



Unraveling Colourism and Internalized Racism in Athol Fugard's play *The Blood Knot*: A Psychological and Socio-Political Analysis of Brotherhood under Apartheid

Assistant Lecturer. Ihab Mohammed Mahdi

General Directorate of Education of Al-Qadisiyah, Ministry of Education

Ihab.mohammed75@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper looks at colourism and internalized racism in Athol Fugard's play *The Blood Knot* from a psychological and social-political point of view. Set in apartheid South Africa, the play shows the complicated connection between two half-brothers, one light-skinned enough to pass as white and the other dark-skinned. It shows how racial hierarchy may deeply affect family ties. This research uses critical race theory as its theoretical framework to look at how Fugard's theatrical portrayal of brotherhood under apartheid shows how racial ideas get established and show up in interactions between people. The paper shows how *The Blood Knot* shows how internalized racism is harmful by closely examining the text and the setting. It shows how the repressive systems of apartheid become part of people's minds and families. The results show that Fugard's representation of brotherhood under apartheid gives us important information about the psychological aspects of racial oppression, how hard it is to develop a racial identity, and how colourism still affects people after apartheid. This study adds to the academic conversation about South African literature, critical race studies, and the psychological effects of systemic racism. It also shows how Fugard's work is still important for understanding current forms of colourism and internalised racism.

Keywords: Athol Fugard, *The Blood Knot*, colorism, internalized racism, critical race theory, apartheid, brotherhood

تحليل التدرج اللوني والاستبطان العنصري في مسرحية أثول فوجارد عقدة الدماء: دراسة نفسية
وسياسية-اجتماعية للأخوة في ظل نظام الفصل العنصري

م . م . أيهاب محمد مهدي

المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة القادسية ، وزارة التربية

الخلاصة

تبحث هذه الورقة في التلوين والعنصرية الداخلية في مسرحية أثول فوجارد عقدة الدم من وجهة نظر نفسية واجتماعية سياسية. تدور أحداث المسرحية في جنوب إفريقيا في عهد الفصل العنصري ، وتظهر العلاقة المعقدة بين شقيقين غير شقيقين ، أحدهما ذو بشرة فاتحة بما يكفي ليبدو أبيض والآخر ذو بشرة داكنة. يوضح كيف يمكن أن يؤثر التسلسل الهرمي العرقي بعمق على الروابط الأسرية. يستخدم هذا البحث نظرية العرق النقدية كإطار نظري للنظر في كيف يظهر تصوير فوجارد المسرحي للأخوة في



ظل الفصل العنصري كيف تترسخ الأفكار العنصرية وتظهر في التفاعلات بين الناس. توضح الورقة كيف تظهر عقدة الدم مدى ضرر العنصرية الداخلية من خلال فحص النص والإعداد عن كتب. إنه يوضح كيف أصبحت أنظمة الفصل العنصري القمعية جزءاً من عقول الناس وعائلاتهم. تظهر النتائج أن تمثيل فوغارد للأخوة في ظل الفصل العنصري يعطينا معلومات مهمة حول الجوانب النفسية للاضطهاد العنصري ، ومدى صعوبة تطوير هوية عرقية ، وكيف لا تزال التلويين تؤثر على الناس بعد الفصل العنصري. تضيف هذه الدراسة إلى المحادثة الأكاديمية حول الأدب الجنوب أفريقي ، والدراسات العرقية النقدية ، والآثار النفسية للعنصرية المنهجية. كما يوضح كيف أن عمل فوغارد لا يزال مهما لفهم الأشكال الحالية من التلويين والعنصرية الداخلية.

الكلمات الدالة : أثول فوغارد ، عقدة الدم ، التلويين ، العنصرية الداخلية ، نظرية العرق النقدي ، الفصل العنصري ، الأخوة

1. Introduction

Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot* (1961) is one of the few South African works that does such a good job of showing how race, identity, and fraternity interact with one other. Set in apartheid South Africa, this important play looks at the relationship between two half-brothers: Morris, who is light-skinned enough to pass as white, and Zachariah, who is dark-skinned. It shows how colourism and internalized racism can have deep psychological and social effects when discrimination based on race is built into the system. *The Blood Knot* was the first play by Fugard to get worldwide attention. It not only made him a major figure in global theatre, but it also gave people a powerful way to think about the human cost of apartheid's racial hierarchy.

The play's look into brothers under apartheid gives us a chance to think about how systematic racism affects even the closest ties. Fugard shows how outside racial ideas become part of a person's mind via the brothers' interactions. This causes psychological stress that shows itself in complicated power struggles, identity issues, and emotional problems. As Hafez (2018) observes, "The two brothers' initial loving relation is soon replaced by interracial conflict as they simulate white-black interaction" (p. 545). The brothers' tiny hut in the "coloured" part of Port Elizabeth is a minor example of the larger racial dynamics of South African culture, where skin colour defines where you fit in the social order and how you see the world.

