

Our skin is trouble: Racial discourse in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Wole Soyinka's 'Telephone Conversation'

Theresah Addai-Mununkum¹, Rexford Boateng Gyasi^{2*}

¹Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

²Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Corresponding Author: Rexford Boateng Gyasi, E-mail: gyasirexford@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: January 25, 2021

Accepted: April 15, 2021

Published: April 30, 2021

Volume: 9 Issue: 2

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

Keywords:

Racism,

Racial Discourse,

Critical Race

Theory,

Discrimination,

Animal Metaphor

ABSTRACT

The recent incident in Minneapolis, United States, where George Floyd, an African-American man, was manhandled by a police officer has brought about the resurgence of racial awareness as championed by the Black Lives Matter Movement. The concept of race has shaped the lives of so many generations and continues to do so in the 21st century. Racial segregation as well as the public hysteria on racism has had so much influence on societies and has led to discrimination and racial slurs across races. Using Critical Race Theory, this study examines racial discourse in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Wole Soyinka's 'Telephone Conversation'. The analysis of the discourse reveals racial tendencies in the description of the black race through white-black (Self/Other) binary (racial segregation), race-based discrimination and animal metaphors. The paper contributes to scholarship on racial discourses and foregrounds the function of language in depicting the racial orientation of characters in literary texts.

INTRODUCTION

In his influential paper on *Linguistics and Poetics*, Roman Jakobson (1960) explicates an emotive/expressive function of language and posits that through the use of language, people evoke certain attitudes towards a particular subject, concept or phenomenon. Thus, an interlocutor may be considered as a racist based on his/her attitude towards other races as depicted, but not limited to, his discourse. A discourse is said to be racial if it depicts racism, and this conforms to the claim that "language is an important factor in the development of the construct of race" (Desimone, 1993, p. 414). Racial discourse is conceptualised by Doane (2006, p. 256) as a "collective text and talk of society with respect to issues of race". He conceptualises it as a means through which individuals, social actors (and writers) develop racial issues as they strive for ideological advantage. This paper examines racial discourse in three texts: a play set in South Africa (*Sizwe Bansi is Dead*), a British novel (*Heart of Darkness*), and a poem 'Telephone Conversation' by a Nigerian. The objective of the study is to investigate racial habits and reveal how they are represented through the discourse of the selected texts.

As intimated by Doane (2006), one key concern in racial discourse and politics is whether an act, event or discourse

constitutes racism. Thus, to know a racial discourse, one must comprehend the concepts of *race* and *racism*. Lopez (1994, p. 193) defines race as "a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry." That notwithstanding, skin colour has become one determining variable of race, a corroboration that race is a social construction. The importance of race, thus, cannot be overemphasised considering the race hysteria that, for many centuries, influenced and/or affected lives. Crenshaw et al. (1995) add that the ideological basis for slavery was the racialization of identity and the racial subordination of blacks. Likewise, Al Hafizh (2016, p. 177) avers that "racism is closely related to orientalism and colonialism, since generally colonialism enrooted on the superiority ism of European or Western race as white." In the largest part, the conception of race resided in the White-Black colour distinction. However, the latter, most often termed the 'Other', is the group often considered in the elaboration of race theories (Lopez, 1994). The experiences of the characters (Styles, Sizwe and Buntu) in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, the persona in 'Telephone Conversation' and the African workers in *Heart of Darkness* reflect the racial abuse and stereotyping of the Other. This is congruent with Burns' (as cited in Fanon 1986, p. 89) argument that "as colour is

the most obvious outward manifestation of race it has been made the criterion by which men are judged, irrespective of their social or educational attainments." Racial prejudices were consolidated with the enactment of laws (like the Naturalization Act of 1790 in the US and the Population Registration Act of 1950 in South Africa) which primarily stratified the populace on basis of colour. Hence, it is unsurprising that a native South African like Buntu needs stay and work permit before he can stay and work in his hometown. Thus, laws became the prime instruments in the construction and reinforcement of racial subordination.

