bruised me too at birth" (63). Indeed, the contradiction between his blood and his skin confuses Morrie. We see it in the image of the bird who should be leaving, though he belongs, and we see it in his certainty that butterflies are not moths, though they both have wings.

The moths of Fugard's imagery remind us of Icarus, the figure in Greek mythology, who, not heeding his father's advice, flew too close to the sun and lost his artificial wings. As Morrie continues with his moth story, the connection between the myth and Morrie's life becomes more clear. If we interpret the moths as representing human limits and butterflies as human hopes, we understand why the butterflies of the last scene are gone.

Yes. I remember now. The moths. I was on the road somewhere and it got dark again. So I stopped at a petrol station and sat up with the night boy in his little room. An elderly ou. I asked his name. Kleinbooi. But he didn't ask mine. He wasn't sure, you see. So often in my life they haven't been sure, you see. We sat there on the floor and cars came a few times in the night, but mostly it was just Kleinbooi and me, dozing...and, of course, the moths. Soft, dusty moths, flying in through the door to the lamp, or on the floor dragging their wings, or on their backs. I'm telling you there are millions of moths in this world, but only in summer; because where do they go when it's winter? I remember having a deep thought about moths that night, Zach....

(63-4)

On the floor of the shack he sees the dead moths, and the carnage makes him fear his own desire for light. Butterflies are in his memory, birds are in his mind, but moths explain his life.

Before Morrie finishes his story, Zach does some convincing in exchange for Morrie's favor of helping Zach accept his blackness. Zach tries to get Morrie to see his whiteness, a whiteness that he contends Ethel would take for the real thing. Listening but not answering, Morrie imagines the danger explicit in what Zach suggests and returns, as a reply, to his moth story.

Where was I? Yes. At a garage, on the floor, with Kleinbooi and there were moths. Then I had that deep thought. You see they were flying in out of the darkness, out of the black, lonely night...to the lamp...into the flame. Always to light, I thought. Everything always flying, or growing, or turning, or crying for the whiteness of light. Birds following the sun when winter comes; trees and things standing, begging for it; moths hunting it; Man wanting it. All of us, always, out of darkness and into light.

(69-70)

R. J. Green writes, "On one level this scene is an amazing insight into the complex psychology of blackness and whiteness....And yet, on a more general level, Fugard is here exploring the attractiveness to Man of all dreams--be they racial, sexual or any other" (339). Like the dreams of the black South African's living under white supremacist rule, Morrie's dreams have faded somewhat after his reminiscence of the night with Kleinbooi.

Having told Zach about the moths, Morrie has really told him not only why he came back but also why he can't try to fool Ethel by wearing fine clothes. But oddly enough, his speech leaves him instead ready to try to be the butterfly that Zach thinks he can be and that he wishes he could be. His dreams regain their colorful wings again, and he tells Zach, "Go to a good shop. Ask for the outfit, for a gentleman" (70). With these words, Morrie sacrifices their future, a two-man farm, for the money to buy the white man's clothing again.

The clothes' arrival, however, finds Morrie newly unsettled. The clothes are not all, he explains to Zach, and to provide an example of what he means he says that whiteness is "even in their way of walking" (70). Rather than telling another moth story, Morrie tells one that applies the moth nature to human nature. During his time away, trying for white, he found himself on a lonely road with just one man ahead of him.

There was something about him, about the way he walked, the way he went to the top...and looked back at me, and then walked on again. And all the time, with this worry in my heart, the loneliness was creeping across the veld and I was hurrying a bit more. In fact, I was going quite quick by then. When the sun went at last, I was trotting you might say, and worried, Zach, really worried, man, because I could see the warm glow of his fire as I ran that last little bit through the dark.

(75)

The parallels are significant: moths get burned when they fly to light; black men get arrested, perhaps killed, when

they try to be white.

