

☐ Contemporary
Literary Criticism

CLC

211

Volume 211

Contemporary Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works
of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and
Other Creative Writers



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Preface

Named “one of the twenty-five most distinguished reference titles published during the past twenty-five years” by *Reference Quarterly*, the *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* series provides readers with critical commentary and general information on more than 2,000 authors now living or who died after December 31, 1999. Volumes published from 1973 through 1999 include authors who died after December 31, 1959. Previous to the publication of the first volume of *CLC* in 1973, there was no ongoing digest monitoring scholarly and popular sources of critical opinion and explication of modern literature. *CLC*, therefore, has fulfilled an essential need, particularly since the complexity and variety of contemporary literature makes the function of criticism especially important to today’s reader.

Scope of the Series

CLC provides significant passages from published criticism of works by creative writers. Since many of the authors covered in *CLC* inspire continual critical commentary, writers are often represented in more than one volume. There is, of course, no duplication of reprinted criticism.

Authors are selected for inclusion for a variety of reasons, among them the publication or dramatic production of a critically acclaimed new work, the reception of a major literary award, revival of interest in past writings, or the adaptation of a literary work to film or television.

Attention is also given to several other groups of writers—authors of considerable public interest—about whose work criticism is often difficult to locate. These include mystery and science fiction writers, literary and social critics, foreign authors, and authors who represent particular ethnic groups.

Each *CLC* volume contains individual essays and reviews taken from hundreds of book review periodicals, general magazines, scholarly journals, monographs, and books. Entries include critical evaluations spanning from the beginning of an author’s career to the most current commentary. Interviews, feature articles, and other published writings that offer insight into the author’s works are also presented. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the general critical and biographical material in *CLC* provides them with vital information required to write a term paper, analyze a poem, or lead a book discussion group. In addition, complete bibliographical citations note the original source and all of the information necessary for a term paper footnote or bibliography.

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- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.

- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.
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- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
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Athol Fugard

1932-

(Born Harold Athol Lannigan Fugard) South African playwright, novelist, and memoirist.

The following entry provides criticism on Fugard's career through 2004. For further information on his life and works, see *CLC*, Volumes 5, 9, 14, 25, 40, and 80.

INTRODUCTION

Fugard is South Africa's most prominent playwright of the late-twentieth century. A white South African, Fugard's dramatic works explore the complexities of race relations in South Africa during the Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras. Most of his plays consist of two or three characters exploring issues of racism and identity through the working out of internal and interpersonal conflict. He is known for his sparse, minimalist settings and naturalistic dialogue, which combines South African English, the Dutch-derived Afrikaans language, and the patois of black South Africans. During the Apartheid era, Fugard's anti-Apartheid stance, expressed through the content of his plays as well as his interracial approach to theatrical production, earned him the censure of the South African government, which banned some of his works, took away his passport, and placed him under police surveillance. Fugard has also received criticism from some black critics who assert that, as a white man, he is not in a position to speak for the experiences of black South Africans. Fugard received the 1971 Obie Award for distinguished foreign play for *Boesman and Lena* (1969) and the 1982 New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play for *A Lesson from Aloes* (1978). For "*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys (1982) he received the 1983 New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play and the 1984 London Evening Standard Award.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Fugard was born in Middelburg, Cape Province, South Africa, on June 11, 1932, and grew up in the industrial city of Port Elizabeth, on the Indian Ocean. His father was an English-speaking South African and his mother was from a Dutch-speaking Afrikaaner family. Fugard's father, a former jazz pianist, was physically disabled and spent much of his time confined to his bed, while his mother, an uneducated woman, supported the family