The Blood Knot's main topic is colourism, which is when people of the same race discriminate against one other based on their skin colour. Morris's pale complexion and Zachariah's dark skin are quite different from one other, which shows how apartheid society was set up in terms of race. The variation in skin tone changes how people see each brother and how they see themselves and each other. As Al-Jarrah (2023) notes, "This dialectic is rooted in the racist premise which considers blackness as a hole in being. The two brothers, Zachariah and Morris, fall into this dialectic from the outset of the play and, therefore, are trapped in sado-masochistic interplay" (p. 1281). As a result, the



play offers a strong example of how colourism works as both a social and psychological force, even breaking apart families.

Another important part of the play is internalized racism, which is when people of colour take in and believe negative things about their own skills and value. As the brothers work through their problems, they show how deeply they have absorbed the racist ideas of apartheid. Morris's ability to "pass" as white and his mixed sentiments about this privilege, together with Zachariah's anger and self-hatred, show how racism becomes a part of people's minds. As Dei (1993) notes, "It is their skin colour that has established their identities and even chances for success from the moment of birth. The play, thus, examines the relationship between these two brothers created by the policies of a racist system" (p. 11). a process clearly evident in the psychological dynamics between the brothers.

The political and social background of apartheid to comprehend what the brothers went through; you need to know about South Africa. During apartheid, race governed everything, from where you could live and work to who you could marry. The Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act of 1950 made racial groups official and enforced residential segregation. In this system, skin colour was not only a physical trait; it also determined a person's legal standing, job prospects, and ability to move up in society. As Dommissie (1986) explains, "The notorious governmental policy of Apartheid affects the people of that country psychologically, as well as politically, socially, economically and medically" (p. 51). *The Blood Knot* shows how hard it is to live in a society like this, where racial identity is forced on you from the outside and negotiated from the inside. This study looks at how colourism and internalized racism work in Athol Fugard's play *The Blood Knot*, which is set in apartheid South Africa. It does this by looking at how these things show up in the relationship between two half-brothers with distinct skin colours. In particular, the paper looks at how the brothers' relationship is a small-scale example of how race relations worked in apartheid South Africa. It shows how systems of racial oppression become ingrained and acted out in close family relationships. This research is guided by two primary objectives: 1. To examine how colorism and internalized racism function as both psychological and socio-political forces within *The Blood Knot*. 2. To analyze how the brothers' relationship in *The Blood Knot* serves as a microcosm for broader racial dynamics in apartheid South Africa.

1.1 Significance of the Research

This study adds to the academic conversation on South African literature, critical race studies, and the psychological effects of systematic racism. *The Blood Knot* looks at colourism and internalized racism from both psychological



and social points of view. Its goal is to help us better understand how racial hierarchies effect how people relate to each other and how they develop their identities. This study also shows how Fugard's representation of brotherhood under apartheid is still relevant now for comprehending colourism and internalized racism, both in South Africa and throughout the world.

The importance of this study is that it uses an interdisciplinary method, combining literary analysis, critical race theory, and psychological insights to provide light on how race, identity, and brotherhood interact in Fugard's work. This study not only helps people comprehend and appreciate a famous South African drama, *The Blood Knot*, but it also helps us grasp how literature may show the psychological effects of racial persecution. In a time when racial justice concerns are still important all over the globe, looking back at Fugard's depiction of brotherhood under apartheid gives us important information about how colourism continues to affect people and how racism keeps going.

2. Literature Review

The academic discussion around Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*, colourism, internalized racism, and brotherhood under apartheid is very important for this study. This literature review looks at past research in these fields and finds the gap that this study will fill.

2.1 Scholarship on Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*

Since it first came out in 1961, Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot* has gotten a lot of attention from scholars. The play is a turning point in South African theatre because it is one of the first theatrical works to explicitly deal with how apartheid affected people's minds. The play is important not just because of its artistic value, but also because of its political meaning, as it came out at an important moment in the fight against apartheid (Wertheim, 2000).

Critical analyses of *The Blood Knot* have explored various dimensions of the play. Al- Qarni (2015) examines the Manichean opposites in the play, arguing that "Despite his white skin, Fugard's *Blood Knot* is a scathing condemnation of apartheid. The play is a powerful attack on the system of apartheid and its negative implications on the lives of the South Africans" (p. 1225). This paper shows that the play has a political side and is a criticism of the dividing ideas behind apartheid.