In a more constructive preparation for Ethel's arrival, the brothers play a game, not unlike the one of their childhood, in which Morrie, a white gentleman, wants to get the attention of Zach, a black vendor, to buy Ethel some monkey nuts. In her article on the play, Anna Rutherford writes that the games they play serve a "psychological function. Insofar as they force each other into their stereotyped roles and compel each other to see themselves as black and white society sees them, they are in effect acting as Freudian analysts to each other, exposing their neuroses and hopefully, through exposure, curing them" (281). This game works that way; Morrie finally confesses that he has already tried to pass for white:

Why did I do it?...Why try to deny it?
Because...because...I'll tell you the
whole truth now....Because I did try it!
It didn't seem a sin. If a man was born
with a chance at a change, why not take
it, I thought...thinking of worms lying
warm in their silk, to come out one day
with wings and things! Why not a man?
(79)

Although the worm lies safely wrapped in its warm silk, Morrie knows that once it gains wings there is danger involved, especially if it turns out to be a moth rather than a butterfly.

The idea of changing from cocoon to moth and butterfly parallels the ideas that each brother has at some point in the play--that of changing skin color. Morrie and Zach

have learned, however, that from a silk worm most likely a creature will arise, fly to light, and die; spirit will become dead body. In other words, they have accepted their skin color in lieu of the death that would result from trying to change it. This acceptance allows them to pretend within the safety of their room. R. J. Green comments on the value of their pretending when he writes, "at last [they recognize] the uncomfortable truth: that they can only live together by each playing the role he has desired secretly from the outset" (343). They are grounded--not birds, not butterflies, not even moths. "They recognize that all is useless," Derek Cohen further notes, "yet they do not cease to live, they do not just give up and die....they simply live as they must" (77). When Morris looks out at the lake and recites his quotation to Zach, we see resignation in its changes.

'Not a bird left now...to break the still
hate of its face.'

(95)

The change from 'no fish nor fowl' to "not a bird left now" shows Morrie's acceptance of having lost his wings. Green suggests that now "the two brothers are at last stripped bare of all their protective illusions" (333). As a result, Morrie feels the lake now without hopes of escape.

Like Morrie and like Zach, the final image in the play, the lake, can not fly away. Yet hope survives in its blackness. Birds do come to it, needing its water for

life, and it does carry on as Zach and Morrie do. They are tied to the hope at the bottom of the water just as they are tied to each other by "the blood knot" between brothers. But Morrie sees the lake differently now, and he sees his life differently.

It's the mystery of my life, that lake. I mean....It smells dead, doesn't it? If ever there was a piece of water that looks dead and done for, that's what I'm looking at now. And yet, who knows? Who really knows what's at the bottom?

(96)

By seeing his life as like the lake, not like the birds, Morrie shows his change. He has accepted his place beside Zach in their South African homeland.

Fugard brings the play full circle at the end. His sequence of imagery--lake, birds, butterflies, moths and lake again--matches the sequence of winged fantasy fading to reality that Morrie and Zach have experienced. Their dreams, as the dreams of the South Africans in Fugard's subtext, escape them as soon as they are born. When the lake regains our attention at the end, the brothers can share it as an image, just as in the past they shared the image of the butterflies. That lake is not the most beautiful of images, but it is the foundation of life, and it won't fly away when they near it, as the birds, the butterflies, and the moths do.

Chapter 3

The Blood Knot Reborn in the Eighties: A Reflection of the Artist and His Times

By the time the play reached New York in 1964, it had been cut from four hours to two and a half hours, starred James Earl Jones and J. D. Cannon, and was voted the best play of the year by The New York Times. From such auspicious beginnings, the play continued to flourish, and in 1985, twenty-five years after its first performance, a marquis in New York again announced the opening of The Blood Knot, starring the original cast of two--Fugard and Mokaie. Critical acclaim was high, higher, in fact, than it had been for the 1964 version. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this revival concerns the unfortunate timeliness of its subject after more than two decades.

