



Breaking boundaries: Fugard's *Blood Knot* and the dynamics of deterritorialization



 Met'eb Ali
Alnwairan¹⁺

 Menia Mohammad
Almenia²

 Dania Meryan³

 Hamzeh Ahmad Al-
Jarrah⁴

^{1,3}Department of English Language, Literature and Translation, Zarqa University, Jordan.

¹Email: alnawairan2@gmail.com

³Email: dmeryan@zu.edu.jo

²Department of English Language and Literature, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia.

³Email: mmmniea@qu.edu.sa

⁴Department of English Language and Literature, Irbid National University, Jordan.

⁴Email: h.aljarrah@inu.edu.jo



(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

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This paper explores the concept of deterritorialization in Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot* through the philosophical frameworks of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, focusing on how Fugard's characters transcend the oppressive restrictions of apartheid using symbolic actions and postdramatic techniques. The study employs a multidisciplinary approach, applying Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical concepts to analyze *Blood Knot* through three primary lenses: temporal displacement, symbolic landscapes, and embodied contradictions. These elements are examined to reveal how Fugard manipulates time, space, and the physicality of his characters to reflect the process of deterritorialization. By analyzing how identity markers and power dynamics are portrayed and subverted within the play, the approach combines philosophical theory with literary analysis to uncover the deeper layers of resistance and transformation within the characters' experiences under apartheid. The analysis demonstrates that Fugard's characters rise above apartheid's constraints by engaging in symbolic and embodied actions, which reflect the fluidity of identity and resistance to oppressive systems. The manipulation of time, symbolic environments, and physical struggles within the play illustrates a deeper process of deterritorialization, where characters disrupt the rigid social and political structures imposed on them. By examining the play through philosophical and symbolic lenses, the study highlights Fugard's nuanced portrayal of resistance and the fluid, dynamic nature of identity under oppressive regimes, providing a richer understanding of the complexities of identity and power within the play's historical and political context.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by offering an interdisciplinary analysis of *Blood Knot* through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization. It highlights how Fugard's characters resist apartheid through symbolic, spatial, and temporal strategies, enriching discussions on identity, power, and postdramatic forms of resistance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Athol Fugard is a renowned South African playwright, known for his profound and poignant works that confront the harsh realities of life under apartheid. His plays often focus on themes of racial tension, identity, and the human condition, making him a key figure in anti-apartheid literature. *Blood Knot*, one of his most significant works, was written in 1961 and marks the beginning of Fugard's exploration of complex racial and social issues in South Africa. The play revolves around two brothers, Zachariah and Morris, who are of mixed race but are perceived differently due to their skin color. Through their relationship, Fugard delves into the effects of apartheid's rigid racial hierarchies, using the characters' interactions to explore themes of identity, power, and survival. *Blood Knot* is a powerful

representation of the struggle for dignity and equality, and it remains a key text in understanding the socio-political landscape of South Africa during apartheid, blending both political and existential concerns.

apartheid in South Africa, like other racist regimes, constructs identity on the rigid basis of skin pigmentation, making skin color the primary determinant of one's identity and territory. This separatist ideology confines Black South Africans to specific areas and severely restricts their physical and emotional mobility. Under apartheid, any attempt by a Black individual to cross into another "territory" required the presentation of a passbook to white authorities, without which movement was prohibited. This system not only controlled and oppressed Black South Africans but also served to justify and perpetuate systemic discrimination. In this context, Athol Fugard's play *Blood Knot* explores themes of identity and mobility, offering a profound critique of these imposed boundaries.

Skin pigmentation essentializes people into fixed categories: black and white, human and subhuman, and masters and slaves. De-essentialization, in turn, requires resistance on different levels: racial, political, and cultural. These "territories" are de-territorialized in many South African plays, such as those written by the white-skinned playwright Athol Fugard. As a case in point, this article scrutinizes the deterritorialization of identity markers using Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophical perspectives, especially their theory of deterritorialization. Deterritorialization, a concept proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, refers to the displacement of people, identities, and cultures. Kaplan (1987) explains that Deleuze and Guattari use the term "deterritorialization" to locate this moment of alienation and exile in language and literature.

In fact, one merit of Athol Fugard's theatre is that it gives its characters the power to skillfully transcend limitations imposed on them by racist regimes through Fugard's use of symbolic actions, powerful dialogues, and postdramatic techniques. The small space on stage becomes a place where they negotiate new possibilities. Although the depiction of suffering is dark, Fugard never rules out the potential for dignity and hope (Walder, 2015). Fugard laid the foundation for radical experiments in both form and content through the vehicle of postdramatic theater, which was primarily anti-elitist, anti-textual, experimental, and collaborative. In his book Lehmann and Jürs-Munby (2006), the authors introduced the concept of postdramatic theater by enumerating various trends and aesthetic features that have been present in avant-garde theater since the late 1960s. The theater that Lehmann refers to as postdramatic is not primarily concerned with drama itself; rather, it develops a performative aesthetic in which the play's text is specifically related to the stage and its material conditions. The unfinished and disjointed literature that a playwright creates is what postdramatic theater aims to imitate. Fugard's plays faced severe overt and covert government regulations, as well as extremely restrictive working conditions. Fugard broke away from accepted norms and, in his own unique style, created a form of theater that aligned with his literary and ideological inclinations and the challenging environment in which he worked (Gqibitole & Bello, 2018).