For the purpose of this study, *racism* is conceptualised as any form of prejudice and discrimination on the basis of a person's colour. Racism is one reason, if not the only, for tagging one society as uncivilised and the other as more civilised (Al Hafizh, 2016). The advent of some racial and resistance movements saw the predominance of racial discourse in the media and literature. A notable racial movement was the Apartheid System in South Africa, a system of racial segregation that governed relations between South Africa's white minority and non-white majority as reflected in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

A careful reflection of the three texts, which have different cultural perspectives, shows commonality in the theme of narcissism and racism. Some studies have been conducted on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Brantlinger, 1985; Hawkins, 1979; Mushtaq, 2010), Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (Brink, 1993; Cima, 2009; Olaiya, 2008; Seymour, 1980) and Soyinka's 'Telephone Conversation' (Oni, 2014). Mushtaq, for instance, investigated the concepts of othering, stereotyping and hybridity in *Heart of Darkness*. Olaiya, on the other hand, analysed the theme of death and resistance in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. However, few of these studies centred on racism (Brantlinger, 1985; Mushtaq, 2010) and racial segregation under Apartheid (Brink, 1993; Olaiya, 2008) in the selected texts. In all the plethora of studies, there remains a dearth of literature on a comparative study of racial discourse in texts from different cultural perspectives. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates racial discourse in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *Heart of Darkness* and 'Telephone Conversation'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is worth noting that some studies have been conducted on racial discourse and racism from sociological, literary and other varying perspectives. From a more sociological perspective, Doane (2006) investigates the various ways in which racism is defined in a variety of media sources: letters to newspapers, public statements in newspapers, and letters to public agencies. His study examines the dynamism of racial discourse and how it results in the emergence of different conceptualization of racism. Concerning changing racial ideologies, he posits that racial discourse is shaped by the changing structure of racial ideologies and conflict in the society. Thus, "racial discourse does not occur in a vacuum" (Doane, 2006, p. 257). He further identifies two competing definitions of racism: a general definition that applies to all persons (whether African or American) who discriminate

against others on the basis of race, and an institutionalized form of racism (structural racism perspective), where only members of a dominant group, say the white minority of South African Apartheid, can be racist. The significance of this elaboration of competing definitions brings to bear the fact that, per his first definition of racism, all persons can be racist. The current study differs from Doane's with regard to the sociological nature of the former and its focus on media sources.

Erritouni (2006) in his study on apartheid inequality and post-apartheid utopia in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*, substantiates Doane's (2006) argument that racism is sometimes located in white imperialism. Erritouni concluded that Gordimer explores the 'collusion' and the role of the white minority in the apartheid system and the racial segregation that was not opposed. The study examines Maureen, a white female character and mistress of July, as a symbol of white supremacy and a contributing factor in the destitution of the African. The author concluded that Gordimer subjects the white South African liberal to criticism as the novelist reveals the material benefits of the whites as a result of racial discrimination against the black race in apartheid. In a similar study, Stolarek (2015) investigates racism in post-apartheid South Africa as presented in J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace*. The study reveals instances of racism, othering and sexual violence. Stolarek reveals that after David Lurie, a white South African, sexually abuses a black woman, he vehemently detests and finds appalling the sexual abuse of his daughter, Lucy. Thus, the author emphasises how racism breeds retaliation in the form of racial abuse and violence. The study concluded that Coetzee's novel presents racial segregation, social injustice and othering as important motifs in *Disgrace*.

As identified by Crenshaw et al. (1995), racialization of identities and racial subordination played a significant role in slavery [and colonization]. Thus, one can find traces of some post-colonial concepts in racial discourse. Mushtaq (2010) conducts a post-colonial analysis of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, using three post-colonial concepts: Othering, Stereotyping and Hybridity in fiction. His study is relevant to the current study because 'othering' and 'stereotyping' are predominant in racial discourse. The former, the process through which imperial discourse creates its *other* (Ashcroft et al., 1998), dwells mainly on the self/other binary in which the other "refers to the colonized [marginalised] subjects which forms [*sic*] part of the Self/Other binary" (Mushtaq, 2010, p. 25). The latter, stereotyping, is conceptualised in Mushtaq's study as a negative image and view of a person towards a group, and such views are usually racist, sexist or prejudiced. In his analysis, Mushtaq reveals 'othering' as a hegemonic tool of the colonisers in that there is a sharp contrast in the description of the white protagonist and the black Africans. Thus, in *Heart of Darkness*, the narrator idolises Marlow as having a straight back and yellow complexion while describing the African natives as savages and beastly. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Mushtaq examines the unjust violence meted out to the so-called barbarians in an attempt by the whites to assert the

authority of the 'white' Empire. The findings establish a binary in which the Africans are marginalised and discriminated against by the 'whites'. Hence, "the black men's physical and psychological description by Marlow arouses deep pathos for the objects of the Othering process" (Mushtaq 2010, p. 26). This is instantiated in how Conrad presents the black man as an antithesis of the white race and as such while the latter is portrayed as the epitome of civilization, health and elegance, the former is anything save these. Mushtaq (2010) also examines stereotyping of the blacks in the two texts and concludes that the imperial oppression had denied them personality, value and life and they were merely seen as black creatures that astonished Marlow when he saw them.