by managing a tea room and boarding house. Fugard has stated that he received mixed messages from his parents regarding race relations in South Africa. While his father expressed unabashed racism, his mother taught him to question racial prejudice. As a boy, Fugard himself insisted on being called "Master Harold" by his family's black employees, and recalls one incident in which he spit in the face of a black man who had always treated him with affection. Fugard's sense of guilt and shame about his own behavior became the basis for "*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys, one of his most highly celebrated plays. Fugard attended Port Elizabeth Technical College from 1946 to 1950, and the University of Cape Town from 1950 to 1953. Before completing his college degree, he left school and obtained work as the only white crew member on a steamer ship which journeyed from South Africa to the Far East. In 1956, he married Sheila Meiring, a novelist and poet, with whom he has a daughter. During the 1950s Fugard worked as a journalist for the *Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, as a reporter for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and as a court clerk in Johannesburg. An aspiring novelist, Fugard at this time began to associate with a community of black writers and actors, who provided him with insight into the struggles of blacks under the Apartheid system. Through this influence, he turned to playwriting, and to addressing issues of race relations head-on. His early efforts, such as *No-Good Friday* (1958) and *Nongogo* (1959), were performed by black and white actors for small, private audiences. In 1958, Fugard cofounded the African Theatre Workshop in Sophiatown. *The Blood Knot* (1961) was his first play to garner widespread recognition, as well as political controversy. In addition to the anti-Apartheid message of the play, the fact that black and white actors appeared on stage together, as well as the composition of a mixed-race audience, was groundbreaking in itself. In 1963, Fugard cofounded the Serpent Players in Port Elizabeth, where he worked as a writer, director, and actor. After a production of *The Blood Knot* was broadcast on British television in 1967, the South African government revoked Fugard's passport, threatening him with exile if he left the country. Due to public pressure, the passport was returned to him in 1971. In 1972 he cofounded an experimental theater in Cape Town called The Space. By the 1980s, Fugard's status as a world-renowned playwright was established and the publication of his *Notebooks, 1960-1977* (1983) was well-received. His international reputation as an

important playwright critical of the racist Apartheid government helped to raise awareness of the need to oppose Apartheid. With the dismantling of Apartheid, reformation of the government, and election of black activist Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa in the early 1990s, Fugard went through a transition phase in his career as a writer. From exploring the suffering caused by Apartheid, Fugard turned to exploring the fresh challenges to white and black South Africans facing an uncertain future in a society undergoing drastic change. In addition to writing and directing, Fugard has acted in several of his own plays, screenplay productions, and motion picture adaptations of his plays. He has also acted in such major motion pictures as *Gandhi* (1982) and *The Killing Fields* (1984). His memoir, *Cousins* (1997), describes his childhood growing up in Port Elizabeth. Fugard and his wife have homes in Port Elizabeth and in Southern California.

MAJOR WORKS

Fugard's early works *The Blood Knot*, *Hello and Good-bye* (1965), and *Boesman and Lena* comprise a trilogy known as the "Port Elizabeth" plays. *The Blood Knot* concerns two black South African brothers, one of whom is so light-skinned that he can "pass" as white. The tensions between the two brothers, born of this difference, are exacerbated when the light-skinned brother attempts to pass himself off as white to a white woman he wishes to impress. The relationship between the brothers serves as an allegory for the effects of racial oppression on white and black South Africans, whose shared humanity is tainted by the Apartheid system. *Boesman and Lena* depicts the struggles of a homeless black couple as they search for a place to rest after their shanty has been bulldozed by the government. *Boesman and Lena* was adapted to film twice, in a 1973 production in which Fugard played the role of Boesman, and in a 2000 production directed by John Berry, starring Danny Glover and Angela Bassett. Fugard's "Statements" trilogy, cowritten with the black South African playwrights John Kani and Winston Ntshona, comprises *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* (1972), *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (1972), and *The Island* (1973). Each of these plays addresses the theme of conflict between the individual and the government. *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* concerns an illicit relationship between a black schoolteacher and a white librarian. *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* depicts the efforts of a black South African man to obtain a "passbook"—required of blacks during the Apartheid era in order to obtain work in South Africa—by feigning his own death in order to adopt a new identity. *The Island* is set in the infamous prison on Robben Island, where political prisoners were held during the Apartheid era. In Fugard's play, two black prisoners stage a production of Sophocles' *Antigone*.

