

## Poetics of Fear in Athol Fugard's *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*

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**Abstract:** This article explores fear motif in *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* (1974), a play by Athol Fugard. That tragicomedy depicts an anti-miscegenational sexual relation between a Coloured man and a White spinster librarian during the Apartheid rule in South Africa. Basing on a postcolonial analytical approach, it particularly examines the relation of fear to hatred and their mutual feeding which foregrounds the racist “Immorality Act” in the play. It henceforth peruses the mechanisms whereby fear prompts to enact laws and erect institutions which create paralyzing fear psychosis that feeds racism. It then postulates racism as an act of cowardice. Subsequently it shows how the playwright displaces the cathartic function of fear to support his naturalistic aesthetic which pledges to combat human oppression. Ultimately, the study attempts to evaluate Fugard’s play within the framework of literary contribution to racial justice.

**Keywords:** Fear, racism, catharsis, racial justice, postcolonial theory

**Résumé:** Cet article explore le motif de peur dans *Statements after an Arrest Under the Immorality Act* (1974), une pièce de théâtre d’Athol Fugard. Cette tragicomédie dépeint une liaison amoureuse interracial interdite entre un mulâtre et une libraire blanche célibataire pendant la période de l’Apartheid en Afrique du Sud. Au moyen de la critique postcoloniale, l’analyse porte plus singulièrement sur le rapport de la peur à la haine et leur enchevêtrement qui fonde la « loi d’immoralité » raciste dont la pièce se fait l’écho. Elle étudie en conséquence les manifestations à partir desquelles la peur suscite la mise en place de lois et d’institutions qui engendrent une psychose de peur paralysante qui, en retour, alimente le racisme. Partant de ce point, elle entrevoit le racisme comme un acte de lâcheté. En conséquence, elle démontre comment le dramaturge déplace la fonction thérapeutique de la peur pour soutenir son esthétique réaliste dans le combat contre l’oppression humaine. En définitive, l’article évalue la portée de la pièce théâtrale de Fugard dans la contribution littéraire à l’avènement d’une justice raciale.

**Mots clés:** Peur, racisme, catharsis, justice raciale, théorie postcoloniale.

### Introduction

In the “Psychology of Fear” Arthur Westermayr (1915, p. 250) defines fear as “the great force that prompts to acts of self-preservation and operates as effectively in the brute as in the human animal.” As he derives “the presence of a natural laws operating very much like fear” in

plants, he visibly ascribes a biological origin to the state of fear. In this sense, Ralph Adolphs (2013) attempts a cross-species investigation which intends to validate the biological origin to the state of fear. He approaches “fear” as an “intervening variable between sets of context-dependent stimuli and suites of behavioral response” (R79). His definition encapsulates variants between individuals, circumstances, species, and patterns of behaviors. In this work, I use the “fear motif” to refer to the pervasive manifestation of fear in the play.

The examination of the fear motif in Fugard’s drama owes more to the behavioral responses to fear which incorporates self-preservation instinct. In turn, it generates suspicion and hatred for racial and cultural differences. As recent race-based police brutality and crimes enliven American-born “Black Lives Matter” and similar anti-racist movements across the world, the focus on the concept of fear repositions Athol Fugard’s play at the center of today’s race concerns. As a South African playwright, Athol Fugard’s works reflect the social and political experiences of the strong police iron-grip Apartheid system of his country. *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* (1972) is one of Fugard’s three “Statements” plays which, according to Kelli Marino (2010, p.3), “directly attack Apartheid.” This very play echoes Fugard’s rejection of the antiracial mixing legislation in its sexual implication, wherein a male Coloured school principal and a White spinster librarian bore the ignominy of the anti-miscegenational sexual crime which triggered fear psychosis during the 1950s and 1960s Apartheid rule.

The concept of fear draws its earliest-known scholarship from Aristotle’s critical study of drama. The Ancient Greek dramatist determines fear –which he couples with pity – as central to tragedy in *Poetics* (2008, p. 8). He defines tragedy as an “imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions” (p. 8). Since fear is first and foremost acknowledged for its “cathartic” function in tragedy, S. Brusberg-Kiermeier et al (2018) interrogate its relevance in modern-day representation in dramaturgy.