The play's shorter run time, somewhat less than two hours, reflects the short attention span of modern audiences accustomed to television shows, but it also reflects a changed vision in the eyes of the playwright. I was in the audience during one of the early performances. The same kind of tense quiet filled the theatre as accounts of the original show suggest. But this time the audience found themselves in the eighties, in New York, with thirty and forty dollar tickets, wearing designer clothing, furs or imported woolen overcoats, many toting leather attaches, having come directly from their Manhattan offices. Still, I imagine that our experience moved us almost as much as it

moved the 120 people in the makeshift room in Port Elizabeth, twenty-five years before. Samuel Freedman reviewed the new play during its run at the Yale Repertory Theatre. He opens his article by saying, "There is talk here of two anniversaries. Only one of them gives cause for celebration" (21). The Blood Knot is the one to celebrate, the Sharpesville anniversary the one to contemplate. Freedman continues, "In its first incarnation, 'The Blood Knot' offered some hope, the possibility of redemption, that typified the early dissident novels of Alan Paton....Over 25 years, however, little has given Mr. Fugard, Mr. Mokaie or most of South Africa's other artists reason to hope" (21).

Athol Fugard and Zakes Mokaie played their roles with an urgency that grabbed at the audience; they embraced New Yorkers with their skill but also with desperation. Having already written a draft of the previous chapter before attending the performance, I noticed that the rich imagery no longer filled their lines, but having experienced the play acted for the first time, I didn't feel any loss. What I did feel was that though this was the same play, it was also a very different one. When hope no longer fills the black hole of Zach's and Morrie's lives and the imagery no longer provides the potential for flight, we see only the bitterness of their blood knot, not the strength of its tie. Fugard explains, "'The play was written 25 years ago

and there was a kind of prophecy in it that if the South African people didn't sort things out, something terrible would happen. And it has'" (Freedman, 21). The audience felt that terror, as the play's first viewers probably did not. In Fugard's words, "'The experience of these brothers, the journey of self-discovery, the terribly dangerous game they play is not as innocent as it was 25 years ago. Because South Africa has lost its innocence. All its innocence'" (Freedman, 21).

Living with the two brothers in the 1960's one heard the language of beauty, dreams, hope. It fluttered through the play like the creatures upon whose wings Fugard placed it--butterflies, moths, birds--but mostly the butterflies. That imagery formed the principle beauty in the lives we shared twenty some years ago. Now that it is gone, other images take its place. But they are not as lovely, or as ephemeral; instead, they bring an economic dimension, a sensual reality and a startling sound to the chaos of apartheid.

The eighties' stage set looks similar to the one in early performances of The Blood Knot. Photographs from both sets show the same corrugated metal walls, the single window, the stark reality of the room in which Zach and Morrie live. The poverty of this setting needs no period cues, no changes in style or the characters' clothing; with hindsight we might say that the twenty-five years

might not have passed at all. Athol Fugard has witnessed the lack of change in South Africa, and his extensive cutting of the play mirrors his evident frustration. Since nothing has been added, any textual analysis must focus on the effect of the excised material. We find less interest in the world outside their shack, either in the imagery that served to bring the characters out of it or in factual references to Morrie's life outside of it; less difference in the brothers' abilities to articulate and their abilities to hold their own in discussions; and less emphasis on the power of language to help them deal with their problems. By de-emphasizing these once powerful divisions between the two men, Fugard has created a more political play and a more realistic one.

The imagery of flight showed the men separated by their self-visions, but the new imagery grounds them in their setting, thereby placing the source of their division outside themselves. The new equality between the two men suggests an end to the dream in which the white man leads the black man to freedom. And the diminished power of language suggests that Fugard questions Morrie's "talking helps," believing instead that phrasing holds more force when it is more pointed, less literary. The eighties give us a bleaker The Blood Knot, one that no longer whispers of hope that all will work out with time, but one that screams for change to occur before it is too late.