Set in Korsten, an industrial city in apartheid-era South Africa, *Blood Knot* dramatizes the complex relationship between two biological brothers, Zachariah and Morris. Morris, the lighter-skinned brother, has passed as white for many years and has recently returned to live with his darker-skinned brother, Zachariah. Zachariah works as a gatekeeper at a white park, where he faces daily humiliation from his white boss. It appears that Zachariah is exhausted due to his demanding job and bored with his lifestyle. Consequently, Morris suggests that Zachariah befriend a girl through a pen pal magazine. However, they end up corresponding with a white girl, through whom they experience the dynamics of power relations between whiteness and blackness. This interaction plays a significant role in broadening the brothers' understanding of the racist construction of identity in South Africa.

The dynamics of power relations between different races are manifested as Zachariah and Morris stage a mock meeting between Morris and Ethel, the white girl, in the course of which Zachariah and Morris exchange racist insults. In another scene, Morris plays Zachariah's white boss, humiliating Zachariah and attacking him physically. The brothers feel estranged from themselves for a moment, but finally, they decide to continue their lives as two biological brothers, though different in color.

Moving from the center (Whiteness) to the margin (Blackness) and vice versa, the two brothers in *Blood Knot* destabilize the racist markers of identity in South Africa by defying essentialism and challenging the existing racist social and political order found in such countries as South Africa. *Blood Knot* grants its characters the ability to negotiate their identities and move into new "territories." Most notably, the play, through its dramatization of the relationship between the two brothers, reterritorializes the concept of identity and belonging, offering a refusal to consider blackness and whiteness as the only determinants of identity in South Africa. As Wertheim (2000) explains, "Fugard has made a name for himself as a serious playwright who has often dared to challenge the social system of his country and the ways whites, blacks, and coloured think of race; and who has expanded our horizons about the nature of human psychodynamics" (vii). Fugard's dynamic theatre opens up new territories for black-white coexistence, creating shifting patterns of power relations that align with Deleuze and Guattari's theory of deterritorialization.

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, combining literary analysis with philosophical theory to offer a deeper understanding of Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot*. By applying Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization, this research provides fresh insights into how Fugard's characters resist the oppressive structures of apartheid. This study contributes to the body of literature on Fugard by revealing the complex ways in which time, space, and physical embodiment interact to challenge identity and power dynamics. Additionally, it broadens the application of philosophical theories within literary studies, demonstrating how abstract concepts like deterritorialization can illuminate real-world socio-political contexts. The study also highlights the role of literature as a vehicle for social critique and transformation, illustrating how theatrical techniques can be used to question and resist systems of oppression.

The primary objective of this study is to explore how Athol Fugard employs symbolic actions and postdramatic techniques to represent the process of deterritorialization in *Blood Knot*. The research aims to investigate the roles of temporal displacement, symbolic landscapes, and embodied contradictions in illustrating the characters' resistance and transformation within the play. By providing a multidisciplinary analysis that combines literary techniques with philosophical frameworks, the study seeks to enhance the understanding of identity and power within Fugard's work. Additionally, it aims to contribute to broader discussions on the role of literature in critiquing and resisting oppressive regimes, particularly within the context of apartheid South Africa.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Writing Under Apartheid*

Writing under the apartheid machinery, which was intended to stifle any form of art deemed subversive and/or anti-apartheid, was challenging for a writer like Fugard, who was obsessed with the *other*, especially those "compatriots excluded from the center of power and mired in poverty and oppression" (Walder, 1984). Fugard writes about his "obsession" with the *other* in a letter to Almeda K. Rae:

I try to relate the very real issues of today to my plays. Perhaps you could describe it as "theatre of defiance"; yes, my object is to defy. I am protesting against the conspiracy of silence about how the next person lives and what happens to groups other than our own (Fugard qtd. in Walder (1984)).

Coetzee (1992) contends that Fugard's work is an act of "bearing witness" to the degradation of black people under the apartheid system. According to Coetzee, this path was, in his view, an existential one. Fugard writes: "My life has been given its order: love the little gray bushes" (Fugard qtd. in Coetzee 1992). Despite Fugard's insistence that his work is simply an act of love, many critics argue that the broader socio-political context of South Africa and Fugard's personal experiences are deeply intertwined with his thematic concerns. In fact, both historical and contemporary studies of Fugard's plays are often marked by controversy regarding his political commitment. His plays have generated extensive discussion and are characterized by numerous paradoxes.

Gqibitole and Bello (2018) for instance, tell us how Fugard's complex personal history has had an impact on his literary writing and the contradictions seen in even his most politically charged works. For example, even though he advocated for the idea that "the personal is inextricably political," he constantly denied being political in his plays and public statements. Gqibitole and Bello (2018) delve deeper into the contested politics of some of Fugard's plays by examining the various forms of restrictions used by the apartheid regime to measure and stifle political discourse in the arts during that period. As a result, Gqibitole and Bello (2018) explain that Fugard had to preserve the middle ground, a strategy that guaranteed his survival as an artist and helped him avoid facing the full fury of the apartheid state.