Although Brusberg-Kiermeier et al. are firstly concerned with fear and anxiety in plays after “the events of 11 September 2001” (2018, p. 3) onwards, their representation applies to Frieda

Joubert's and Errol Philander's conspicuous emoting of fear in Fugard's play. While Aristotle specifies that fear and pity may arouse both from "spectacular means" and the inner organization of the play, advocating that the plot must be so arranged as to incur terror and pathos from the audience (p. 15), Fugard's dramatization of fear rather centers on the protagonists' discourses. Fear in "Statements" is not audience-centered, but plays a purgative function on the characters. That displacement has to do with the playwright's social vision and life combat. And because fear operates in a different way in that play, it equally means differently in that African-based theatrical creation.

Austin Asagba (1986) identifies fear as a motif in traditional African drama. He bases his standpoint on polygamous marriages wherein fear for the future combines with jealousy and material want to generate conflicts in the homestead, and in society at large (p. 96). He substantiates his idea drawing on 'Zulu Sofola's play, *King Emene* (1974), in which Nneobi commits a crime on account of "fear of misery and poverty, material bounty for her lineage and the protection of her son" (1986, p. 97). Likewise, fear appears as a personal psychosis in Soyinka's drama production. According to Jeanne Dingome (1980) who reads *The Road* as "Ritual Drama", the personal relationship which Soyinka developed with the road is to be understood in terms of fear for his own life, due to the numerous accidents that he eye-witnessed on his numerous trips from Lagos to Ibadan, and back. Dingome notes that "putting his anguish and deep-rooted fear of death in verse, Soyinka purged the terror resulting from death's embrace" (p. 31).

Owing to its sociohistorical setting, the examination of fear in Fugard's play operates following postcolonial assumptions of ethnicity, race, gender, and all forms of discrimination which inconvenience disenfranchised peoples around the world. Although its operating tools are multifarious and trace back to much earlier established theories, "postcolonialism or post-colonialism" derives essentially from the works of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak (Ashcroft et al, 2007, p. 168). It draws especially on the poststructuralist theory of colonial discourse exposed by Foucault, Althusser, Lacan and Derrida, and concerns itself with studying "the material effects of the historical condition of colonialism" and "the controlling power of representation in colonized societies" (Ashcroft et al, p. 168).

As a subversive approach, postcolonial criticism focuses on “texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production; anthropological accounts; historical records; administrative and scientific writing” (Ashcroft et al, p. 173). The investigation of the concept of fear prompts to resort to that theory in so far as it enables to deconstruct racial hatred as a pattern of threat-related stimulus, especially as one caused by fear of differences. Moreover, postcolonial critical tools help to highlight Athol Fugard’s commitment to fighting the horrendous Apartheid system that dehumanizes a large portion of South African citizens.

This article is organized in three main parts. The first explores the root-cause of racial hatred. The second posits the “Immorality Act” and whole Apartheid system as an institutionalized cowardice. The last part deals with a Coloured protagonist, Errol Philander and explores the victim’s fear and psychosis as an appeal to rise up against racial oppression.

### **1- Joubert’s Phobias: Conceptualizing the Root-Cause of Racial Prejudice**

Fugard’s dramatic activism against human segregation draws primarily on laying a theoretical understanding of the core basis of racism in *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*. Frieda Joubert, a white lady who works in the local library, has a prohibited sexual intercourse with a Coloured man, assumes the playwright’s epistemological framework for probing racism. Her overwhelming panic-stricken attitude visibly posits fear as the dramatist’s hypothesis in that pursuit.

Joubert shows an ambivalent expression of fear. While she clearly proves terrified by Philander’s account of prehistoric animals and beings, she is equally scared of being with the man. That fear is legible in Joubert’s actions and specific use of language. Her hesitant response to Philander’s questions “Everything. Me...you...them...” (p. 83), convinces the audience that she is actually frightened. More than her temporary refusal to be seen outside with the Coloured man – when “a match flares in the darkness [and] she scrambles away” (p. 82) – her frightful answer raises an intertwined psycho-biological interest in the theoretical approach to the concept of fear.

With “Everything [and] Me”, as she puts it, fear is indeed viewed from a biological perspective. It implies that man is innately endowed with a state of fear. In the course of the play, that inherent

potential enhances the Coloured man's irresponsible carelessness. The play assumes here a tragicomic trajectory as it prepares the Coloured lawbreaker to work obstinately towards his own fatal destiny, in the logic of a tragic hero who is benighted by his hubris – his unyielding pride.