In his analysis of 'Telephone Conversation', Oni (2014) also focusses on racial prejudice in Soyinka's poem. The study concludes that discrimination is one dominant theme in this poem as reflected in the land lady's refusal to rent her apartment to an African. Oni alludes that such forms of racial discrimination are more often than not levelled against so-called 'third class' countries. He indicates a hierarchy of race where the white race sits atop of the black race. The study however does not explicate the means through which the African is racially abused since denial of opportunities is not the only discriminatory act against the African in the poem. His personality was reduced to his skin colour and the white land lady would not want to know more of him because his skin seems to trouble her.

In a more recent study, Al Hafizh (2016) analyses racism in two of Jacqueline Woodson's Novels, using a Critical Discourse Analysis. Complementing Critical Discourse Analysis with a deconstruction reading approach, he identifies traces of racism in Woodson's *If You Come Softly* (1998) and *Maizon at Blue Hill* (1992). He concludes that racism is reflected in the way whites relate with black people. Hence this type of racism conforms to Doane's (2006) concept of racism being linked to institutional power. Al Hafizh's (2016) study draws three conclusions: The whites discriminate against black people to maintain white supremacy; through discrimination and segregation in the forms of verbal expression, avoidance and/or exclusion, the white marginalises the blacks; resistance of black people against prejudice and race-based discrimination. His findings reveal certain habits which can be considered as indicators of racism, an aspect of that study which shares commonality with the current study.

Some racist habits and attitudes to racism have been identified by Forrest and Dunn (2006) and Ngo (2016). The former investigate racism and intolerance in Australia, using survey responses from about 5000 respondents. They reiterate the view that race and racial attitudes are social constructs and identify two forms of racism: old and new. While the old racism emphasises the natural supremacy of some race and prohibits intermarriages among races, new racism is depicted in intolerance and opposition to cultural diversity. Forrest and Dunn conclude that the attitude towards racism in Australia varies as a section of the people are intolerant of other races. From a philosophical perspective, Ngo (2016) explores some racist habits, focussing on George Yancy's *Black Bodies*, *White Gazes* and the works of Linda Martin

Alcoff and Alia Al-Saji. The study is premised on the assumption that racism does not only manifest in hate speeches but in non-verbal gestures and perceptions as well. Using Merleau-Ponty's concept of habits as orientation, Ngo identifies that racism is embedded in gestures and attitudes which he terms racial habits. At the core of such habits is the perception that the Black man must be feared.

The review reveals that a number of studies have been conducted on racism and racial discourse by sociologist and literary critics. While a portion of these studies focus on racism and how it is conceptualised in societies, some studies, just like the current study, analyse racism in literary texts. The studies reviewed so far provide a background to justify the relevance of the current study in contributing to scholarship on racism and racial discourse especially because most of the studies have focused on western literature. Since the black or the 'other' is the group often considered in the elaboration of race theories (Lopez, 1994), the current study investigates the depiction of racism from the perspective of two African texts- *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and 'Telephone Conversation', in a comparative study with a British novel-*Heart of Darkness*.

The Critical Race Theory

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is the Critical Race Theory (CRT) as stipulated by Delgado and Stefancic (2001). CRT concerns the study and transformation of 'the relationship among race, racism, and power' (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). There exists two camps in the CRT: the idealist and realist. The Idealist school of thought of CRT posits that racism manifests in thought process, attitude and discourse hence, to remedy it is to change attitudes, unconscious feelings and words or verbal expressions. The other camp in CRT, the realists, argue that racism goes beyond negative attitude and hate speech to include the means by which society assigns status and privileges. The study can be situated in these two schools of thought since the analysis includes lack of privileges (realist) and racial slurs (idealist). The CRT began in the 1970s as a movement whose inception became necessary after activities of the Civil Rights era of the 1960s had stalled (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As intimated by Delgado and Stefancic, CRT was born out of the need to "combat the subtler forms of racism", and necessitated by power imbalance and discrimination of "people of colour".