2.2. Fugard's *Blood Knot*

In a racist society, apartheid created a fluctuating dynamic of authority and dependence among its people, a theme skillfully explored by Fugard in *Blood Knot*. This play, in particular, established Fugard's reputation both locally and globally, setting the style for his subsequent works. It is primarily local in terms of inspiration, setting, discourse, and texture: a 'non-white' shantytown on Port Elizabeth's northern outskirts called Korsten (Walder, 1984). The first of the three Port Elizabeth plays to be performed in front of an invited multiracial audience, *Blood Knot*, a two-hander play by Athol Fugard, delves into the complex dynamics of power relations that arise between Morris and Zachariah, two brothers of mixed race. The play explores this tormented and binding relationship between the two.

Scholarly work on *Blood Knot* has explored various interpretative approaches. Analyses often focus on the racial tensions between the brothers and how their relationship mirrors broader societal conflicts under apartheid. For instance, Al-Jarrah (2023) adopts an existential-phenomenological interpretive approach to the play and argues that Fugard's *Blood Knot* embodies the dialectics of presence and absence, which have their roots in the racist presupposition that views blackness as essentially lacking. Al-Jarrah investigates the depiction of the body as a territory in *Blood Knot*. He argues that the corporeal limitations imposed on Zachariah by strict racial boundaries heighten his awareness of blackness, as his presence is eclipsed by the whiteness of his brother, Morris. This existential awareness causes Morris to eventually retreat into his designated racial identity. However, this awareness also enables Zachariah to adopt a black gaze. The brothers in *Blood Knot* act as each other's reflected consciousness, serving as eyes that disclose each man to himself.

Thomson (2013) explores this seemingly irreconcilable alterity in *Blood Knot*. He interprets the play through a Camusian lens and investigates how the two brothers acknowledge that their circumstances are *Sisyphean* in nature. In a sense, Zack and Morris are fated to keep oscillating between the extremes of darkness and whiteness, despite having been endowed with an existentialist consciousness. Fugard acknowledges this tormented yet binding connection, pondering, "What could be more obvious than that I should be drawn to, overwhelmed by Camus? Wasn't I trying to do that to Morris and Zachariah at the end of *Blood Knot* two men who were going to try to live without hope, without appeal? In effect, Morris is trying to say, in that final beat of the play: Now we know" (Fugard, 1974).

Thompson believes that the Camusian style of existential theater resolves the aesthetic issue of representation that critics initially examined, such as those by Sartre (1976) and Fanon (2008). He claims that the constellation and cooperation of voices in *Blood Knot*, as opposed to their reduction and/or synthesis, are the necessary approaches to the problem of portraying *Otherness*.

Other scholars, such as Mwihiia (2015) have interpreted the play's setting and interactions as symbolic of the broader South African socio-political landscape, using allegory to critique apartheid. Mwihiia argues that Fugard employs techniques of characterization and symbolic portrayal of various events to convey his vision of a better South Africa. Mwihiia (2015) contends that the play highlights what he perceives as the *ideal* by engaging with the *real*, which, in this context, is the apartheid system.

The real and fictitious mothers of Zachariah, his girlfriends, and his pen pal Ethel are all unseen, off-stage characters in *Blood Knot*. Nevertheless, they all play a significant role in shaping both the plot and the narrative itself.

Fugard demonstrates the regime's authority, which is constant yet unseen, through these absent figures. The two main protagonists in *Blood Knot*, as Mwihia explains, do not have their biological mother present because she is purportedly deceased. However, she symbolizes South Africa. She was a mother to two children one white and one black reflecting the two major racial groups in South Africa: the whites, represented by Morris, and the blacks, represented by Zachariah. apartheid is symbolized by the fictitious mother, who becomes obstinate after being driven out by one son. Mwihia asserts that Fugard endorses the idea that only when the two sons unite and drive the false mother away does she disappear. This implies that both Black and White populations must make efforts together in the struggle against apartheid.

Despite extensive research on the political, existential, and racial dimensions of *Blood Knot* including its critique of apartheid and the racial tensions between the brothers a gap remains in exploring how Fugard's symbolic actions and postdramatic techniques contribute to the characters' resistance. Specifically, there is limited analysis of these elements through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization. While past studies focus on socio-political allegories and existential themes, they do not fully explore the fluidity of identity and power dynamics in *Blood Knot* using this philosophical framework. This study aims to fill that gap by offering a new perspective on Fugard's work, particularly in the context of identity transformation and resistance under apartheid.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DELEUZE'S DETERRITORIALIZATION

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, theoretical research approach, primarily focusing on literary analysis through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization. Situated within the interpretive paradigm, the research examines how Fugard's *Blood Knot* portrays characters who resist and transcend the socio-political structures of apartheid. Textual analysis will dissect dialogues, settings, and character interactions to identify moments where fixed identities and power dynamics are subverted. This method is well-suited for analyzing the symbolic and postdramatic techniques used by Fugard, providing deeper insights into how the play challenges norms related to race and power.

To better situate Fugard's *Blood Knot* within its larger (global) context, the research design also draws on prior applications of deterritorialization in postcolonial literature to contextualize *Blood Knot* within a broader literary tradition. This method not only facilitates a rich reading of Fugard's symbolic actions but also provides new insights into how the fluidity of identity is portrayed through his characters' struggles against the apartheid regime. The study thus seeks to contribute to scholarship on Fugard by offering a fresh perspective on how his work embodies themes of resistance and transformation through the process of deterritorialization.