Now the newly-considered imagery more often finds meaning in Zach's interpretation rather than Morrie's. For example, in the 1985 production, Zach's footsalts pick up additional resonances when they are left alone in scene one without the lake and the birds. We no longer see a concern with the wind and the smells from the lake, but we do have concern with economics. And economic considerations soon lead to aesthetics--color, texture, and smell. Unlike Morrie's poetic reverie about the lake, however, Zach's interest in his footsalts brings us closer to their shack's four walls and its Korsten setting. Speaking of the footsalts manufacturer, Zach says,¹"Hey. I see it now. I do the bloody work--all day long--in the sun. Not him. It's my stinking feet that got the hardnesses. But he goes and makes my profit" (Manu, 5). Although Morrie also gets Zach's profit without working in the sun all day, the daily ritual of the footsalts shows Morrie as the subservient brother, mothering and waiting on Zach's needs. As an image, the footsalts accent their dependent relationship, whereas the flying imagery stressed their individuality.

Zach's coat, another "object" image that gains emphasis, also brings sensual concerns of color, texture and smell into the play, unlike the philosophical concerns ushered in on the wings of the flying imagery. Even though

¹This and all subsequent references to the unpublished script will be noted by (Manu.).

in 1960 Morrie had more to say about the coat, stretching the metaphor as far as it would go, the emphasis is stronger in the eighties' version: to get inside a man's coat is to get inside his life, to smell it, to feel it. Morrie says,

It's been a big help to me, this warm, old coat. You get right inside a man when you can wrap up in the smell of him. It prepared me for your flesh, Zach. Because your flesh, you see, has an effect on me. The sight of it, the feel of it... it feels, you see...I saw you again after all those years...and it hurt, man.
(Manu, 21)

This streamlined version strikes us more vividly; we could almost repeat it, having heard it only once. Fugard has opted to use the concrete world, the one we touch and smell everyday, as his central imagery. Because of this change, Morrie and Zach are more firmly tied to the earth--and its problems.

The quiet of this South African world strikes us---no music, no singing, no birds chirping outside the window; only the words of the two men break the silence, and a periodic alarm. Morrie's alarm clock is the only other sound we hear in either edition, but without the words that launched the flying imagery, its force jars us even more. The alarm breaks off discussion, controls sleep time, meal time; indeed, it controls their lives. Although Morrie sets it for the appropriate time and keeps it wound and reset, the new version points out just how much the clock

controls its winder. He no longer departs from conversations with Zach to philosophize and create dream imagery; instead, the clock calls him away, and he tends to it as if his very existence depended upon it, just as his spiritual life used to depend upon his imagistic escape.

Indeed, in the 1980's version Morrie has changed. We see Fugard's altered conception of him through the cut monologues, like the one about the lake and the white birds, in which Morrie explained why he came back to Zach. No longer depending upon metaphor, Morrie can't explain his return, underlining his sense of powerlessness. He can only relate:

Have you noticed, Zach, the days are getting shorter, the nights longer? Autumn is in our smelly air. It's the time I came back, hey! About a year ago! We should have remembered what day it was, though. Would have made a good birthday, don't you think? A candle on a cake for the day that Morrie came back to Zach.

(Manu, 21).

Without the long passage about the lake, Morrie seems more content with their lives; we find no hint of the eruption that lies within him and no vision of himself as a white bird. He speaks of a candle on a cake instead.

Although he still talks a lot in the new version, the substance of Morrie's conversation has changed. Fugard's cuts remove Morrie's self doubt, his fear of the future. We see the dream farm more clearly as an illusion, for we no longer hear Morrie acknowledge the threat the world

represents for any dream, let alone a black man's dream.

These lines have now been removed:

Go out, you say. But go out where?
On to the streets? Are they any better?
Where do they lead? Nowhere. That's my
lesson. City streets lead nowhere...just
corners and lampposts. And roads are no
different, let me tell you...only longer,
and no corners and no lamp-posts which,
in a way, is even worse. I mean...I've
seen them, haven't I? Leading away into
the world--the big empty world.

(10)

As a result, when Morrie says, "our farm in the future...that will be different" (Manu, 16), he no longer compares their farm to the streets and the empty world but only to Korsten and its "rotten smell" found in the lines that precede it in the new version. Rather than Morrie's fears, we hear his certainty and his assertions (now seemingly fancified) about happiness lying ahead. Consequently, we regard the dream with as much doubt as Zach does.