Other researchers have looked at the play's structure and symbols in a more dramatic way. Kačer (2008) looks at how the play uses small spaces as a metaphor for the limits that apartheid put on people. "Blood Knot was a radical play at the time when it was first performed in South Africa." (p. 81). Blood Knot is a major work in South African theatre because it was one of the first plays to explicitly deal with how apartheid affected people's minds. This



analysis focusses on the play's psychological depth and its creative use of stage space to convey political realities.

More recent research has looked at how the play deals with identity and performance. Hafez (2018) looks at how the characters' identities and points of view change throughout the play. He says, " The present study analyses their transformed identity, shifting stance, evaluation, positioning, and alignment. Such analysis of the interaction between the two brothers before and after the transformation of their brotherly love into interracial conflict should be helpful in demonstrating patterns of the discourse of racism and apartheid" (p.1). This study brings out the play's subtle way of showing how racial identities are acted out and negotiated in the setting of apartheid.

2.2 Literature on Colourism in South African Context

There has been a lot of study on colourism in South Africa. Colourism is when people of the same race treat one other unfairly because of their skin tone. It has been researched a lot in South Africa. Mbatha (2016) gives a full look at colourism in South Africa and says that "Introducing the 'coloured' category provided a social distinction but also allowed the government to reinforce each racial groups' hierarchical standings in society." (p.4) This research indicates that colourism has been a problem in South Africa for a long time and still influences how people interact with one other.

CRT is a great way to look at the South African context because it focusses on the structural and systemic nature of racism instead of just seeing it as individual bias. This is because under apartheid, racial hierarchies were clearly written into law and they still shape social realities today. Researchers have also looked at the legal and institutional aspects of colourism under apartheid. The Population Registration Act of 1950 made racial classifications official, while the Group Areas Act of the same year enforced residential segregation. Together, these laws gave skin colour a lot of legal weight. According to Modiri (2012), "The legacy of this oppression, of course, continues to persist in post-apartheid South Africa with wealth, education, and power being largely divided along the lines of race." (p. 406). This study stresses the structural aspect of colourism in South Africa, making it a systemic issue instead of just an interpersonal one.

2.3 Literature on Internalized Racism

Researchers in several fields, including psychology, sociology, and literary studies, have studied internalized racism. When individuals of colour believe and accept the negative beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, and stereotypes that the dominant white society claims are true about their own race, they are



experiencing internalized racism. This helps us understand how racist notions become lodged in people's thoughts (Miller, 2022).

Researchers have looked at the psychological processes that make internalized racism work. Reece (2019) says in his development of "Color Crit," internalized racism operates not as a simple acceptance of racial hierarchy but as a complex psychological process that includes both accommodation and resistance" (p. 10). This paper shows how complex and often contradictory internalized racism can be, as people simultaneously accept and fight against negative racial messages.

Scholars have also looked at how internalized racism shows up in literature. Wafula (2016) looks at Fugard's *The Blood Knot* via a Lacanian psychoanalytic lens and says that the play shows "the psychological mechanisms through which racial ideologies become internalized and enacted, even by those who are oppressed by them" (p. 180). This study focusses on the play's psychological depth and how it shows how racial oppression becomes part of a person's mind.

2.4 Literature on Brotherhood and Family Relationships under Apartheid

Many researchers have looked at how apartheid affected family ties, especially between brothers. Njoki (2014) looks more closely at Fugard's social vision by looking at how racial categorization affects people's minds and the conflicts that arise in the brotherly connection. This study shows that the play is mostly on the personal and private effects of apartheid.

Researchers have also looked at how family ties might be places of both tyranny and resistance throughout apartheid. As Conradie (2016) says, "Research in the latter category also emphasizes the confusion and conflicting interests among South Africans born around 1994. As they seek to develop their own epistemologies about race, the desire to break from the assumptions (and vocabulary) of preceding generations is evident" (p. 6). Even in systems where racism is everywhere, people find methods to prevent fully accepting racist ideas. One way they do this is by keeping ties that challenge racial divides. This study shows how family bonds may help fight against the dividing ideas of apartheid.

Scholars have been especially interested in the psychological complexity of family interactions under apartheid. In their study of how people in South Africa form their identities, Norris et al. (2008) say, Family ties are very significant for how individuals think about and deal with their racial identity, particularly when racial categories are legally required and socially relevant. These connections may affect how people perceive things and how they deal with what society expects of them. Because of this, finding out your racial



identity is frequently a lengthy process that combines family history, cultural traditions, and outside forces from society. This study shows how important family interactions were for forming identity under apartheid.