3.2. Deleuzian Philosophy

The application of Deleuzian theory, particularly *deterritorialization*, to Fugard's works is relatively unexplored. In this study, the researchers intend to investigate areas in *Blood Knot* that reflect the process of deterritorialization. Gilles Deleuze was a major thinker in postmodern French philosophy. Given his active involvement in the fight for rights and freedom of the oppressed, his ethics have significantly influenced his views on society and politics. Since Deleuzian philosophy primarily draws on literary analysis, it supports the academic perspective that postcolonial works can be regarded as a form of biopolitical fiction literature that explores the body as a territory intertwining politics, history, and the arts with literature. For example, under apartheid, the black body became a domain of racial struggle, over which racism exerted its power, confining black-skinned people within the boundaries of skin color (Al-Jarrah, 2020). In fact, the Deleuzian approach often returns us to literature because Deleuze perceives literature as a theory in its own right, embedded in social contexts, rather than merely a reflection of historical or economic circumstances (Meryan, 2011).

Deleuze establishes a complex theory of “writing-as-becoming,” in which he privileges difference over identity and ties it to colonial cultures. According to Deleuze, colonial subjects are constantly evolving. Their identities are perpetually in a protean state of *becoming*. Therefore, minor literature such as postcolonial literature can both help develop these colonial identities and serve as a means of deconstructing and ending the conventions of colonial ideology. Deleuze was particularly interested in texts that examine the *rhizomatic* relationships between marginalized people and the writers who feel connected to these “multiplicities,” which are not yet considered “people,” as well as their socio-political struggles (Meryan, 2011).

The term “Deterritorialization” is philosophical in nature; it is an elastic neologism that was first used by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The Latin prefix *de*, which means “from, away from,” and another Latin word, *terra* (the earth or terrestrial planet), are the etymological roots of “deterritorialization”. Terra’s alternative term “territorium” designates particular earthly geographical areas and territories. Hence, deterritorialization is the purposeful shifting of the center of reality and power, which not only defines but also assigns (Eko, 2021; Legrand, 2003). In other words, deterritorialization involves using a territory with a set of established relationships to create a new stratum (Colebrook, 2020).

Deterritorialization has been widely applied in literary studies to explore themes of identity, space, and narrative structure. Examples include postcolonial literature, where deterritorialization is used to examine how colonial and postcolonial texts disrupt and reconfigure identities and spaces imposed by colonial powers (Bignall & Patton, 2010; Burns & Kaiser, 2012; Patton, 2010). Moreover, modernist and postmodernist texts often employ fragmented narratives and non-linear structures, embodying the process of deterritorialization by breaking away from traditional forms and conventions (Aldea, 2011; Buchanan & Thoburn, 2015; Patton & Protevi, 2003). Likewise, literary works dealing with themes of migration, exile, and diaspora frequently engage with deterritorialization, exploring the fluid and dynamic nature of identity and belonging (Reyes, 2020).

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) deterritorialization is the process by which structures, identities, and boundaries that are already given are ruptured, deconstructed, or displaced. This is basically the most important concept for understanding how social, cultural, and political phenomena become dynamic and flexible in contemporary society. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that a territory is not really a physical space but a construct defined by various forces and relations. The process they describe involves the deconstruction of these constructs, an act that opens up new possibilities for thought and action (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deterritorialization, then, symbolizes changes and contests in social, cultural, and political values and practices. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) it is the undoing of fixed and stable notions that characterize a particular form of territory, which can be geographic, social, or psychic.

3.2.1. Geographic Deterritorialization

Geographic deterritorialization, at its most basic level, refers to the dissolution of geographical boundaries. The weakening of these firm links with specific geographic territories results from processes such as migration, globalization, and the spread of technology. As mobility increases both literally and across boundaries through people, goods, and ideas, the fixed associations with particular geographic territories are challenged (Appadurai, 1996).

Geographic deterritorialization’s impacts on our conceptions of space and place in the contemporary world are significant. This phenomenon can be illustrated by the movement of populations through migration, which may be voluntary or forced. According to Appadurai, migrants transfer their cultures and social principles to new locations, thereby creating hybrid spaces that challenge traditional geographical borders. For example, the development of ethnic enclaves in major cities worldwide demonstrates how deterritorialization can lead to the formation of new cultural and social landscapes. This concept is particularly evident in various contexts, especially diaspora literature. Bulosan (1946) exemplifies how physical and psychological displacement highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of identity and belonging (Alnwairan, 2020).

As Kofman and Youngs (2008) observed, globalization increases the scale and scope of geographical deterritorialization by facilitating intensified cross-border movement of commodities, capital, and information. Operating across several nations, multinational companies establish global supply chains that are geographically deterritorialized, such as the integration of remote economies into a single system. This type of economic integration, as Sassen (2000) points out, thwarts nation-states' sovereign power and instead leads to new sets of global governance and regulation.

3.2.2. Social and Cultural Deterritorialization

In social and cultural terms, deterritorialization challenges the concepts of fixed roles, norms, and identities within society. This process can be viewed as disrupting established codes or social structures, leading to new forms of social and cultural organization. For example, hybrid cultures emerge from the blending of diverse cultural practices through migration or media, resulting in cultural expressions that are not merely the intersection of two fixed territorial practices but rather a dynamic and evolving amalgamation (Hall, 1992).