Over and over, Fugard cuts Morrie's long philosophic speeches containing his poetic descriptions and revelations. For example, the following lines in the original showed Morrie as a poetic, thoughtful man, one intimate with the natural world, though not the world of men:

In between my cleaning and making
the room ready when you're at work,
I look at the lake. Even when I can't
smell it I just come here to the
window and look. [Morris is now at

the window and looking at the lake.]
It's a remarkable sheet of water.
Have you noticed it never changes
colour? On blue days or grey days
it stays the same dirty brown. And
so calm, hey, Zach! Like a face
without feeling. But the mystery of
my life, man, is the birds. Why,
they come and settle here and fly
around so white and beautiful on the
water and never get dirty from it too!

(13-4)

An altered Morrie stays away from the window in the eighties, concerning himself instead with the smell, the feel, and the look of life inside the shack. Even more than before, their room is a microcosm of the outside world, and Fugard keeps us imprisoned within its walls, forcing us to acknowledge that only within them will answers be found.

In the new version, Fugard minimalizes Morrie's experience, his ability to use language, and his cultural difference. He seems to want the brothers' bond to be more indigenous and more permanent, as, of course, the subtext of South Africa makes it. Morrie's world was once the world outside of Korsten, but now Fugard has removed his continual reference to it. For example, we no longer hear Morrie's long description of Oudtshoorn, Ethel Lange's hometown. The early Morrie's full, poetic portrait moves from physical characteristics, "White, white thorns and the bushes grey and broken off" to the effect upon him: "Both times I went straight through. I didn't make no friends there" (25). But that life doesn't matter in the new play;

what matters is that Morrie has come back, and what concerns Fugard is that he can't escape anymore.

Fugard's latest cuts in Morrie's lines not only affect the way we respond to Morrie, but also the way we view Zach. Zach seems more steadfast, more a power to reckon with than he did before, yet his lines are very much the same. Because Morrie talks less, Zach seems to talk more; because Morrie is less poetic and philosophic, Zach's lack of poetry seems less noteworthy; because Morrie is less spiritual, Zach seems less obviously physical. As a result the two brothers are more equal. To support this movement, Fugard often makes Zach more grammatical. For example, whereas in the old text Zach said, "I only seen me properly tonight" (64), the new text reads, "seen myself," a partial correction. Also we find that Zach's line "if I didn't know who you was" (64) now has the verb "were." Fugard also changes Zach's "You know what these is?" (71) to "what this is."

Since Fugard has cut all reference of any merit to the lake and the birds there, when Zach narrates his letter to the white Ethel and says, "It's winter down here. The light is bad, the lake is black, the birds have gone. Wait for spring, when things improve" (Manu, 60), he has created the imagery. In the 1960 version it seems that Zach mimicks Morrie, for Morrie claims the images first. In a reflection of their old relationship, Morrie speaks

and Zach listens and learns. But now Zach expresses a poetic and philosophic view of life and seems more knowledgeable about the world in which Ethel lives than does Morrie, since the latter no longer has a long monologue describing his visit there.

In addition, Fugard has given one of the two remaining imagery references exclusively to Zach. This held-over scene shows Zach talking to his mother and recalling the butterfly he captured for her in his youth. Fugard leaves this scene virtually untouched; Zach presents a single butterfly to his vision of his mother. Again we no longer compare Zach's scene to Morrie's corresponding one, for most of Morrie's references have been cut. Zach's midnight talk with his mother really captures us, because his sensitivity and use of language resonate with a force this scene didn't allow him under the shadow of Morrie's monologues.