Conversely, with “you...them,” fear is inscribed as a threat-related stimulus, and combines the biological function of self-preservation with the psychological pressure of societal requirements. When Joubert says “you”, when pointing at or meaning Philander, she designates her Coloured suitor as the object of the danger she is most likely to face. With “them”, she seems particularly ambiguous. For she expresses unreasonable phobia for beings that do no more exist, and metaphorically implies her white community to replace them.

When Joubert fearfully stammers upon the simple thought of “dinosaurs and those hairy... [the dots expressing fear] missing links... that look like baboons, stand like men, and could almost smile” (p. 83), she discloses her panic and, thereby, her rejection of anything strange. Joubert's disgusting fear for these creatures could hypothesize a theoretical background for racial hatred. Philander's statement about fossilized *Australopithecus* – “that's the one *you don't like*” (p. 83) [My Italics] – underpins that hypothesis.

Fugard's theoretical ascription of racial hatred and fear gains momentum with the figurative language of the protagonists. Frightening as baboons may appear to any human, they have always been assimilated to black people in racist discourses. Speculating on the danger of extinction of these animals in South Africa, Wendy Woodward (2011, p. 61) reveals that “‘the heart of darkness’ metaphor echoes, possibly, the racist/species homology of baboons with African people in apartheid discourse...” Frieda's insinuation that baboons “stand like men, and could almost smile,” which explains her trembling voice, gains a higher racist resonance from that perspective.

Beth Cleary (2000) investigates post-Apartheid drama and notes that arts in general, and theatre in particular, underwent and still undergoes a discriminatory distribution in South Africa. She guesses that the segregationist preoccupations of the “apartheid mind” “have reached as well into artistic activity, because the realm of the symbolic and representational is always a matter of concern to powers in any country” (pp. 216-217). Fugard criticizes that artistic, mostly theatrical, representation of racial hatred through Frieda's expression of fear. Her phobia turns out to be characteristic of the white minority's psychic dread of losing their supremacist power to the

benefit of the black majority in South Africa. Cleary described the “Apartheid (a system that is only nominally over in South Africa) [as] a system of white supremacism that has accrued the vast majority of capital and land resources to the 10% minority population of white colonists and their descendants” (2000, p. 216).

Set in the sociohistorical context of the play, Joubert’s confused fear for the Whites, the Blacks and everything strange, denotes estrangement, rejection, and ultimately, arouses a feeling of hatred for the feared object. Indeed, Warren TenHouten (2007, p. 235) states that “hatred also involves fear.” He explains his view pinpointing that

The potential harm to oneself that is perceived by the one who hates is believed to stem from fundamental traits of the other person or group, and hated groups are often seen as potentially powerful and able to inflict great harm to one’s welfare and way of life. For this reason, fear, the primary emotional reaction of self-protection, is interior to hatred. (p. 235)

From that assumption, Joubert’s confessed fear for Australopithecuses, dinosaurs, and baboons inherently contains a subconscious hatred for their strangeness. When she confesses that she is afraid of Philander himself, she intuitively fosters hostility and distancing towards him. Although she has sex with the Coloured man then, she only sees him as a useful object. Robert Solomon (1977) provides a clue to understanding the type of hatred that the white woman feels for her Coloured sex partner. He states that “hatred is an emotion that treats the other on an equal footing, neither degrading him as ‘subhuman’ (as in contempt) nor treating him with the lack of respect due to a moral inferior (as in indignation) nor humbling oneself before (or away from him) with the self-righteous impotence of resentment” (p. 324). That postulate complexifies the racial hatred that Fugard conceptualizes through Joubert’s pervasive emoting of fear. Yet, this very absurdity of fear-informed hatred fortuitously harbored for ethno-racial differences in South Africa appears as the theme of the play.