The consequences of social and cultural deterritorialization are more evident in their direct relationship with media and communication technologies. Since the advent of television, film, and the internet, these media have reached a global audience, facilitating the widespread circulation of cultural products beyond national and cultural borders. New platforms have given rise to innovative cultural expressions, where diverse traditions are fused together, creating hybrid cultural forms. For example, the popularity of Hollywood and Bollywood films is genuinely global, demonstrating the capacity of such cultural products to be deterritorialized and recontextualized into new cultural spaces. This phenomenon highlights the increasing interconnectedness of cultures facilitated by modern communication technologies, leading to a more integrated and diverse global cultural landscape.

Interestingly, deterritorialization is also at work in everyday practices attributed to individuals who hold multiple cultural identities, where practices used by a diasporic group in their parents' homeland and those of the host country blend together. This mixing negates a unitary cultural identity that assumes stability and highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural belonging (Hall, 1992).

3.2.3. Psychological Deterritorialization

Another important form of deterritorialization is psychological deterritorialization, which refers to the destabilization and transformation of personal identity and subjectivity. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) find faults in classical psychoanalytic models, especially those propounded by Freud, that are mechanistic and impose rigid structures on the psyche. They believe the human mind is never static but a site of flux and transformation. Deterritorialization, therefore, permits a more mobile and liquid understanding of desire and subjectivity, no longer in thrall to the straitjackets of traditional psychoanalytical categories (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983).

In a relevant vein, psychological deterritorialization undermines the solidity and rigidity of self-boundaries and categories that underpin them. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) suggest that the psyche is not a closed system but one that interacts with the world through various social, cultural, and political forces acting upon it. This view is consistent with their general philosophical project emphasizing becoming over being and multiplicity over unity, where the psyche must be seen as dynamic and responsive to possibilities, meaning it is in a state of continuous transformation and adaptation.

In practice, such psychological deterritorialization is materialized by the fluid and shifting nature of personal identities. People, remaining within numerous frameworks of relations, inhabit different roles and identities in line with how social contexts change, thus defying the idea of a unified, coherent self. People's flexibility in negotiating their identities is seen in the combination of various elements from their backgrounds to create a unique sense of self (Hall, 1992). Such hybrid identity cannot be classified and reflects the relative cultural forces at play.

The theory of deterritorialization offers a valuable global framework for understanding the dynamic and fluid characteristics of social, cultural, and psychological phenomena in contemporary society. Geographical, social, and psychological deterritorialization lead to a dislocation of traditional concepts of boundaries and structures that define territories, favoring new forms of organization and expression. These areas are explored within the discussion section of this research paper under the headings of Temporal Displacement, Symbolic Landscapes, and Embodied Contradictions. They are most closely related to the geographical, social, and psychological deterritorialization issues discussed within [Deleuze and Guattari \(1983\)](#)'s theoretical framework. By examining these dimensions, the discussion provides a deeper analysis of how deterritorialization manifests in various contexts, highlighting ongoing processes of transformation and adaptation that define contemporary existence. This multidisciplinary approach offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of different forms of deterritorialization and their effects on understanding modern social and cultural processes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characters in Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot* live in oppressive, complex realities created by the socio-political landscape of apartheid South Africa. Through the lens of Deleuzian deterritorialization, this study highlights how characters manage to break out from their fixed identities, oppressive spaces, and, most importantly, constraints imposed upon them by society. The aim is to reveal aspects of deterritorialization in action. This analysis is divided into three representative dimensions: Temporal Displacement, Symbolic Landscapes, and Embodied Contradictions. These dimensions illustrate how the characters work to move beyond their immediate conditions by using time, space, and their bodies as sites of resistance, transformation, and hybridization.

4.1. Temporal Displacement

Temporal displacement is one of the trajectories in *Blood Knot*, through which we argue the characters maneuver and even manipulate their experience of time. Fugard's characters manipulate memories, dreams, and plans to escape the oppressive reality of their present. This technique embodies the notion of deterritorialization disruption of fixed structures and their transformation into a means of escaping the constraints of a system or reality. This is evident, for example, from the beginning of the play, when Zach and Morrie discuss the quality of the salt pack. Zach shifts the conversation from the present to the past and recalls his neighbor, Minnie: "No, you don't remember, man. I'm talking about before you. He came every night, you know. Ja! Me and him used to go out together, you know quite a bit. (pause) How did I forget a thing like that!" (7). In the play, Zachariah is constantly caught in memories of the past. His memories serve as a temporal solution to his current deplorable state, providing him with identity and continuity, unlike a present that is so static ([Lenta, 1989](#)). As Zach appears to be a man of the past, Morrie shifts the conversation to the future: "Here I am, putting our future to you, and you don't even listen. The farm, Zach! Remember, man? The things we were going to do?" (9). What is notable about Morrie's character is that he always dreams of the future a future where social and racial cages are broken down. These dreams function as resistance to his current situation, as sites of hope, and as visions of potential escape ([Thompson, 1987](#)). Constructing plans for what will happen in the future, such as the plan for Zachariah to date, provides an avenue through which the characters can create new temporal realities. Although these plans may sometimes be unrealistic, they still represent agency and control over their lives. Creating a new reality aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization, which involves breaking free from fixed and oppressive structures in the present. Through their engagement with different temporalities, the characters succeed in subverting the linear and suffocating timeline of their oppressive environment.