"*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys, set in 1950, is an autobiographical work in which Fugard explores the complex dynamics between a white teenager and two black men who work as waiters in the tearoom managed by the boy's family. *Master Harold* was deemed subversive by the South African government, which banned the distribution of published copies of the play. *My Children! My Africa!* (1989) is set in 1984, amidst the political unrest surrounding black South African students who are opposed to the Apartheid system. The story concerns a black schoolteacher who serves as an informer against student activists and is subsequently murdered for his betrayal of their cause. *Playland* (1992) was Fugard's first play to be performed after the dismantling of the Apartheid government of South Africa. Set in an amusement park on New Year's Eve of 1989, the story centers on a conversation between a black carnival worker and a white man, both of whom ultimately confess to having killed in acts of racial violence. *My Life* (1994) is an experimental, collaboratively written theatrical piece which Fugard refers to as a "recital" rather than a play. In constructing *My Life*, Fugard chose five South African girls and young women, ranging in age from 15 to 21, whom he assigned to keep journals of their daily lives. Based on their personal experiences, Fugard composed a dramatic work in which each relates her own story in her own words. *Valley Song* (1995) explores the hopes and dreams of a seventeen-year-old black South African girl facing an uncertain future under the newly formed post-Apartheid government. *The Captain's Tiger* (1997) is an autobiographical play based on Fugard's experiences working as a "captain's tiger" (personal servant) on a steamer ship while trying to write a novel about his mother's life. *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2001) begins with the death of David (or Dawid) Olivier, a white South African poet whose works have been banned in South Africa. The ghost of David appears throughout the play, while his wife, his black mistress, and his mixed-race illegitimate daughter relate the story of his life, each from her own perspective. Fugard's autobiographical *Exits and Entrances* (2004), set in the 1950s, explores the relationship between an aging white South African actor—based on the real-life "Laurence Olivier of South Africa," Andre Huguenet—and an idealistic young playwright—who represents the young Fugard himself. With only two characters, the play is set primarily in theater dressing rooms, where the young man helps his mentor to dress for the title role in *Oedipus Rex*.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Fugard's status as South Africa's most important playwright of the late-twentieth century rests primarily on his complex and insightful dramatizations of race relations under Apartheid. Francis Donahue in 1995

remarked that Fugard's plays "stand as judgmental witnesses to the true nature of the South African experience as lived by the immense majority of the country's non-white population." Donahue asserted that Apartheid is "the antagonist" in all of Fugard's plays, which portray "the consequences of the system reflected in the lives of [his] troubled protagonists." In many of his plays, Donahue concluded, Fugard "draws a devastating portrait of life under apartheid." The enduring power of Fugard's plays is in part due to the skill with which he addresses universal issues of human significance, as well as addressing the specific social and political conflicts of South Africa's Apartheid era. As Albert Wertheim observed: "[I]n Fugard's dramas, South African problems become larger global problems." Wertheim continues, "Certainly Fugard is a man of his time charting the history of his country during the second half of the twentieth century, but he is also a playwright for all time addressing those things that make us fallible and, consequently, human." Revivals of Fugard's Apartheid era plays in the early-twenty-first century confirmed the capacity of his works to transcend the specific cultural and historical moment in which they were conceived. In a discussion of a revival production of *The Island*, staged in 2000, Hilary Burns remarked, "Apartheid in South Africa is over, but the play has a universal relevance in a world where political oppression has not by any means been eradicated and where it can so easily appear and re-appear." Wertheim summed up Fugard's enduring relevance to both theater and society in stating, "At bottom, all of his plays are about the power of art and more specifically the art of theatre to touch and diagnose the ills and problems humans and societies are heir to." Fugard's post-Apartheid era plays have met with mixed reviews. Though they were often well received, critics generally concurred that they lack the trenchant impact of his Apartheid-era works.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

The Cell (play) 1956
Klaas and the Devil (play) 1956
No-Good Friday (play) 1958
Nongogo (play) 1959
The Blood Knot (play) 1961
Hello and Goodbye (play) 1965
The Coat (play) 1966
Mille Miglia (teleplay) 1968
People Are Living There (play) 1968
Boesman and Lena [adapted to film in 1973 and 2000] (play) 1969
The Last Bus (play) 1969
Friday's Bread on Monday (play) 1970

Orestes (play) 1971
Sizwe Banzi Is Dead [with John Kani and Winston Ntshona] (play) 1972
Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act [with John Kani and Winston Ntshona] (play) 1972
The Island [with John Kani and Winston Ntshona] (play) 1973
Dimetos (play) 1975
The Guest [with Ross Devenish] (screenplay) 1976
A Lesson from Aloes (play) 1978
Meetings with Remarkable Men (screenplay) 1979
The Drummer (play) 1980
Marigolds in August [with Ross Devenish] (screenplay) 1980
Tsotsi (novel) 1980
"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys (play) 1982
Notebooks, 1960-1977 [edited by Mary Benson] (notebooks) 1983
The Road to Mecca [adapted to film, 1991] (play) 1984
A Place with the Pigs: A Personal Parable (play) 1987
My Children! My Africa! (play) 1989
Playland (play) 1992
My Life [collaboratively written] (play) 1994
Valley Song (play) 1995
The Captain's Tiger: A Memoir for the Stage (play) 1997
Cousins: A Memoir (memoir) 1997
Sorrows and Rejoicings (play) 2001
Exits and Entrances (play) 2004

CRITICISM

Francis Donahue (essay date spring 1995)

SOURCE: Donahue, Francis. "Apartheid's Dramatic Legacy: Athol Fugard." *Midwest Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (spring 1995): 323-30.