The Social Construction thesis holds the view that race is a social construct not a biological one. The theory states that societies create races and assign certain pseudo-permanent characteristics. By ordinariness, CRT asserts that remedying racism is possible only in the most obvious and blatant forms since it is institutionalised in the "usual way society does business" (Delgado & Stefancic 2001, p. 7). One tenet of the theory that we will discuss for the purpose of this study is 'Interest Convergence or material determinism'. The theory stipulates that the system of white-over-color (racism) ascendancy serves the interest of one race. It advances the interest of white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically) hence a greater percentage of the beneficiaries

have no interest in eradicating racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Situating the current study in this theoretical framework allows the researcher to investigate the racial discourse in the three selected texts.

METHOD

The study examined three literary texts: *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, a play by the South African playwright, Athol Fugard; *Heart of Darkness* by the Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad; and 'Telephone Conversation', a poem by Wole Soyinka. The three texts were carefully selected to represent different cultural perspectives and narratives of race. A brief overview of the texts is given.

Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, set in South Africa's Apartheid system, reveals the struggle of native South Africans under the governance of the white minority. The play evokes the racial discrimination of the Apartheid system and language serves an important tool in identifying, as earlier stated, the racial subjugation in the text.

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad recounts the adventures of Charlie Marlow, an English seaman, and his journey to Congo to work as a riverboat captain in a company. In Africa, he sets out to meet Kurtz, reputed for his immense abilities. Marlow and his crew, which includes the conspiratorial manager who sees Kurtz as a threat to his position, are attacked by an unseen band of natives who now regarded Kurtz as a god. The novel recounts several instances where the natives are stereotyped and described as uncivilised.

'Telephone Conversation' is a poem by Wole Soyinka. The poem is centred on a fictional telephone interaction between a landlady and an African looking for a place to rent. The landlady denies the African access to her apartment after the latter indicates that he/she is an African and black. The discourse that ensues between the two parties is revealing of the racial consciousness of people even in contemporary societies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals instances of racial discrimination in the three texts and these are discussed under three thematic variables: white-black (Self/Other) binary (racial segregation), race-based discrimination and animal metaphors.

White-black Binary (Racial Segregation)

The study reveals that some expressions indicate racial segregation or white/black binary as stipulated by the Critical Race Theory. As rightly indicated by Mushtaq (2010), "construction of the other is fundamental to the construction of the self" as the dominant race seeks to establish a clear-cut boundary between the supposedly civilised and uncivilised". The black person is always marginalised, dehumanised and reduced to a creature. In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is the main character and narrator who tells his adventures in Congo. One significant issue in his narration is his obvious belief in a race hierarchy as he sought to clearly segregate the 'black fellows' from his kind. He illustrates

this white-black binary in his description of the Black man and the white in extracts 1a and b respectively.

Extract 1

- a. *It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque mask* (Conrad, pp. 19-20).
- b. *When near the buildings I met a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for a sort of vision. I saw a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots. No hat. Hair parted, brushed, oiled, under a green-lined parasol held in a big white hand. He was amazing, and had a penholder behind his ear. I shook hands with this miracle* (Conrad, p. 26)

The discourse in extracts 1a and 1b reveals a white-black binary in *Heart of Darkness* where the white race (extract 1b) is associated with such elegance, vision and cleanliness that Marlow describes his appearance as unexpected in the heart of darkness. The white man is accorded all kinds of image-enhancing attributes and the narrator, Marlow, is so humbled and pleased to shake hands with this miracle. A sharp contrast in description occurs when, once again, Marlow encounters some African natives (extract 1a). The first binary is seen in their description as 'black fellows'. Here, the narrator draws a colour distinction between these Africans and the character in extract 1b (white man) and whatever description follows in extract 1a; perspired bodies and grotesque faces constitutes a process of 'othering'- 'a process by which imperial discourse creates its others' (Mushtaq 2010, p. 25).

The process of othering and establishing a racial hierarchy between the white-skinned and the Black-skinned is present in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* as well. In the opening scene of the play, Styles who is skimming through the headlines in a newspaper comes across a news item which had everything to do with white-black binary.

Extract 2

'So and so from America or London made a big speech: "...going to see to it that the conditions of their non-white workers in Southern Africa were substantially improved." The talk ended in the bloody newspaper. Never in the pay-packet. (Fugard, p. 150)

There is a clear indication of segregation on the basis of colour as the workers are identifiable by their skin colour. The binary distinction is realised quite differently here as the colour *white* is foregrounded and used as a basis of distinction. There is an indication that 'white' is all that matters and that people of other skin colours are the non-whites. The white speaker demonstrates a strong sense of narcissism such that he regards all other races whose skin differs from his white skin as the 'other', an indication of no or little regard for the South African black majority. The segregation in the play results in hate speeches mainly from the marginalised and as rightly posited by Delgado and Stefancic (2001, p. 70), the white-black binary "weakens solidarity, reduces opportunities for coalition, [and] deprives the group of the benefits of

the others' experiences". It comes as no surprise then that the workers at Ford demonstrated the lack of solidarity between themselves and their white employers when the former, led by Styles, portrayed their dissent through their indigenous language which was unintelligible to Baas Bradley.