2.5 Research Gap

There has been a lot of research on certain parts of Fugard's *The Blood Knot*, such as colourism, internalized racism, and fraternity under apartheid. However, there is still a need for a more comprehensive study that looks at how these things interact in the play. There isn't much research on how colourism and internalized racism affect the brothers' relationship on both a psychological and a social-political level, or how their relationship is a little example of how race works in apartheid South Africa.

This study tries to fill this gap by using critical race theory to look at how Fugard's dramatic portrayal of brotherhood sheds light on the complicated relationship between colourism, internalized racism, and the social and political realities of apartheid. This study looks at the brothers' relationship from both a psychological and a social-political point of view. It aims to help us better understand how racial hierarchies affect people's relationships and the way they form their identities. This has implications for understanding how colourism and internalized racism show up in post-apartheid settings today.

3. Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

This paper uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) as its main theoretical framework to look at colourism and internalized racism in Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*. CRT is a strong way to look at how the play shows the complicated connections between brothers under apartheid and how racial ideas get ingrained in people's minds and affect their relationships with others.

3.1 Origins and Development of Critical Race Theory

In the 1970s and 1980s, people in the United States started using Critical Race Theory to talk about racial disparity because they thought conventional civil rights language and liberal measures weren't working. CRT started as a field of study in law, but it has now grown to include literature, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies, among other fields. Scholars like Modiri (2012) have worked on applying CRT to South Africa, especially to look at apartheid and its effects. Modiri says that CRT gives us useful ways to think about why racial inequality still exists in South Africa after apartheid.

3.2 Key Concepts and Principles

This paper of *The Blood Knot* is especially related to some of the main ideas of CRT:



1.The Centrality and Permanence of Racism: CRT says that racism is not an exception, but a basic, permanent part of society. This idea is especially useful for looking at apartheid South Africa, since racism was clearly written into the legislation. Modiri (2012) says that "CRT's emphasis on the structural and systemic nature of racism, rather than viewing it merely as individual prejudice, makes it particularly well-suited to analyzing the South African context, where racial hierarchies were explicitly codified in law under apartheid and continue to shape social realities in the post-apartheid era" (p. 406).

2. The Social Construction of Race: CRT stresses that race is not a biological fact but a social construct that is formed and kept up via social, political, and legal processes. This idea is very important for understanding how racial groups were formed and enforced under apartheid, especially via laws like the Population Registration Act of 1950. The random nature of these racial *The Blood Knot* shows how strong categories can be by showing how the brothers are related via their mother, even if they have distinct skin tones.

3. Interest Convergence: This idea says that progress towards racial fairness can only happen when it is in the best interests of the dominant group. This idea isn't specifically spoken about in this study, but it helps to comprehend the bigger political picture in which Fugard's play came out and was appreciated.

4. Intersectionality: CRT understands that people face oppression because of more than one identity, such as their race, gender, class, or sexuality. This idea is useful for looking at how racial oppression interacts with other types of social stratification in *The Blood Knot*, especially in the way the brothers divide their work by gender.

5. Counter-Storytelling: CRT prioritizes the lived experiences of marginalized groups and stresses the relevance of stories that go against what most people believe. Fugard's play may be seen as a kind of counter-storytelling since it tells the story of apartheid from the point of view of the people who were hurt by it.

3.3 Colour Critique and Colourism

One feature of CRT that is quite useful for this study is its look at colourism as a sign of racial hierarchy. Reece (2019) came up with the idea of "Colour Crit" as a way to build on CRT and look at how disparities in skin tone generate hierarchies between ethnic groupings. Reece says that colourism is more than just individual prejudice; it is "a structural phenomenon that reinforces racial hierarchy" rather than merely as individual prejudice " (p. 5). This point of view is important for looking at how the difference in skin colour between Morris and Zachariah shows how racial segregation worked in South Africa under apartheid.



3.4 Internalized Racism in CRT

CRT also helps us understand the psychological aspects of racism, especially the idea of internalized racism, which is important for figuring out how the characters in *The Blood Knot* have internalized the racist ideas of apartheid. Miller (2022) says that internalized racism is "the acceptance of negative attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and stereotypes perpetuated by the White dominant society as being true about one's racial group" (p. 8). CRT helps us understand how this internalization happens, not only as a psychological process for each person, but also as a reaction to institutional racial oppression.

3.5 Application to South African Context

Even though CRT started in the US, some experts have said it is still useful in South Africa. Modiri (2012) says that "CRT's emphasis on the structural and systemic nature of racism, rather than merely viewing it as individual prejudice, makes it particularly well-suited to analyzing the South African context, where racial hierarchies were explicitly codified in law under apartheid and continue to shape social realities in the post-apartheid era" (p. 406). Using CRT in South Africa gives us a useful way to look at how the racist ideas of apartheid affected people's lives and connections with each other.