[In the following essay, Donahue provides an overview of Fugard's life, career, and major works.]

As South Africa struggles to dismantle apartheid, historians are reassessing the national experience under that system of racial separation and political and economic discrimination against blacks encoded in law from 1948 to early 1992. To this end, many are reviewing the theatrical works of Athol Fugard (1932-), South Africa's leading dramatist, its conscience in the theater, and today one of the world's ranking playwrights. Athol Fugard is white.

As the author of an impressive cycle of nine anti-apartheid plays, Fugard has earned the close attention of South African audiences, together with critical and popular acclaim from playgoers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe.

His plays stand as judgmental witnesses to the true nature of the South African experience as lived by the immense majority of the country's non-white population in the second half of the twentieth century.

Writing without political stridency, the playwright cultivates what he terms a "theater of defiance":

I am protesting against the conspiracy of silence about how the next man lives and what happens to groups other than our own.

His characters struggle against something undefined in the play, something that remains supremely present in the minds of the audience. That something is apartheid, which is the antagonist in all of these plays, albeit its authority figures do not appear on stage, only the consequences of the system reflected in the lives of Fugard's troubled protagonists.

Each play explores one or more of those consequences arising out of the racist mindset of the whites as well as the country's institutionalized racism under apartheid: the "Pass Laws" (restrictions on blacks' movements or employment), the Separate Amenities Act (segregated facilities), the Special Branch (secret police), the political prison, the ban on interracial sexual relations, the Group Areas Act, and the Banning Order severely limiting free association of non-whites.

To most of these plays Fugard gives an open ending, by which he seems to say "What happens after this is up to you, the public." For South Africa's nonwhites, this represents a call for continued resistance, for its white playgoers, a grave rebuke, and for audiences outside the country, an appeal for solidarity and political pressure to be brought to bear on the Pretoria government.

Structurally, Fugard hews closely to the Ibsenesque pattern for the social realist play, with a linear plot and colloquial dialogue. Creating the scenic environment are sparse stage sets framing the shabby-to-wretched surroundings in which most Fugard characters spend their blighted lives.

Fugard's plays are short, running one or two acts, and they are powered by extended, sometimes explosive dialogues between his characters, who usually number two or three in each work. Little physical action takes place. The characters reminisce, role-play, mime, and reenact earlier experiences, most of which inflict physical or psychological pain. Yet they press on. They are survivors.

For dramatic inspiration the playwright draws on a personal experience, an encounter, or an image of oppression, humiliation, or despair. That experience, encounter, or image, after finding its way into his copious notebooks, becomes the seed for a new play.

Fugard grew up in Port Elizabeth, an industrial city on the Indian Ocean. Because his father was crippled, his mother had to support the family, managing a boarding house and later a tea room.

The future playwright was educated at a Catholic elementary school. After studying motor mechanics, he enrolled in the University of Cape Town, where he majored in philosophy and social anthropology. Before graduating he decided to hitchhike north to Port Sudan where he signed on as the only white crew member of a British merchant vessel. During his two years at sea living with nonwhites Fugard came to judge men by character and merit and not by color.

During the 1958-60 period he clerked in the Native Commissioner's Court in Johannesburg, where he was appalled at the extreme suffering of blacks under apartheid. "We sent an African to jail every two minutes."

Fugard's initial success in the theater came with *The Blood Knot*, which premiered in 1961 in a private performance before an interracial audience of about one hundred. The playwright directed and acted in this work, a practice he has continued, with few exceptions, in subsequent plays. Shortly after this play was televised in London in 1967, Fugard's passport was lifted by the South African government. "They said I couldn't leave the country unless I wanted a permanent exit visa." The playwright stayed and the government returned his visa in 1971.

While none of his plays has been banned outright, Fugard has had to contend regularly with government restrictions and the inhibiting threat of censorship. Over the years Fugard's plays have generally been viewed separately by white and nonwhite audiences in South Africa.

In *The Blood Knot* (1961) Fugard focuses on the problem of identity arising from racial differences based on skin color. Under apartheid each individual is assigned legally to a specific group: white, black, Colored or Asian. And that assignment carries with it a specific role and lifestyle. According to the playwright, "people have lost their faces and have become just literally the color of their skins."