Soyinka's 'Telephone Conversation' primarily portrays racial segregation and the racial habits of the white land lady. After the caller had accepted to pay for the apartment, he is faced with another challenge of having to justify that his skin colour meets the requirement of a tenant in an obviously white-dominated society.

Extract 3

"Madam", I warned
 "I hate a wasted journey- I am African"
 Silence. Silenced transmission of pressurised
 Good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
 Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
 Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.
 HOW DARK?" ...ARE YOU
 LIGHT OR VERY DARK? (Soyinka, Lines 4-11)

In extract 3, the African demonstrates awareness of a white-black binary system and the discrimination that was associated with it and thus seeks a confirmation from the white landlady if his skin colour will pose a problem in his quest to settle in this new residence. The landlady demonstrates her racial orientation by proving that she ascribes to the white-black distinction and that the African only stood a chance if he happened to be light skinned. The white-black binary seems to operate in almost every aspect of the society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The silence after the African discloses his identity reveals the racial perceptions that the white had about Africans. She contemplates on the unexpected incident and later hopes that the man is not a typical dark-skinned man. There is racism embedded in the silence of the white lady just as there is racism in her comments about his dark skin. Ngo (2016) argues that racism is not only depicted in hate speeches but also in gestures. He adds that racism is revealed in the perception that the Black man must be feared and this probably justifies why the land lady becomes speechless for a while after she realises she has been bargaining with one.

Race-based Discrimination

Another finding which demonstrates racism in the selected texts is race (colour)-based discrimination and unequal access to opportunities. One may be said to have been discriminated against when an opportunity is denied him/her because of race. For the purpose of this analysis, discrimination refers to the 'practice of treating similarly situated individuals differently because of race (Delgado & Stefancic 2001, p. 145). Through the adventure of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, he encounters two distinct groups of people: the white race which he belonged to and the 'other' race which was subjected to several forms of denial and abuse. There is an established race hierarchy as the Black man is marginalised and considered constantly inferior. Marlow reveals the plight of the Africans who were worn out because they have been constantly deployed to work for the whites. One can

easily contrast the treatment of the Black men with that of Kurtz who had been rescued and given reasonable care by some workers in the company.

Extract 4

- a. *And this was the place where some of the [African] helpers had withdrawn to die. 'They were dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now— nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. (Conrad, p. 25)*
- b. *We had carried Kurtz into the pilot-house: there was more air there. Lying on the couch, he stared through the open shutter (Conrad, p. 112)*

Extracts 4a and 4b reveal instances of two similarly situated individuals who are treated differently because of their different races. The discourse of extract 4a narrates the ordeal of the African helpers who had dedicated their time and strength to work in the Company. The narration reveals certain instances of discrimination in terms of conditions of service (if there were any); their surroundings are uncongenial, they are fed on unfamiliar food (thus, different from what the white narrator is used to) and as they sickened, they were given the permission to crawl away and die. One gets to better understand the claim of race-based discrimination after comparing the narration in 4b which involves a sick white man. Ironically, Kurtz, who was described by the manager as having caused more harm than good to the Company, was rescued so as to be treated of his sickness and was given such care as laying him in the pilot house, while the African 'helpers' were denied any such opportunities after being fed on unfamiliar food. There is a clear case of preferential treatment given to the Kurtz because of his race, a clear instantiation of race-based discrimination.

In a similar instantiation in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Buntu and Sizwe, who represent the black majority in the apartheid system, are subjected to denial of the same opportunities available to the white minority in South Africa. The two characters contemplate their plight as Africans who are struggling to provide for themselves but are barred from freely setting up their own trade in their country. Hawker's license, stay permits and other requirements which are applicable to only the black serve to deter him from engaging in any industrious venture.

Extract 5

And how [are] you going to buy your potatoes at the market without a Hawker's License? Same story, Sizwe. You won't get that because of the bloody stamp in your book...If I had to tell you the trouble I had before I could get the right stamps in my book, even though I was born in this area. The trouble I had before I could get a decent job" (Fugard, pp. 173-4).