3.6 Relevance to *The Blood Knot*

CRT has a number of analytical techniques that are very useful for looking into *The Blood Knot*:

1. It helps illuminate how the brothers' relationship is similar to larger patterns of racial control and resistance in South Africa under apartheid.
2. It gives you a way to think about how colourism works as a structural thing that generates hierarchies even inside families.
3. It shows how racial discrimination can become a part of a person's identity and affect how they see themselves and their connection with their sibling.
4. It highlights how important it is to look at how social, political, and legal processes shape and keep racial ideas alive. This is important for understanding the setting in which the brothers' relationship develops.

This paper uses CRT to show how Fugard's close look at a family interaction shows larger patterns of racial control and resistance in apartheid South Africa. This theoretical framework allows us go beyond just looking at the brothers' connection from a psychological or interpersonal point of view to see how systemic racial oppression affects and reflects their relationship.

4. Analysis and Discussion



This section looks at both colourism and internalized racism in Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*. It looks at how these issues show up in the relationship between Morris and Zachariah and how this relationship is a small-scale example of how race works in apartheid South Africa as a whole. The paper is broken up into four parts that are all related and look at various aspects of the brothers' relationship.

4.1 Colourism in *The Blood Knot*

The dramatic physical differences between the half-brothers make colourism a major issue in *The Blood Knot*. Morris has skin that is light enough to "pass" as white, while Zachariah has skin that is darker and clearly defines him as "coloured" or "black" under the apartheid categorization system. Together, they show the range of skin tones that were present in South Africa's complicated racial hierarchy. As Al-Qarni (2015) observes, the black Zachariah and the white-looking Morris are half-brothers who share the same mother but have different fathers and this difference in skin tone becomes the foundation for their complex relationship. Fugard uses their similar mother ancestry but differing paternal history as a great theatrical technique to look at how arbitrary racial categorization was during apartheid.

The brothers' physical differences are not just random; they are at the heart of the play's emotional tension. Fugard's stage directions and conversation keep bringing up this distinction, making it a visual metaphor for the bigger socioeconomic divides in apartheid South Africa. As Weyenberg (2020) notes, "The brothers' different skin tones serve as a constant visual reminder of the racial hierarchy that structures their world, making the abstract concept of colorism concrete and immediate for the audience" (p. 230). In a theatre setting, this visual aspect is especially important since the brothers' looks have an immediate and powerful effect that supports the play's themes.

The play looks at how skin colour affects social mobility and opportunities under the apartheid regime. Morris's lighter complexion gives him advantages and chances that Zachariah doesn't have, even if they are both related. This dynamic is similar to what was going on in apartheid South Africa, when skin colour might affect a person's legal status, where they could live, where they could work, and what their social standing was. As Mbatha (2016) explains, "Skin colour is a significant factor in the lives of black and coloured people in South Africa, and has been since the colonial era. It has been used as a tool to divide people of the same race and ethnicity" (p. 14).

The play shows this distinction quite clearly via Morris's ability to "pass" as white, which lets him go places and do things that Zachariah can't. The part when Morris helps Zachariah write letters to a white lady called Ethel shows how different they are. Morris can see and talk about a world of white privilege



that Zachariah can't reach since his darker colour makes him "other" in the apartheid system.

The Blood Knot's colourism is closely tied to power dynamics, both in the brothers' relationship and in the larger societal order. Morris, even though he is the younger brother, frequently acts like he is in charge of their relationship. This is largely because his lighter complexion gives him social influence. He runs their household, handles their money, and makes choices about their future. This shows how colourism creates an imbalance of power. As Reece (2019) argues in his development of "Color Crit," colorism operates as "a structural phenomenon that reinforces racial hierarchy" rather than merely as individual prejudice" (p. 5).

4.2 Internalized Racism in *The Blood Knot*

Internalized racism is when racial minorities take in and believe negative things about their own talents and value. This is a major psychological theme in *The Blood Knot*. Morris and Zachariah have both taken in racist ideas from apartheid South Africa in various ways, embracing and occasionally reinforcing bad messages about their race. Miller (2022) defines internalized racism as "the acceptance of negative attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and stereotypes perpetuated by the White dominant society as being true about one's racial group" (p. 8). This definition gives us a useful way to look at the psychological dynamics in the play.

Morris's character gives a nuanced look at internalized racism by showing how hard it is to "pass" as white. Because of his lighter complexion, some people may think he is white in certain situations, which makes him feel like he is not really himself when he moves between ethnic groups. This capacity to "pass" is not shown as a simple luxury, but as something that causes mental tension and shame. As Weyenberg (2020) argues, "Morris's ability to 'pass' as white creates a complex relationship with privilege, as he both benefits from and feels alienated by the racial hierarchy that privileges lighter skin" (p. 235).