Fugard’s assumption of cultural fear meets Homi Bhabha’s critical reading of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986). Bhabha, indeed, unveils Fanon’s aesthetics of fear behind colonial/racial oppression, stating that

[t]he Antillean *évolué* cut to the quick by the glancing look of a frightened white child; the stereotype of the native fixed at the shifting boundaries between barbarism and civility; the insatiable fear and desire of the Negro: ‘Our women are at the mercy of Negroes...God know how they make love’; the deep cultural fear of the black figured in the psychic trembling of Western

sexuality – it is these signs of symptoms of the colonial condition that drive Fanon from one scheme to another, while the colonial relations take shape in the gaps between them, articulated to the intrepid engagements of his style. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 41)

The “psychic trembling of Western sexuality” denoting the Whiteman’s complex and prejudice about the Blackman’s sexual power might well lie behind Fugard’s criticism of the racist “Immorality Act” in play. That legislation on sexuality turns out to be an oppressive response to racial handicap. It is conferred a moral dimension which supposedly derives from a cosmic decree of racialization. William Du Bois (1996) explains how the “White folk” turn their cultural psychosis to their advantage and construct a debasing racist discourse. He draws on his own personal experience to reveal the hypocritical commiseration of the most tolerant and most learned among White people – the “sweeter souls” (p. 498). Their sympathy goes as follows: “My poor, un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born – white!” (W. Dubois, 1996, p. 498). The racial prejudice above only intends to mask the Whiteman’s subconscious fear of cultural and bodily differences.

Putting racism on the same discriminatory footing as sexism, Michael Pickering (1994, p. 330) supports the underlying fear assumption, advocating that “the discourse of sexist and racist humor can seep through into other discourses, and its clichés and stereotypes may contribute to a symbolic lexicon from which fear and prejudice are able to derive their self-sustaining expression.” Now Grace Fatkin (1978, p. 37) – who underlines the importance of teaching youngsters anti-racist values through drama – notes that “prejudice is bred by fear of the unknown as well as ignorance.” Her view is in line with the type of prejudice that Joubert nurtures for ancient-time animals, a feeling denoting fear that eventually settles her unjustified hatred for beings which lived long before her time.

Insight into Fugard’s reading of fear behind racism may be corroborated by an extensive study guide documented by a group of Spanish researchers. Subtitled “A Guide to Talking about Racism” (2007), this research paper centers on several film extracts which identify fear as the most common denominator of the rejection of otherness, and thereby of racism, homophobia, and xenophobia. They advocate that “racism and fear are two ideas that many people associate,

because a racist attitude seems to be produced as a response to a threat, provoked by fear” (Teresa A. Odina et al, 2007, p. 46). They also note that racism is learned, and that people are constantly exposed to it the same way in which “there are fears that are learned socially and are based on stereotypes” (p. 46). In the same vein, Fugard insinuates that Apartheid system, its legislations, especially the so-called “Immorality Act”, and all its practices are ideologically and socially constructed on the basis of fear and prejudices.

## 2- The “Immorality Act”: An Institutionalized Fear

Fugard uses Joubert’s emoted fear to present the “Immorality Act”, and Apartheid ruling system by implication, as a legalization and an institutionalization of absurdity based on fear for non-Whites. According to Kelli Morino (2010, p. 20) “the Immorality Act forbids all sexual relations between whites and non-whites.” All the characters enact that legalized absurdity which regulates the lives of both discriminators and discriminated. When Philander suddenly takes consciousness of his infringing situation, he starts panicking. He does so not just out of instant realization that his life is at risk. To purposefully break the law, knowing the ensuing consequence, is Fugard’s theatrical device to mock at the enactment of a law intended to impede natural impulses between people on the basis of physical differences.

Yet, while Philander expresses true fear because of the danger he faces, Joubert, on the contrary, only emotes fear. “*She laughs with bewildered innocence*” (p. 98) as the panic-stricken Coloured man strives to hide his genitals with his hat as much as he can. The white woman better copes with the embarrassment of her nakedness and now appears to control her initial expression of fear. With her amusement caused by the man’s fearful shame, she retrieves her true position of racial supremacist, and therefore, can cry out orders to the person whom a few minutes before she had sex with. She has now become his first tormentor, so that while “knocking the hat out of his hand” (p. 99) to enhance the man’s humiliating nakedness, she barks at him: “stop it!” (p. 99). There is a total change in scene in the fear motif as Fugard uses that sequence to illustrate the trickery foregrounding racism both as a concept and a social practice.

Fear, which embeds hatred and is conversely embedded in racial hatred, can at once be emoted and institutionalized as in the “Immorality Act” and whole Apartheid policy, and be actually experienced by the discriminated communities who must fear for their lives. That Joubert emotes



fear shows the absurdity, the absence of any objective reason for hating non-Whites. When Philander trembles with fear, his life is at risk on the ground of a mere presumption of danger elaborated by those who fear him for his physical difference. So that when Joubert orders him to stop the “grotesque parody of the servile, cringing ‘Coloured’” (p. 99), Fugard assumes that the Coloured man has done nothing wrong that deserves his histrionic panic. From that perspective, he insinuates the blame to lie rather in the fear-based segregated institutions of South Africa.