To dramatize the problem of identity, Fugard presents a domestic rift between two Colored half-brothers: Morris is so light-skinned that he can easily pass for white, and Zach, so dark that he is considered black.

Morris, who keeps house for his brother, is practical and literate, often quoting from his biblical readings. His major interest is security. Zach, a gatekeeper in a local park, is sullen, taciturn, and illiterate. His principal interests are liquor and sex.

To cheer up his brother, Morris suggests a pen-pal relationship, offering to write the letters and sign Zach's name. Zach agrees, and they are soon corresponding with young Ethel who, in her letter, encloses a snapshot—she is white. Morris immediately realizes the danger inherent in such a potential black-white relationship. He reminds his brother that “they” have ways of punishing a black for his thoughts about a white girl: confinement in a cell on bread and water. “All they need is evidence of a man's dreams. Not so much his hate . . . they say they can live with that.”

After Zach reluctantly gives up on his fantasy relationship, he urges Morris to take his place and arrange to date Ethel. Zach drains their savings to buy his brother some second-hand clothes. “You never seen a white man without sox or shoes,” Morris observes: “It's that manner of whiteness that I got to find. . . . I got to pin down this white living. I'm just as white as some of them . . . it all boils down to this different thing they got . . . even in their way of walking.” Morris's budding fantasy evaporates when Ethel terminates the correspondence, explaining that she is getting married.

Later tension between the two brothers surfaces when they mime a series of scenes caricaturing the archetypal roles expected of a white and a black in South African society. Morris in his white man's suit deports himself like a white man in walk, gesture, and speech. Zach assumes the role of the subservient black “boy.” After Morris pokes his brother with an umbrella and asks if he is black all over, Zach threatens to kill Morris because he is white.

Their passion spent, the two return to their roles as brothers and lapse into desultory conversation. Morris comments: “It was only a game, and as long as we play it in the right spirit, we'll be all right. . . . I'm not worried . . . other men get by without a future . . . this is home . . . there is no other way. We're tied together, Zach. That is what they call the blood knot . . . the bond between brothers.”

Apartheid has clearly prevented that blood knot, mankind's common bond, from becoming a reality in South Africa.

How the racist virus affects even the most unlikely of South African whites—such is the thrust of “*Master Harold*” . . . and the *Boys* (1982), Fugard's most autobiographical work to date and the one in which he manages to exorcise a corrosive sense of guilt which had plagued him for more than three decades.

The three on-stage characters are patterned closely on the playwright himself and two black friends, the two off-stage characters represent his parents, and the plot recycles experiences drawn from his own life.

On a rainy afternoon, two black waiters, Sam and Willie, are tidying up an aging Tea Room (luncheonette) in Port Elizabeth, interrupting their work occasionally to practice foxtrotting in anticipation of an upcoming dance contest. Joining them is the scion of the white owners, 17-year old Hally who, it is soon apparent, has a long-standing close relationship with the fortyish “boys.” Hally falls into serious discussion with Sam, who has long been like a surrogate father to the white youth. They reminisce about that special afternoon when Sam made a kite out of sticks, glue, and a woman's hose. “A little white boy in short trousers,” Hally recalls, “and a black man old enough to be his father, flying a kite.”

When the conversation turns to the dance contest, Hally remarks that the participants often bump into each other. Sam says: “No . . . it's like being in a dream world without collisions . . . and it's beautiful because that is what we want life to be like.”

Interrupting the discussion is a telephone call from Hally's mother, informing him that his father will soon be released from the hospital. Hally remonstrates with his mother, for he harbors strong feelings about his crippled, alcoholic, and bigoted father. Says Hally: “Be firm with him. You're the boss. . . . You know what it's going to be like if he comes home. . . . I'm not being disrespectful but I'm sick and tired of emptying stinking chamberpots. I'm warning you now: when the two of you start fighting again, I'm leaving home.”

After hanging up, Hally shouts “So much for a world without collisions!” Sam observes: “It's a terrible thing to mock your father, Hally . . . even if he is a cripple, he is your father.” Hally counters: “Mind your own business and shut up! Just do what you're paid to do. My mother is always warning me about allowing you to get too familiar . . . this time you have gone too far. . . . Remember my father is your boss. He's a white man and that's enough for you.”