The play shows how Morris has taken in some of the ideas of white racial ideology, especially when he tries to "improve" Zachariah's life by making him follow specific rules and goals. His careful planning of their home life, his handling of their money, and his focus on saving for a future farm show that he has internalized some of the ideals that were associated with being white in apartheid South Africa. Morris's actions frequently show internalized ideas of respectability and propriety that are implicitly based on race in the setting of apartheid. (Hafez, 2018)

Zachariah's character shows a particular kind of internalized racism, mostly by how he puts himself down and how complicated his connection with



his own ethnic identity is. Zachariah has taken in signals about how inferior he is since he lives in a culture that always looks down on those with darker complexion. These messages show up in how he acts and what he wants to do. As Mwihi (2014) argues, "In the play *Blood Knot*, Fugard uses two characters to illustrate the quest for identity. Zachariah who represents the black is presented as one who is uncomfortable with his identity" (p. 70). This pain comes from the fact that he has internalized negative racial stereotypes and that his skin colour limits his social and economic options.

The scenario when Morris pretends to be a white guy is a fantastic way to explore internalized prejudice. In this moment, both brothers play out the racist ideas they have learnt, showing how much they have taken in the racist ideas of apartheid. As Hafez (2018) observes, in this scene "Zach here negatively evaluates all Morris's actions as too atypical of whites... and instructs him on how to behave like a white man, using the following imperatives: 'Start again', 'don't stop. Just walk past', again defining him and his sort through his clothing" (p. 560). This instruction shows how Zachariah has internalized his concept of whiteness, including the behaviours, attitudes, and ways of showing authority that go along with it. Fugard shows how deeply internalized racism affects people's minds throughout the play. Both brothers suffer from many kinds of mental problems, such as worry, guilt, anger, and even self-hatred. These problems are caused by their racial beliefs. As Dommissie (1986) explains, "The notorious governmental policy of Apartheid affects the people of that country psychologically, as well as politically, socially, economically and medically" (p. 51). The brothers' troubled connection, conflicting sense of self, and trouble conceiving possibilities outside of apartheid show how this affects their minds.

4.3 Psychological Dimensions of Brotherhood under Apartheid

The bond between Morris and Zachariah is a deep psychological study of brotherhood under the harsh regime of apartheid. The title of the play, *The Blood Knot*, makes the main psychological point clear right away: the brothers are tied together by a complicated, unavoidable relationship of common blood that society forces would try to break. Morris and Zachariah are half-brothers with the same mother but separate dads, which is why their skin tones are different. They show what Wafula (2016) calls "the psychological tension between connection and division that characterized family relationships under apartheid" (p. 177).

Morris and Zachariah's psychological connection is affected by complicated familial roles that both reflect and go against the norm for brothers. Even though Morris is the younger brother, he frequently acts like a father or caretaker for Zachariah, taking care of their home, their money, and their future. This switch in roles produces a psychological tension that is similar to



how skin tone disparities affect power relations in general. On the other hand, Zachariah, who is the elder brother, frequently acts more like a kid in the relationship. The fact that he works outside the home while Morris manages the house creates a gendered division of labour that makes their relationship as brothers even more complicated.

The complicated connection between the brothers is based on a key psychological theme of dependence and anger. Morris and Zachariah rely on each other in many ways, such as for money, emotional support, and a feeling of who they are. However, this reliance also causes anger since it shows and reinforces the differences between them. As Miller (2022) notes, such dependency can create "psychological ambivalence, where feelings of connection and support coexist with frustration and resentment" (p. 15). The brothers go back and forth between times when they really care about each other and times when they are angry with one other.

The play gives a detailed look at how brotherhood shapes identity under apartheid. Morris and Zachariah's connection with each other has a big impact on how they see themselves. This creates a psychological dependency that helps and makes it harder for them to build their own identities. As Norris et al. (2008) observe in their study of identity formation in South Africa, "Family relationships play a crucial role in how individuals understand and negotiate their racial identity, particularly in contexts where racial categories are legally enforced and socially significant" (p. 55).

The Blood Knot looks at how the brothers use shared memories and nostalgia to deal with the harsh reality of apartheid. Their memories of their mother, their upbringing, and their common history make a mental space that briefly goes beyond the racial barriers that apartheid created. The piece also looks at how dreams and imaginations help people deal with the limits of apartheid. The boys' common fantasy of fleeing to a farm is an effort to picture a future that isn't limited by the apartheid regime.