Joubert’s fear equates with that of her white neighbor, Mrs. Tienie Buys. They both manifest the social and cultural fear infused in their psyches by their racial group and institutions in regard to anything different, especially to non-white individuals. Through these two characters, the playwright shows that fear, which informs racial hatred, is a sociocultural construct. Discriminated races or ethnic categories cannot but experience its painful consequences. Philander’s trembling reveals the non-White’s psychotic fear for infringing the interracial sexual prohibition. By constructing it as an “Immorality Act,” the Apartheid clearly ascribes an exclusive moral code to sexuality. From that ethical pedestal, that legislation imposes fear on either side of the racial barrier.

The difference between these two racial categories nevertheless lies in the fact that while non-Whites are constrained to actually fear for their lives, White people only express fear following what Frank Furedi (2007) terms “the culture of fear”. He notes that the “cultural norms that shape the way in which we manage and display our emotions also influence the way that fear is experienced” (2007, p. 2). He draws on Elias’s assumption that ““the strength, kind and structures of the fears and anxieties that smoulder or flare in the individual never depend solely on his own ‘nature’. Rather, they are ‘always determined, finally by the history and the actual structure of his relation to other people’” (2007, p. 2). Mrs. Buys’ and Joubert’s fears therefore reflect their racial group’s “culture of fear.” Similarly, Philander’s hysteric fright when the police catch him red-handed also exemplifies the permanent fear-saturated “culture” of persecuted races under Apartheid system.

That same culture of fear motivates Detective Sergeant J. du Preez to arrest both Joubert and Philander for committing a “moral crime.” The Coloured man’s metaphorical discourse on adultery questions the true basis of the prohibition of miscegenational sexual relations. Replying

to the frustrated White woman's suspicion of contrition, Philander says: "[...] My adultery? And yours? *Ja*. Yours! If that's true of me because of you and my wife, then just as much for you because of me and your white skin. Maybe you are married to that the way I am to Bontrug" (p. 93). Fugard attacks here the different laws which, alongside the "Immorality Act", separate racial/ethnic categories under Apartheid system. While the woman's whiteness denotes racial supremacism, Bontrug reflects a somewhat lower stratum in the taxonomic organization of space in Apartheid South Africa.

Philander and his white concubine belong to two diametrically opposed geographical and cultural spaces. Joubert lives in "Ten. Conradie Street" (p. 94), while Philander inhabits "Bontrug Location" (note the absence of a precise address). Anne Sarzin (1987, p. 263) decodes the name of that "coloured township" stating that "Bont" is an Afrikaans word "for varied or confused" which "suggests a background of impurity and mutilation, blighted in this instance by deprivation and drought, a harsh contrast to the amenities of the white Karoo village where Frieda lives." The Black people probably dwell in a much lower-rank shantytown. Fugard intends that space – that is, the dwelling places – determines and hierarchizes racial categories. Kelli Marino (2010, p. 20) notes that the 1950 "Population Registration Act classifies people into three racial groups: white, Coloured (mixed race or Asian), and native (African/native)". That grouping policy contributes to enhance the sense of insecurity and fear of lower-rank races. But, it also exemplifies the cultural fear of white supremacists in Apartheid South Africa.

Fugard's denunciation of racial persecution and the socially settled fear denoting a sense of perpetual insecurity for non-Whites, covers his three "Statements" plays. In "Sizwe Bansi is Dead" (1974), that critique comes from Buntu who comments on the lay preacher's requiem speech over Outa Jacob's grave: "the only time we'll find peace is when they dig a hole for us and press our face into the earth" (p. 28). In "The Island" (1974), the Antigone allegory is a pretext to criticize the climate of fear fostered by ruling institutions. Winston, in the cast of Antigone awaiting life sentence after burying her brother, tells ruling king Creon (embodied by John) that "all the people in your state would say [that I did right] too, if *fear* of you and another law did not force them into silence" (p. 76) [My Italics].