The scene in which Zach gets Morrie to see his whiteness exemplifies many of the changes Fugard made throughout the play: he cut Morrie's lines and left most of Zach's, thereby balancing the two. As part of that new balance, Morrie's moth story, which took up three or four pages of text in the 1960 version, had to be cut, thereby affecting the end of scene four most powerfully. Instead of Morrie's own story serving as the impetus for his lines, "Go to a good shop. Ask for the outfit, for a gentleman"

(Manu, 103), Zach's question, "Aren't we brothers?" (Manu, 103) turns Morrie's thinking around and makes him ready to present himself to Ethel as a white man. Rather than outside "worldly" experience, his life in the shack as Zach's brother determines his actions.

Zach's increased sensitivity also affects the way the two men relate to each other. When at the end of an early scene, Zach asks Morrie about his sex life, "Anything the matter with you?", Fugard removes Morrie's accusatory comments which are intended to condemn Zach's definition of male/female relationships. In the earlier version Morrie says,

I touched the other thing once, with my life and these 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. That's the question. Do you want to know what was the matter with me? Do you? Zach? Zach?

(34)

Although most of this speech remains intact, noticeably absent is Morrie's reference to the blood, pain, and screaming that was a reaction to Zach's tale of sex with Connie, which Fugard has cut also. In removing both the tale and Morrie's derogatory reference to it, Fugard softens Zach's character and eases the tension between their opposing visions of sexuality and love. Also removed

are Morrie's angry questions, "do you want to know what's the matter with me? Do you?" (34). The new script's tone contains regard for Zach's opinion and speaks more gently. Morrie now says, "Ask me why I didn't take it when I touched it. That's the question. Do you want to know why, Zach? Do you? Zach? [Pause, then softly] Zachariah?" (Manu, 41). As a result of these changes, we experience less relief when we find that Zach has fallen asleep and hasn't heard Morrie's words. Significantly, we now simply find Morrie talking to no one about a love that doesn't belong in his Korsten world anyway.

In the 1980's version, Fugard's changes consistently diminish Morrie's command, his harshness to Zach. When Morrie warns his brother to stay away from the white Ethel in the early version, violence and fear constitute his argumentative weapons. The revision alters his approach. Only the underlined lines currently remain (parenthetical words were added):

Morris. Please, Zach. You're going to get hurt.
 Zachariah. [aggression]. Such as by who?
 Morris. Ethel. [Zachariah laughs] Then yourself! (Oh, yes) Yes! Do you think a man can't hurt himself? Let me tell you, he can. More than anybody else can hurt him, he can hurt himself. I know. What's to stop him dreaming forbidden dreams at night and waking up too late? Hey? Or playing dangerous games with himself and forgetting where to stop? I know them, I tell you, these dreams and games a man has with himself. That. There in your hand. To Miss Ethel Lange, Oudsthorn. You think that's a letter? I'm telling you it's a dream, and

the most dangerous one. Maybe, just maybe, when the lights are out, when you lie alone in the darkest hour of the night, then, just maybe, a man can dream that one for a little while. But remember, that even then, wherever you lie, breathing fast and dreaming, God's Watching With His Secret Eye to see how far you go! You think he hasn't seen us tonight?(And) now you got (have) it on paper as well! That's what they call evidence, you know. Pause] Shit (God), Zach, I have a feeling about this business, man!
(46); (Manu, 62)

Fugard's careful editing of this speech makes it less of a knowing fire and brimstone sermon intended to bring the ignorant Zach to trembling. The message still comes through, but the shroud of hypothetical ideas about the dangers of dreams has fallen away. Fugard has peeled away philosophy and psychology and left the brutal facts of black legal status in their stead.

A similar speech of Morrie's has also been cut for much the same reason--it was too harsh, too cruel-sounding. It begins with Ethel's uncle, of whom Morrie says, "Uncle! [Another laugh] That's an ugly word, when you get to know its meanings. Oom Jakob! Do you hear it? Hairy wrists in khaki sleeves with thick fingers. When they curled up, that fist was as big as my hand!" (57). This monster-like description no longer remains to threaten Zach. Its removal emphasizes Fugard's desire to weaken the superior stance of Morrie, whose experience means nothing to Zach. We still have the tension of the two men working through the reasons why Ethel is no good for Zach, but the tension

is less exhausting. For example, we have Morrie's warning:

When they get their hands on a dark-born boy playing with a white idea, you think they don't find out what he's been dreaming at night? They've got ways and means, Zach. Mean ways. Like confinement, in a cell, on bread and water, for days without end.