There are numerous occasions that reflect the need for displacement and change in *Blood Knot*, even if this change is temporary. For example, Zachariah displays his frustration well when he claims, "A whole year of spending tonight talking, talking. I'm sick of talking. I'm sick of this room" (19). Zachariah's dissatisfaction with his situation highlights

the absurdity of cyclical patterns in his life; it symbolizes temporality in a standstill, from which he so much wants to escape. The endless talking is symbolic of a confined present's search for meaning, aiming to move toward an idea of a future that will break such temporal stasis (Lenta, 1989). In the play, this is exemplified when Morris shows Zach blank spaces in Africa, where they plan to establish a farm: "Look there . . . and there . . . and down here . . . Do you see? Blank. Large, blank spaces. Not a town, not a road, not even those thin little red lines. And, notice, they're green" (9).

The reflection of Morris, "They don't like these games with their whiteness, Zach. Ethel's got a policeman brother, remember, and an uncle and your address" (53), underscores their awareness of having a fixed social and racial position in time. The certainty that their racial truths will be exposed compels the characters to enlist their fantasies as a means of temporal displacement, attempting to envision alternative futures where these truths would not be relevant. Their hope to transcend current limitations can be understood as a desire for temporal displacement, which aligns with Deleuze's concept of deterritorialization (Patton, 2000).

In Zachariah's observation, "Wind's coming up. It's the mystery of my life, that lake. I mean... It looks dead, doesn't it? If ever there was a piece of water that looks dead and done for, that's what I'm looking at now," (84) the symbolic aspect of the lake as a stagnant, dead space powerfully portrays the oppressive present that the characters inhabit. The deadness of the lake mirrors, metaphorically, the coldness of their lives; the rising wind, on the other hand, suggests change or motion. That is, their wish to deterritorialize the current lifeless temporality and imagine a more dynamic future is a reflection of themselves. As evidence of his willful design of the future, Morris insists: "The farm, Zach! Remember, man? The things we're going to do. Picture it! Picking our own fruit. Chasing those damned baboons helter-skelter in the koppies. Chopping the firewood trees... and a cow... and a horse... and little chickens. Isn't that exciting?" (16). Here, Morris attempts to escape the regimented present for a future idyllic farm, in an attempt to reimagine their lives through deterritorialized time-space. The aim of constructing this mental escapade is to give hope and a sense of purpose to Morris, which stands in complete juxtaposition to the present reality.

Temporal displacement takes a more serious shape through the urgency in Morris's voice as he addresses Zachariah, "This is not just talk, you know. It's serious. One fine day, you wait and see... We're going to pack our things in something and get to hell and gone out of here. You say I don't want to go out? My reply is I do, but I want to get right out." (17). This notion of leaving everything behind and starting over represents another radical form of time displacement. The act of packing and departure symbolizes a severing of the linear progression of their current lives toward a new timeline upon which freedom and possibility are inscribed. This urgent desire to leave signifies a profound act of deterritorialization, as the characters seek to abandon their oppressive present for a hopeful and liberated future (Lenta, 1989).

Temporal displacement in *Blood Knot* is used as a technique to confront the limits imposed by apartheid. The memories, dreams, and future plans of Morris and Zachariah act against the rigid structures of the socio-political milieu that confines them. Temporal displacement occurs as characters utilize memory, dreams, and plans to manipulate their experience of time, enabling them to escape the oppressive reality of their present. This closely links the theme with Gilles Deleuze's concept of deterritorialization: the process of subverting established boundaries to create new realities.

4.2. Symbolic Landscapes in *Blood Knot*

Symbolic landscapes in *Blood Knot* are masterfully utilized to evoke the innermost desires, fears, and aspirations of the characters. These physical and mental landscapes serve as metaphors for their efforts to break free from oppressive physical and social confinements. The characters employ a form of Deleuzian symbolic deterritorialization of these spaces to create opportunities that challenge and transcend the boundaries of their reality. This device is used

in various scenes throughout the play, offering different ways for the characters to envision other, freer, and more open spaces, thereby subverting their current oppressive circumstances.

The fantasized departure to elsewhere, as when Morris declares, "We're going to pack our things in something and get to hell and gone out of here" (17), indicates a strong desire to free themselves from their current constraining environment. This provides a stage for contemplating new settings where they will be free and able to live; such scenery represents the wish to escape physical and social confinement. This move to their future farm project, for example, holds symbolic meaning as a landscape of freedom and self-determination. Hence, the imagined farm can be seen not only as a tangible place but also as a mental and emotional retreat where the characters are at liberty to make decisions for themselves, free from control by oppressive structures that burden them at present. This act of deterritorialization towards autonomy and liberation reflects the characters' striving to create an alternative realm outside of the oppressive present they are trapped in.

Similarly, Zachariah resorts to an imaginary trip with his brother, declaring, "Now, I got this gear here, and I'm going to go [...] to hell and gone, and we aren't coming back" (45). This act symbolizes the urgent need of the characters to sever themselves from their stark reality. Traveling to the idealized, picturesque landscape they describe to the audience serves as a mental and emotional escape. Zachariah and Morris construct a deterritorialized space in their minds, open to exploration and habitation, unhindered by current realities. It symbolizes the displacement of identity and belonging to this uncharted land, representing a break from the linear and oppressive timeline of their present (Patton, 2000). The characters' rich imagination expresses their impulse to cross spaces where the oppressive rules framing their daily lives do not exert control over them.