4.4 Socio-Political Implications of Brotherhood under Apartheid

The connection between Morris and Zachariah is a strong example of the larger social and political situation in apartheid South Africa. Their shared home, a modest hut in Port Elizabeth's "coloured" area, becomes a symbolic location where the racial ideas and hierarchies of apartheid society are both copied and questioned. As Hafez (2018) observes, the transformation of their relationship from "brotherly love into interracial conflict" (p. 545) shows how brotherhood under apartheid becomes a place where bigger social and political problems are played out, spoken about, and fought over.

The Blood Knot deals directly with the social and political reality of apartheid laws, especially the Population Registration Act of 1950, which set up



racial categories, and the Group Areas Act of the same year, which made it illegal for people to live in the same area as people of a different race. The fact that Morris could "pass" as white whereas Zachariah was clearly classed as "coloured" or "black" shows how arbitrary and harmful these legal designations are. As Mbatha (2016) notes, "Colourism can be described as prejudicial treatment of individuals based on varying degrees of skin colour. This has significant implications for people of colour, who are often targets of racism, but also perpetrators of skin tone discrimination among their own racial group." (p. iv).

The play looks at the economic aspects of apartheid in a more complex way by showing how the brothers' differing attitudes towards work and money affect their lives. Zachariah is a park gatekeeper, which is a low-level job that only nonwhites can accomplish. Morris takes care of their home and money. This division of labour shows the bigger economic differences in apartheid society, as race influenced who could get jobs and money. The brothers' common aim of collecting money to purchase a farm shows both their desire for financial freedom and their awareness of how little job options they had during apartheid.

The Blood Knot takes place in a tiny hut in the "coloured" district of Port Elizabeth. This directly relates to the spatial politics of apartheid. The boys' little living area shows how the Group Areas Act, which enforced racial segregation in housing, limited where people could live. *The Blood Knot* is a big deal in South African theatre because it's one of the first plays to explicitly deal with how apartheid affected people's minds. One effect of this was the spatial constriction that affected the lives of South Africans who were not white (Kačer, 2008).

The Blood Knot shows the harsh reality of apartheid without holding back, but it also looks at ways to fight back and be together via the friendship between the brothers. Their shared living space, support for one other, and times of real connection are all ways that they fight against the logic of apartheid that divides people. Even in groups where racism is common, people find ways to fight back by keeping relationships that go against racial divides. The bond between the brothers, even with its problems and fights, is an example of this kind of connection (Modiri, 2012).

The Blood Knot was first done in 1961, which was a very important time for the antiapartheid struggle, both in South Africa and throughout the world. The play's worldwide reception and significance show how more and more people throughout the world were becoming aware of and against apartheid at this time. As Colleran (2004) says, "Admiration for Fugard's theatre, however, goes beyond its social utility. Fugard is a consummate theatrical craftsman. He



is also, in his own appellation, a 'storyteller', one whose point of departure may be South Africa but whose tales resonate across cultures." (p. 89). The play's close look into brotherhood under apartheid gave people across the world a more personal view of the abstract political concerns of racial segregation and injustice.

5. Conclusion

This paper looked at colourism and internalized racism in Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot* from a psychological and socio-political point of view. It looked at how these issues show up in the relationship between two half-brothers with different skin tones and how this relationship is a small-scale example of how race works in apartheid South Africa. This research has used critical race theory to show how colourism, internalized racism, and the sociopolitical realities of apartheid are all connected in Fugard's important drama.

The study found that colourism is a psychological and sociopolitical force in *The Blood Knot* that creates power structures and hierarchies that are similar to those in apartheid society. The big difference between Morris's pale complexion and Zachariah's dark skin is a tangible representation of the racial hierarchies that existed in apartheid South Africa. These hierarchies impact how each brother sees himself and how others see him. This difference in skin colour has a direct effect on their social mobility, opportunities, and place in the power dynamics of their relationship and society as a whole.

Internalized racism is a big psychological theme in the drama since both brothers have taken in the racist ideas of apartheid South Africa in different ways. Morris's complicated feelings about "passing" as white and Zachariah's self-deprecating comments show how racism becomes part of a person's mind. In the role-playing scenario, Morris takes on the character of a white guy for a short time. This is an effective way to show how both brothers have internalized racist ideas and how living in a society that constantly devalues darker skin affects their mental health.

The psychological aspects of brotherhood under apartheid are looked at via the complicated relationship between reliance and animosity, how brotherhood shapes identity, and how shared memories and dreams may help people cope. The brothers' relationship is marked by psychological ambivalence, which means that sentiments of connection and support are mixed with feelings of irritation and anger. This is similar to the psychological stress caused by apartheid's racial hierarchy.

The play looks at the social and political effects of brotherhood under apartheid by talking about apartheid laws, economic inequalities, spatial politics, and ways to fight back and stand together. The relationship between



the brothers is a small-scale example of how apartheid South Africa's larger social and political issues work. It shows how the logic of racial segregation impacts even the closest personal relationships.