The fear motif in Fugard's "Statements" plays, and particularly in "Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act", suggests that more than material pursuit, fear of otherness, inducing fear-related instinct of self-preservation, foregrounds the politics of Apartheid itself. The "Immorality Act", an illustration of legalized fear, is one of the mainstream segregationist legislations enforced from the late 1940s onwards.

Likewise, all other legislations tending to discriminate against otherness in Apartheid South Africa are foremost and basically guided by fear psychosis. Bontrug, thereafter, epitomizes the white folk's fearful instinct of preservation from Indians, Coloured and, mostly, native Black African neighbors. Bontrug herein evolves from the segregationist "Group Area Act" enacted in 1950 (K. Morino, 2010, p. 15) to separate the different racial categories on the basis of physical features. This act, together with the 1949 "Immorality Act", "the Population Registration Act" (1950) and the "Reservation of Separate Amenities" (1953), constitute the four fundamental legislations of Apartheid system. Those discriminatory acts gestate in what Arfi Badredine (1998) terms "ethnic fear", in the sense that they denote a "social construction of insecurity".

There comes out that Philander's sentence for infringing the "Immorality Act" prohibiting interracial sexuality and mixed marriages, while serving as a deterrent, inherently disguises a system-wide sense of insecurity. As he fearfully explores the inevitability of his doom – his nemesis – the Coloured man uses fear to purge himself, the audience and all oppressed people of paralyzing fear. His soliloquy, embedding at once anxiety and subdued acceptance, ensures the cathartic function of fear in Fugard's representation of human oppression in Apartheid South Africa.

### **3- Philander's Mournful Anagnorisis : A Catharsis to Oppressive Fear**

John McFarlan (2000, p. 367) interprets Aristotle's definition of "anagnorisis" in *Poetics* as "recognition" characterized by "a change from ignorance into knowledge, leading to either friendship or enmity." Although Philander was aware of the prohibition of interracial sexuality, it is only with his condemnation by the court that he fully realizes the actual meaning and implications of the "Immorality Act". He "suddenly" "recognizes" or "becomes aware" of his personal offence and its psychosocial effects.

The term “ignorance” becomes polysemous with Philander’s law-infringement. While in reference books, the term literally means “the state of being ignorant: lack of knowledge, education, or awareness” (*Merriam-Webster*, 2020), or “lack of knowledge or information” (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2020), or else “lack of knowledge, understanding, or information about something” (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2020), it also implies “deliberateness” with the Coloured man’s attitude vis-à-vis the prohibition law. He cannot claim innocence for lacking “knowledge or information” about the segregationist law, as stated above. In that, the secrecy surrounding his love affair with the white woman goes beyond mere marital unfaithfulness. He even assumes his adultery as a purposive defiance to the law. By stating “My adultery? And yours? ...Maybe you are married to that [“your white skin”] the way I am married to Bontrug” (p. 93), the Coloured man acknowledges self-conscious indulgence into trouble, a device whereby he reverses the situation to provoke a higher emotional impact on the audience. Fugard’s play assumes a unity of action, which pivots around the cruelty of systemic oppression operated through controlling and punishing human sexuality on the basis of physical differences.

Although Philander’s and Joubert’s respective fears are in line with Fugard’s naturalistic aesthetics, they are so to challenge and expiate the paralyzing fear which inhibits action against tyranny. The Coloured man’s incessant expression of fear in a self-created compromising situation calls for reflection. Does he actually feel afraid or does he emote fear as a symbolic message? Fugard is known for his theatrical vision which draws on the actual daily experiences of his milieu. Mwihi Margaret Njoki and Collins Ogogo (2014, p. 69) note that Fugard’s characters “face the same issue which is the poverty imposed on the blacks of South Africa and that to be black in South Africa is to be poor.” They read that realistic dramatic aesthetic as expressive of the playwright’s social vision which encapsulates his resolute activism for human dignity.

While Philander endeavors to identify with a tragic hero by creating artificial tragic features – given that he was fully aware of the interdiction and ensuing prosecution in advance – Fugard assumes his dramatic commitment to fighting human oppression. Joubert almost betrays that theatrical technique when she accuses her Coloured companion of over-emoting fear: “NO, no...stop it... [*Knocking the hat out of his hand.*] STOP IT!” (p. 99). Yet, following the

playwright's relentless determination to fight racial injustice, Philander keeps emoting fear through a soliloquy until disclosure of its symbolic message.