The metaphorical drive in Scene III leads the characters to a place filled with butterflies: "This is rare, Zach! We've driven into a flock of butterflies. Butterflies! We've found it, Zach. We've found it! This is our youth!" (47). The imagery here is entirely imaginative, representing an escape to freedom and the realization of youth and innocence, as well as the prolongation of these qualities. Butterflies are used to symbolize transformation and renewal, creating a deterritorialized space of hope and rebirth. The butterfly, a symbol of delicate beauty, starkly contrasts with the grime of reality that characterizes the lives of Fugard's characters. This act of imagining a space filled with butterflies serves as a moment of transcendence for the characters, allowing them to escape the confines of reality and enter a world where everything is better.

Another example of spatial symbolism can be found in the gate in Scene VII, which underscores racial and social boundaries rooted in apartheid. When Morris asks Zachariah about his job at the gate, Zachariah replies, "They put me there to chase the black kids away" (76). This type of job emphasizes racial and social boundaries established by apartheid. It functions as a symbol of a forced existence, serving as a barrier between spaces that represent the physical and symbolic landscapes of apartheid. Interestingly, this position embodies the deterritorialization of Zachariah's personal space, where he is both a guardian and a prisoner of these perimeters. These nuances make the gate a powerful metaphor for social confinement and the characters' desire to break free from these restrictions (Thompson, 1987). A gate is not merely an obstacle to the characters' movement but also a barrier between them and the worlds of racial segregation and class expectations. Zachariah's role in shooing away Black children is paradoxical; he finds himself enforcing racist policies that the same system imposes on him. The place the man occupies stationed at the gate is a unique symbol of the intersection between oppression and compliance, suggesting deeply rooted contradictions within the characters and their environment.

The act of climbing a hill and seeing the sky ahead is another reference in the symbolic landscapes the play offers. Morris describes the vividness of this imagined landscape: "I see it through the trees... so I'm climbing up the hill on this road, putting miles between us; and now, at last, there ahead of me is the sky, big, blue, beautiful" (78). This description refers to a symbolic ascent to freedom and possibility. The imaginary landscape of open skies and distant horizons affords relief from confined space; it produces a deterritorialized vision of expansiveness and potential. The journey up the hill becomes a metaphor for their struggle to transcend their current limitations, embodying hope and

determination to achieve a better future (Lenta, 1989). The ascent towards the sky represents an upward trajectory, a striving towards a broader perspective and liberation from the suffocating constraints of their current existence. This vision of the sky, vast and unbounded, contrasts sharply with their brutal and restrictive living conditions, symbolizing the characters' deep-seated desire for freedom and the boundless possibilities that lie beyond their immediate reach.

Fugard's integration of symbolic landscapes in the play highlights the characters' mental and emotional strategies for coping with and transcending their oppressive environment. By envisioning new spaces and journeys, Morris and Zachariah engage in acts of deterritorialization, mentally breaking free from the physical and social confines that define their reality. These symbolic landscapes not only reflect their innermost desires and fears but also serve as powerful tools for imagining and striving toward a liberated and self-determined future.

4.3. Embodied Contradictions in *Blood Knot*

In *Blood Knot*, the contradictions in embodiments become central to the lived experiences of the characters, as it is the body where all tensions and contradictions play out. This relates closely to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization, which describes the subversion of firmly established borders to create new forms of being and existence. This concept is vividly illustrated through the characters' struggles, which are primarily bodily and existential.

The examples of embodied contradictions in the play are numerous. For instance, when Zachariah's boss shouts, "Go to the gate or go to hell" (33), he rephrases the command to either conform to a dehumanizing role or face severe consequences in the form of oppressive socio-political constraints imposed on Zachariah's body. The physical presence of Zachariah at the gate becomes a site of embodied contradiction, where his identity is simultaneously made visible and contested. This command reflects the tension between the autonomy of the body and the external control imposed upon it. Zachariah's body is compelled to perform a role that only deepens his subjugation. Consequently, he becomes his own worst enemy in a daily struggle against an antagonistic force that, through fear and intimidation, has successfully colonized his mind. His predicament exemplifies Deleuze's concept of deterritorialization: Zachariah's identity is continually in question, ensuring that the rigid boundaries of his existence are constantly challenged and destabilized. The gate, a space designed to exclude some individuals and include others, symbolizes the sociocultural barriers Zachariah faces. His presence there signifies more than just his physical location; it also represents his existence within the frameworks of societal control and segregation. Zachariah recognizes this when he tells Morris, "Ja. But after a whole life I only seen me properly tonight. You helped me. I'm grateful" (45).

The playful yet ultimately painful exchange in derogatory terms between Morris and Zachariah: "Hey, Nigger! No harm done now, hey, Zach?" (75) brings to the surface much internalized racism and the complexity of their identities. It reveals the fluidity and conflict that inherently accompany their identities, where play and reality intermingle to create a space of embodied deterritorialization. The jocular use of racial slurs points to deep-seated prejudices and the struggles the characters face while trying to navigate their internalized oppression. This dynamic further reflects embodied contradictions that emerge from attempting to reconcile personal identity with societal expectations (Thompson, 1987). The casualness of this language, even as a joke, indicates how deeply internalized racism is insidious, affecting personal identity and relationships within a social context.