(84)

But that's all, political facts, not implied moral imperatives. Morrie's examples, metaphors, and memories no longer fill the picture with vivid cruelty. Also gone from the most recent production is the following extended example--an example that we assume comes from Morrie's own experience (underlined words remain):

They sit outside with their ears to the keyhole and wait...and wait...
They got time. You'll get tired. So they wait. And soon you do, no matter how you fight, your eyeballs start rolling round and ...around and then, before you know it, maybe while you're still praying, before you can cry, or scream for help...you fall asleep and dream!...It's his dreams they carry off to judgment, shouting: 'Silence! He's been caught! With convictions? He's pleading! He's guilty! Take him away.' [Pause.] Where? You ask where with your eyes, I see. You know where, Zach. You've seen them, in the streets, carrying their spades and the man with his gun. Bald heads, short trousers, and that ugly jersey with the red, painful red stripes around the body.

(59)

A second subtle lessening of the harshness between the two men occurs with Fugard's adding many direct addresses to both characters' lines. For example, "It's not that...."(42) becomes "it's not that, Zach" (Manu, 55). And "Don't fool yourself" (43) becomes "Don't fool yourself,

Zach" (Manu, 56). Though these are minor changes, they make the characters more intimate, more respectful of one another. In addition, Fugard has altered various phrases to achieve a more sensitive tone. For example, in 1960 Morrie said to Zach, "Give it to me" (39), but in the 1985 version he says, "Zach, let me have another look at her" (Manu, 46). In addition, Zach's claim, "It's my room, isn't it? It is!" (39), has been removed. In like manner, Zach asks in the sixties, "What the hell are you talking about?" (39) He no longer uses that tone with Morrie in 1985. Besides, the answer is now more clear.

It can be said that the early version of the play clearly recognized the power of language in human affairs. Although the strength of the word in the current production still builds, destroys, and connects men's ideas, it no longer mends their differences. Morrie's ability to write letters still gives him power over what Zach can say in them. Morrie still has to tell his brother how to ask the shopkeeper for the proper clothes to wear to meet Ethel. And in both versions Morrie tries to convince Zach that talking helps. But, ironically, Fugard's cuts consistently remove Morrie's talk and the sections having to do with semantics; thus Fugard demonstrates by default the insufficiency of Morrie's idealistic view of language's power and beauty, perhaps reflecting his own changed view concerning the poetic and philosophic use of language as

evidenced in the earlier version.

One of the most important words for Morrie in 1960 and 1980 is "brother." When Zach asks Morrie why he came back, he replies, "We are brothers, remember," and the word "brother" becomes the basis for a long series of meditations. Although in the new version Morrie still plays with the word brother (as well as with Father, Mother, and Sister), Fugard doesn't let him take his playfulness quite so far. As a result, this speech is silenced in 1985:

But brothers! Try it. Brotherhood.
Brother-in-arms, each other's arms,
Brotherly love. Ah, it breeds, man!
It's warm and feathery, like eggs in a
nest. [Pause] I'll tell you a secret
now, Zach. Of all the things there
are in this world, I like most to hear
you call me that.

(19)

The power of the idea no longer fits neatly behind the word.

Language still holds Fugard's meaning, but its spareness in comparison with the play's first run on Broadway shows a somewhat changed attitude toward the possibility of language to lighten the human condition. Words still encompass all that they have of value within their room--even Ethel is no more than words on a page. But without the moth story that once fluttered through the scene, we notice the power of words as a weapon; Morrie displays this power when he struts his semantic superiority

over Zach:

Zachariah. I see they got animals on stamps nowadays.

Morris. [his patience wearing thin]. You mean to tell me you only see that now?