In the pursuit of his fight against racism, Fugard's dramatic representation of fear follows Arthur Westermayr's dualist scheme, shifting from an "earmark of cowardice...an ignominious position" to "eminent respectability" (1915, p. 250). The fearful situation in which Philander is trapped becomes a venue to challenge fear itself. The Coloured man's offense leaves him no more way out. His community is already deprived of basic human facilities, lacking even drinking water as exemplified in his fearful defense (pp. 98-99). Therefore, fear grows and overwhelms him as he regretfully recollects his mind and helplessly tries to figure out the racially constructed capital punishment awaiting him.

Philander communicates his fear through an atypical rhetorical pattern which combines rhyming versification with prosodic soliloquy. All along his anagnorisis, he cries over the sanction placed on an intangible, uncontrollable, yet fundamental dimension of human beings: love. While it is easy to control the five senses of the human by maiming corresponding organs, the Coloured man's plaintive language exposes the limits of the racial absurdity that pretends to stifle human emotions.

The implication is that if the racist bully can bring under control such noble emotion as love, then conversely the oppressed should be able to convert the emotion of fear that entralls him into a liberating impetus. Philander's expression of fear before the court – "I am terribly frightened they will find out" (p. 106); "That frightens me" (p. 107) – soon invigorates him to critically examine the "emptiness" (p. 108) of oppressed people.

As he transcends his fear and scrutinizes the depth of his "emptiness" as a racial victim, Philander indorses Fugard's determination to reverse fear-induced paralysis into a powerful energizing force against racial discrimination and ensuing persecutions. The dramaturg's commitment operates following the psychological process of fear appeals which Melanie B. Tannenbaum and (2015, p. 1178) consider to be "effective at positively influencing attitude, intentions, and behaviors." Fugard's dramatic aesthetics draws on that approach which consists of "persuasive messages that attempt to arouse fear by emphasizing the potential danger and harm that will befall individuals if they do not adopt message's recommendations" (Tannenbaum and al, p.

1178). Although the “danger and harm” are already at work in Apartheid South Africa, the playwright sensitizes on further destructiveness if fear-paralyzed victims do not rise up against racial oppression.

In the play, fear assumes the same therapeutic function as in Aristotle’s tragedy. Yet, while in the tragic play the cathartic function of fear operates through the string of actions unwittingly generated by the hero’s tragic trajectory and operates upon the audience (Aristotle, 2008, p. 8), it rather unravels through the protagonist’s language in “Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act.” By placing the curative action of fear upon the oppressed character’s articulation of his own suffering, Fugard firstly addresses racial victims. He commits them to taking the lead in the fight for their own racial liberation. Fear therapy shifts from the audience onto the suffering characters. Following his social vision which rests on the ideal for a discrimination-free human society, and in compliance with his naturalistic aesthetics, he directly pledges oppressed individuals to break down the fetters of racial subjugation.

As he cries over his “nothingness” Philander bares the ugly face of the perpetual fear psychosis which is the actual obstacle to racial equity. The Coloured man infers that in racial discrimination, even the stark destitution of the oppressed is not enough in the eyes of his persecutors. He also insinuates that mere paralyzing fear psychosis does not help. He explores the victim’s “emptiness” and sees it as a sequel of his own internalization of fear which prevents him from reacting against racial injustice.

Philander’s recollection of Joubert’s reproachful words – “You’re a coward” (p. 107) – assumes the didactic purpose of the play. Postulating that “at the end as at the beginning, they find you again” (p. 107), the play intends to teach racial victims that there never will be a solution until they get rid of their mesmerizing fear and brace themselves up against racism. The sense of fright that arouses from the indiscriminate guilt of subjugated races provides a venue to fathom the “welfare” of cowardice. Visibly, Philander finds none, except death. But, even death seems to be a luxury. So much so that after receiving his dead body, “God” refuses to attend to his “nothingness” (p. 108). Surprising enough, where God finds nothing worth taking from the victim even in death, racists still find something: “they arrest it [the emptiness] all the same” (p. 108).

Fear operates in the play as a central theme which originates from the set question: “why did you let them do it?” (p. 107). That reproachful interrogation is determinant in that it webs the plot and actions, as well as the language of the characters and the breathtaking rhythm. Yet, Fugard’s representation of fear differs from conventional tragic plays on various points. For that fundamental question is rather directed to the character. So much so that fear barely gestates in the thread of actions. It is communicated as a direct discourse. Doing so, Fugard directs his play to the fear-bound victims of racism who do nothing to change their conditions.