Zachariah points to Morris's lighter skin as an advantage by saying, "Your skin. How can I put it? It's on the light side" (56), illustrating how difficult racial identification can be. The idea that Morris's light skin might enable him to negotiate deals differently highlights the fluidity and instability of racial identities within an oppressive system. This point underscores a contradiction in embodiment, where physical appearance becomes a tangible factor influencing social mobility or acceptance.

The body of characters is thus the battleground for social approval and self-preservation: an embodiment of the concept of deterritorialization as their identities are constantly redefined and renegotiated within the limits of a

restricting system (Patton, 2000). This discovery by Zachariah also reveals one of the most excruciating aspects of colorism's bias: in the oppressed, lighter skin has an unjust advantage, which creates another schism and internal conflicts. This is exemplified in his donning of a suit as he remarks, "You're wearing a pretty-smart-for-a-meeting-with-the-lady type of suit. Shiny shoes, white socks, a good shirt, and a spotty tie," (61), indicating an attempt to transform and reconfigure the body to fit a desired identity. This process can be viewed as an embodied contradiction, as external appearances conflict with internalized racial realities. The suit represents an aspiration beyond their social status, but the physical body within that suit remains as fragile as any against the social prejudices they seek to escape. The desire for deterritorialization through changing the outer surface only demonstrates that, through image alteration, these individuals are unlikely to transcend the deeper-seated rules of social order. Their pursuit of reterritorialization through bodily transformation as a way of returning to themselves highlights an ongoing struggle against racial boundaries that remain unyielding.

The suit, with all its connotations of respectability and status, is merely a veneer a thin one that barely conceals the harsh truths of their lived experiences and the societal barriers that remain unchanged. This is Morris's reflection on the superficiality of appearance versus the deeper, ingrained aspects of racial identity: "There's more to wearing a white skin than just putting on a hat. You've seen white men before without hats, but they're still white men, aren't they?" (65). This observation emphasizes the challenge of truly detaching from an imposed identity, highlighting how social norms can become fully internalized, making them resistant to easy dismissal or redefinition. The hat serves as a metaphor for superficial adjustments that are incapable of transforming the actual conditions of the lived body. Morris's comment draws attention to the contradictions inherent in attempting to change identity from the outside in. It also reinforces the idea that genuine deterritorialization requires profound and fundamental changes in societal structures and cultural norms.

In this way, the hat becomes a metaphor for the superficial layers of identity that society imposes on the individual, which do not fundamentally alter the underlying racial and cultural realities. The physical examination of Zachariah's body, as depicted in "Wait, wait! Not so fast, John. I want to have a good look at you. My God! What sort of mistake is this? A black man? All over, my boy?" (81), only emphasizes the fundamental contradictions involved in attempting to change one's identity through external means. The body becomes a site where social norms and personal desires clash, reflecting the tension between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. It is clear that superficial changes are ineffective in genuinely reshaping innate social perceptions. The characters' bodies are constantly observed and categorized based on racial stereotypes, creating ongoing barriers to complete deterritorialization.

How the insides of Zachariah's body are visually laid bare communicates the sentiment that racial discrimination is pervasive and insidious; it is not quickly shed or overcome through superficial changes (Patton, 2000). The visual aesthetic of this inspection graphically illustrates that the physical body has been forged into a barometer of identity. One must prove oneself against this standard and seek society's approval, which can be overturned or denied based on prejudice. If we now scrutinize these three dimensions in *Blood Knot* temporal displacement, symbolic landscapes, and embodied contradictions, we can better understand Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization: the characters' struggles and longings are vividly expressed through their manipulation of time, engagement with symbolic spaces, and the tensions within their bodies. These dimensions warrant a multi-layered and nuanced understanding of the play, reflecting the complex interrelations and mutual influences of identity, space, and sociopolitical constraints. The characters use their bodies to navigate a world of oppressive structures, continually striving to redefine themselves and challenge the boundaries imposed upon them.

5. CONCLUSION

This study employs a qualitative and theoretical research design focused on literary analysis, utilizing Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization to examine power dynamics and identity in Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot*.

The research interprets the characters' actions, dialogues, and interactions as symbolic of resistance against apartheid's rigid racial structures. Textual analysis is used to explore how the characters, Zachariah and Morris, subvert the established norms through temporal displacement, symbolic landscapes, and embodied contradictions. These elements serve as key sites of deterritorialization, where identity becomes fluid and malleable, challenging the fixed racial and social orders. By examining how the characters manipulate time, space, and their own physicality, the study reveals the depth of Fugard's symbolic and postdramatic techniques in articulating rebellion and self-liberation.

The findings highlight that Fugard's portrayal of the brothers in *Blood Knot* not only critiques the racial prejudices of apartheid but also emphasizes the potential for transformation and coexistence. The analysis shows that through their embodied experiences, the characters transcend their oppressive realities by envisioning new possibilities for self-definition and liberation. The study demonstrates that *Blood Knot* is not only a reflection of racial oppression but also an exploration of hope and dignity. By applying Deleuze and Guattari's theory of deterritorialization, this research underscores the broader philosophical and literary implications of Fugard's work for resisting social injustices. Ultimately, the play is revealed as a powerful testament to human resilience and the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality.

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