Zachariah. Donkeys with stripes.

Morrie. Zebras.

Zachariah. Ja...with stripes

Zachariah. And my name on the envelope. How do like that, hey?

Morris. Your name?

Zachariah. Ja. My name.

Morris. Oh.

Zachariah. Now what do you mean, with an 'Oh' like that?

Morris. What makes you so sure that that is your name? [Zachariah is trapped.] How do you spell your name, Zach? Come on, let's hear.

(Manu, 76-7)

Fugard has accented this pointed cruelty in regard to Zach's lack of semantic control in the trimmed script by removing such concerns elsewhere. Rather than emphasizing the therapeutic power of words, Fugard stresses their destructive power.

But in the 1960's Morrie's rhetoric served as a model for Zach, one to emulate. Knowing how to handle words gives power, and Zach seemed to have learned the orator's skill from his teacher as evidenced in the following excised monologue:

...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...me at the gate...you in here...why, nothing would happen. Isn't that so? One by one we would just topple over and nothing would happen. But we all know that some-

thing got to happen. So that proves
it, doesn't it? We must carry on.
Okay? Feeling better?

(83-4)

Instead of having Zach use Morrie's style of rhetoric, (as shown above) to convince him that they must carry on, Fugard has him focus on things, real evidence: "What's this bundle, Morrie?" (Manu, 121), he asks.

Morrie's reply also concerned itself with the power of language, and he had all the power. But Fugard diminished that power by cutting these lines:

You see, this morning when you were at work, I thought it out. It's no use any more, I said. There's no future left for us now, in here. So I wrapped up my Bible and my clock in my shirt and wrote the farewell note. Four pages! I explained everything. I was ready to go, man...until I realized that you couldn't read. My God, that hurt! That cut me deep! Zach can't read without me! [Pause] So you see, I know I can't go.

(84)

Since he no longer accents Zach's dependence upon Morrie's ability to manipulate the written word, perhaps Fugard suggests that the black man doesn't need to mimic the white man's culture.

When Ethel's letter arrives, telling of her marriage and therefore releasing the two from having to play their white-man charade with her, the men are released from fear. Rather than preparing them for closeness, however, that freedom prepares them for the roles of oppressor and oppressed, the roles Ethel helped them see in each other.

Toward the end of the play, during the scene in which they play their new "pretend" game at the gate, we find, as we do in the older version, Morrie's proclamation:

It's the mystery of my life, that lake.
I mean...It looks dead, doesn't it?
If ever there was a piece of water that
looks dead and done for, that's what
I'm looking at now.

(Manu, 150)

But we don't find the hope of the earlier version: "And yet, who knows? Who really knows what's at the bottom?"

(96) Cutting that, Fugard moves to Zach's semantic question instead: "What is it, Morrie? You know. The two of us...in here?" And Morrie's reply, "Home" (Manu, 151). But we realize, all too well, perhaps, that "home" is South Africa, a home in which laws determine what blacks, or anyone who openly opposes apartheid, may do within its walls as well as beyond them.

Although Morrie still has the last lines of the play, we hear them differently now that we have seen a different play, one rewritten by an older man, one edited by a more realistic, perhaps less hopeful man. When Morrie answers Zach's question, "Is there no other way?" by saying, "No, Zach. You see, we're tied together. It's what they call the blood knot...the bond between brothers" (Manu, 151), we notice the terrible state of affairs more vividly, for we haven't seen any fluttering of wings that might rise above the ashes of the shanty like some phoenix. Instead, we have dead-end memories and frightening games played in

the shadow of a dead lake in a relationship which needs more than words to make it right.

Fugard's revised play is less subtle, more forceful; perhaps there is less to lose after these past decades of trying to effect change through art--perhaps he has simply grown older, more impatient; perhaps he is less willing to stand on the stage wrapped in a soft, warm verbal cocoon, taking his chances on the biologically determined factors of color and wings. Or perhaps he, like his South Africa, has lost his innocence. And, along with it, a mighty portion of his hope.

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