From that perspective, the play turns out to be politically subversive. It not only frontally attacks the oppressive system of Apartheid, but it also calls for the revolt and rejection of the system by those who actually endure it. No wonder then that Fugard himself suffered disavowal, house arrest and exile all along his career. Ashleigh Harris (2018, p. 327) underscores one such denial drawing on Errol Durbach’s report on an obstacle to the performance of *Antigone* in 1965: “[it was] on the eve of production, that Fugard was denied a police permit to enter the black township of New Brighton for the dress rehearsal of *Antigone*, while the Serpents Players [black actors] were refused permission to perform before white audiences in Port Elizabeth.” As evidenced in the passage above, the playwright experiences a lot intimidation and threat especially with regard to his anti-Apartheid “Statements” plays, but he never backs down or surrenders. From that angle, the dramatist posits as a groundbreaker, an exemplar of bravery in hostile environment. He therefore addresses his chosen audience, the undermined racial groups, through exemplification.

By centering his characterization on racial victims, Fugard pledges them to fight back the intimidating fear which keeps them into subdued inaction. In his theatrical aesthetics, the subjugated are given the prominent role of freeing themselves. That is why fear firstly cures the character before standing as a catharsis for the audience. Even then, he firstly targets an audience which belongs together with and shares the same humiliating suffering as the discriminated characters of his anti-Apartheid plays. So much so that while the oppressed characters recover from their enthralling fear, they equally heal the victimized communities they embody.

Fear still plays its conventional cathartic function in Fugard’s play. Yet, the recovery it incurs is self-reflexive in the sense that it cures fear-stricken victims from hypnotic fear in the first place. In other words, Philander’s exaggerated emoting of fear, while heightening the humiliating

dehumanization of racial oppression, intends to purge paralyzing fear. Fear, thereafter, turns out to be cathartic to fear. The audience herein recovers from their psychotic fear, and gain a new invigorating power to fight back racist tyranny. In this light, the fear motif in “Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act” stands as Athol Fugard’s dramatic commitment to denouncing and combatting Apartheid system, and all forms of human oppressions around the world.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has explored racism and racial oppressions behind the fear motif in Athol Fugard’s “Statements after an Arrest under the immorality Act”, using postcolonial criticism. It has revealed that racism primarily gestates in the fear of difference and ensuing socio-cultural prejudices. It has demonstrated that fear is both a biological state and a psychological emotion in that it is inherent to human being and evolves at the same time as a natural instinct of self-preservation before a threat. It has further shown that threat-related fear engenders estrangement which, in the case of cultural otherness, causes suspicions and a sense of insecurity. The cultural psychosis that ensues generates racial hatred which, in turn, triggers ethno-racial discrimination. The analysis has therefore posited Apartheid in South Africa as a fear-inspired and fear-imbedded ruling system. It has particularly read the anti-miscegenational legislation, the “Immorality Act”, as a deceptive camouflage of cowardly feelings. Similarly, the article has sensed behind all Apartheid institutions and laws a fear-bound ideology which rests on an exhibition and implementation of violence aiming at oppressing and exploiting discriminated categories in South Africa. Besides, the work has tried to re-conceptualize the cathartic function of fear in Fugard’s theatrical aesthetics. It has shown that the purgative effect of fear rather centers on the oppressed protagonist, contrary to its conventional audience-based impact in classical tragedy. As such, it has demonstrated that Fugard’s representation draws on his naturalistic ideal and social vision. In that respect, the study has unveiled the dramatist’s particular characterization of the discriminated protagonist as exemplifying the psychic fear and the socio-physical pains of his community. Additionally, it has expounded the playwright’s assumption that if racial discrimination derives from fear of difference, conversely it is internalized fear passively endorsed by discriminated categories which entrenches and perpetuates it. It has found in the cathartic power of fear an invigorating force intended to heal racial victims of their paralyzing anxiety. Fear in this sense is meant to purge the fear psychosis that leads to subservience and dehumanization. The article has



ultimately concluded that the fear motif in the play is expressive of Athol Fugard's commitment to discrediting and fighting racial tyranny. As such, it has evaluated as much as possible the playwright's representation of fear as a real contribution to racial justice.

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