Sam, realizing they are on dangerous ground, tries to tone down the heated exchange. But the youth presses on. As tension mounts, Hally unleashes his inbred racism by spitting on Sam. The latter restrains himself, hesitates, and then attempts to effect a reconciliation. Remarks Sam: “I tried to stop you from saying those things. . . . the one person who should have been teaching you what it is to grow up to be a man was the cause of your shame. That's why I made that kite. I wanted you to be proud . . . to look up . . . I couldn't sit there with you that afternoon on the bench [to which

the kite was tied] . . . it was a 'Whites Only' bench. You know what that bench means now, and you can leave it any time you choose."

To Sam's suggestion that they try again, "fly another kite . . . it worked once," Hally comments weakly that it is raining. Too distraught to apologize, he pushes his way through the door and into the rainy street.

In contrasting the present world of "Whites Only" with a dreamed-for world "without collisions," Fugard has drafted a telling indictment of human waste under apartheid.

On *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (1972) Fugard collaborated with two close associates, black actors John Kani and Winston Ntshona. The playwright conceived the dramatic situation and created the characters; his associates supplied much of the dialogue based on their own experience as South African blacks.

The antagonist in *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* are the "Pass Laws" governing access by blacks to employment, residence, and movement within the country.

Robert Zwelinzima goes to a professional photographer to have his picture taken, to be sent to his wife in Ciskei, one of the ethnic homelands. That photo comes to life in the form of a flashback. Robert is really Sizwe Banzi, an illiterate who had come to Port Elizabeth in search of work. While living with his friend Buntu, he is picked up by a member of the Special Branch, who stamps his Pass Book with this entry:

You are required to report to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner . . . within three days . . . for the purpose of repatriation to the home district.

Buntu warns Sizwe that, without his Pass Book in order, there is no way he can remain in Port Elizabeth: "that bloody book . . . you go to school, it goes too. Go to work, it goes too . . . to the hospital to die, it lies there too!

Walking home after a night of drinking, Sizwe and Buntu stumble over a dead body. Sizwe suggests they contact the police. Buntu says: "Are you mad? You, drunk. Pass Book not in order . . . they would hold you responsible."

Buntu, removing the Pass Book from the dead man, reads "Robert Zwelinzima." And Robert is listed as having a work-seeker's permit. Buntu replaces the dead man's photo with Sizwe's, thereby offering the latter a new lease on life. Buntu foresees a promising future for "Robert"; a good job, a white supervisor, regular pay checks, credit at a clothing store, and no fear when a policeman inspects his Pass Book: "To hell with them [names] if in exchange you can get a piece of bread for

your stomach and a blanket in winter. I'm not saying that pride isn't a way for us. . . . What I'm saying is . . . sh- on our pride if we only bluff ourselves that we are men. Next time the bloody white man says to you, a man, 'Boy, come here!' don't run to him and lick his arse like we all do. Face him and tell him: 'White man, I'm a man!'"

Sizwe soon realizes that, as Robert, he can get a Lodger's Permit, send money home, and even have his family spend a few days with him in the city. When he wonders how long he can keep up the deception, Buntu advises, "As long as you can stay out of trouble. And trouble will mean police station and fingerprints off to Pretoria . . . then Sizwe Banzi will live again, and you will have had it."

Sizwe nods agreement, "A black man stay out of trouble? Impossible, Buntu. Our skin is trouble."

When the flashback fades and the photographer takes another "shot," it is clear that Sizwe is ready to live a lie in order to become a 'Man' and to be able to support his family.

In these three plays as well as in others, Fugard draws a devastating portrait of life under apartheid, a portrait on which future historians are sure to draw as they attempt to answer the question "What was life like under the *ancien régime*?"

Jeanne Colleran (essay date fall 1995)

SOURCE: Colleran, Jeanne. "Athol Fugard and the Problematics of the Liberal Critique." *Modern Drama* 38, no. 3 (fall 1995): 389-407.

[In the following essay, Colleran discusses the political and ideological stance of Fugard's plays in the context of South Africa's post-Apartheid era. Colleran focuses discussion on *My Children! My Africa!* and *Playland*.]

National reconciliation could be effected, I thought, on condition that there is no whiteout of memory—provided, I said, that we break open the silences, that we get all the repressed unsaid things out in the open.

Breyten Breytenbach¹

Effecting reconciliation: such has been the subject of Athol Fugard's writing during the past decade and by extension its political project. His most recent drama reflects, as his work has always done, a moment in South African history: the crucial present moment of apartheid's dismantling, of the political process currently underway which seeks reconciliation and attempts coalition even as it allows for the continued enfranchisement of the white minority. Despite the enormous dif-