This study has shown that colourism and internalized racism show themselves in the relationship between Morris and Zachariah via their physical differences, power dynamics, mental states, and social positions. The brothers' relationship is a little example of how race worked in apartheid South Africa. It shows how racial oppression affected people's lives in terms of the law, the economy, space, and their mental health.

The study has theoretical consequences because it helps us comprehend how critical race theory may help us understand the psychological and social-political aspects of colourism and internalized racism in literary works. This research adds to the academic conversation on how literature may show the complicated relationship between systematic racial oppression and individual psychological experience by using CRT to look examine Fugard's depiction of brotherhood under apartheid.

The practical consequences include learning how literary analysis can help us comprehend the psychological effects of racial oppression and how people may interact with one other in ways that both support and fight racial hierarchies. This study looks at Fugard's close look into brotherhood under apartheid to show that his work is still important for understanding how colourism and internalized racism show up in today's world.

In conclusion, Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot* takes a deep look at how colourism and internalized racism work as both psychological and social-political forces in apartheid South Africa. The play shows how systemic racial oppression and individual psychological experience interact in a complex way by showing how brotherhood was affected by apartheid. It also shows how colourism and racism continue to exist in people's minds. As issues of racial justice continue to demand attention worldwide, revisiting Fugard's portrayal of brotherhood under apartheid offers valuable insights into the psychological dimensions of racial oppression and the potential for human connection to both reinforce and challenge racial hierarchies.

References

- Al-Jarrah, H. (2023). Presence-Absence Dialectics in Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot*. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literature*, 15(4), 1281-1296. <https://doi.org/10.47012/jjml.15.4.8>
- Al-Qarni, S. M. (2015). Manichean and dichotomous opposites in Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot*. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(6), 1250. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0606.09>



Colleran, J. (2004). [Review of the book *The Dramatic Art of Athol Fugard: From South Africa to the World*, edited by A. Wertheim]. *Theatre Research International*, (Issue 01), 89–90. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307883303301270>

Conradie, M. S. (2016). Critical race theory and the question of safety in dialogues on race. *Acta Theologica*, 36(1), 5–26. <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v36i1.2>

Dei, E. C. (1993). *Athol Fugard and race relations: social dynamics under apartheid* [Master's thesis, University of British Columbia]. UBC Library Open Collections. <https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0058196>

Dommissie, J. (1986). The psychological effects of apartheid psychoanalysis: Social, moral and political influences. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 32(2), 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002076408603200207>

Hafez, S. (2018). Identity and stance shifts in Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 18(2), 1-15.

Kačer, T. (2008). Criticism of apartheid in Blood knot in comparison with Two trains running and Philadelphia, here I come! *Brno Studies in English*, 34(1), 79–88. <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/104239>

Mbatha, S. (2016). *Understanding skin colour: Exploring colourism and its articulation among black and coloured students* (master's minor dissertation). University of Cape Town. <https://open.uct.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/1228c1f5-f159-442b-a99a-6aea2db645dc/content>

Miller, A. N. (2022). Internalized racism among African Americans: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 48(1), 3-35. <https://doi: 10.1111/josi.12350>

Modiri, J. M. (2012). The colour of law, power and knowledge: Introducing critical race theory in (post-) apartheid South Africa. *South African Journal on Human Rights*, 28(3), 405-436. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19962126.2012.11865054>

Mwihia, E. W. (2014). The theme of identity in selected plays of Athol Fugard. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(6), 67-73.

Njoki, M. M., & Ogogo, C. (2014). A critical analysis of Athol Fugard's social vision in four selected plays. [Master's thesis, Kenyatta University]. KU Institutional Repository. <https://doi:10.5901/jesr.2014.v4n1p63>

Norris, S. A., Roeser, R. W., Richter, L. M., Lewin, N., Ginsburg, C., Fleetwood, S. A., Taole, E., & van der Wolf, K. (2008). South African-ness among adolescents: The emergence of a collective identity within the birth to



twenty cohort study. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 28(1), 51-69.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431607308674>

Reece, R. L. (2019). Color Crit: Critical race theory and the history and future of colorism in the United States. *Journal of Black Studies*, 50(1), 3-25.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934718803735>

Wafula, M. N. (2016). Fugard's *The Blood Knot*: A Lacanian psychoanalytic reading. *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, 2(3-4), 175-188.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23277408.2016.1275773>

Wertheim, A. (2000). *The dramatic art of Athol Fugard: From South Africa to the world*. Indiana University Press.

Weyenberg, A. V. (2020). *Theatre and contested identities in the public sphere: Performance, politics, and place*. Palgrave Macmillan.