Extract 5 reveals certain forms of deprivation of the black majority in the apartheid system. While the white minority had unrestricted access to work opportunities and

accommodation, the lives of Africans were regulated by a passbook and the former were mandated to have stay and work permits. Without such permits from the white, Sizwe could not even buy and sell potatoes and this meant that the black man was always in trouble trying to survive. Sizwe has to sacrifice his identity in order to survive as he assumes the identity of Robert Zwelinzima, a dead man who had stay and work permits. Olaiya (2008, 77) emphasises that in the apartheid system in South Africa, "Blacks and the Coloured were distinguished by their race, which the country used to deprive them of economic opportunities" Buntu is alarmed that he is a victim of discrimination and denial in his quest for a decent job even though he is qualified by virtue of being born in Port Elizabeth. The use of *even though*, a subordinating conjunction which introduces a fact that makes the preceding utterance surprising, evokes a sense of unfounded discrimination and deprivation of the speaker. In extract 5c, Sizwe is conscious of the race-based discrimination meted out to him as he sees his skin as the source of all the prejudice.

The instances above corroborate the claim by Burns that:

As colour is the most obvious outward manifestation of race it has been made the criterion by which men are judged, irrespective of their social or educational attainments. The light-skinned races have come to despise all those of a darker colour, and the dark-skinned peoples (*sic*) will no longer accept without protest the inferior position to which they have been relegated' (as cited in Fanon, 1986, p. 89).

This is reiterated by Sizwe as he laments that the black skin has been tagged as trouble in racist societies. One such society is depicted in Wole Soyinka's fictional telephone conversation between the white lady and the African who is denied access to 'white-only' apartment.

Extract 6

Facially, I am brunette, but madam you should see the rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet. ...sensing her receiver rearing on the thunderclap About my ears – "Madam," I pleaded, "wouldn't you rather See for yourself?" (Soyinka)

In extract 6, the African looking for a place to rent is denied opportunity to rent the apartment (as the land lady hung up on him) because not only does she consider the financial capabilities of tenants but more importantly, as illustrated by the several attempts she makes to ensure that the tenant is not dark, she prefers light-skinned or white tenants. Ironically, the African saw the price to be reasonable, an indication of his capability to meet all requirements. This confirms the stipulation of the Critical Race Theory that "blacks and Latinos who seek loans, apartments, or jobs are much more apt than similarly qualified whites to be rejected, often for vague or spurious reasons" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 10). In this discourse, the 'spurious' reasons are foregrounded by Soyinka's use of capital letters for utterances made by the racist landlady. The white lady considers the dark skin colour of the African to be troubling hence he is victimised and denied.

Animal Metaphor

It was also observed that predominant in the discourses of *Heart of Darkness* and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is the use of metaphors which sought to match animal characteristics to certain persons. Such discourses sought to de-personalise a particular race. Hence, this constitutes a racial discourse. The locus of metaphor, as suggested by Lackoff (1993, p. 1), resides in "the way we conceptualise one mental domain in terms of another". He further posits that there are conceptual correspondences in metaphorical expressions which enable one to reason about the target domain using the knowledge one has of the source domain: there is a mapping of the source domain to the target domain. Names of animals are source of pet names for most children and pet lovers and thus, some animal metaphors convey positive sentiments. An instantiation is the biblical parable of the sheep and goat where the metaphor of the sheep maps the humility of the sheep to people of humbled and righteous behaviour, those who will inherit the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25: 31-46). One racial habit identified in my analysis is the use of some animal metaphors as racial slurs. The black man is compared to *a monkey which walks on all four*. These racial animal metaphors have discriminatory inference patterns.

Extract 7

a. *...while I stood horror-struck, one of these creatures rose to his hands and knees, and went off on all-fours towards the river to drink. He lapped out of his hand, then sat up in the sunlight, crossing his shins in front of him, and after a time let his woolly head fall on his breastbone. (Conrad, p. 26)*

In extract 7a, the black man is given such animal tendencies as walking on all fours. The description of the Black men as creatures who lap up water is a zoomorphic depiction of one race by the other, a racial slur born out of the orientation that blacks are beastly, savage and animalistic. Marlow's perception of the Africans as below the white race is also depicted in his description of the African fireman.

b. *...I had to look after the savage who was fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap. He squinted at the steam-gauge and at the water-gauge with an evident effort of intrepidity—and he had filed teeth, too, the poor devil, and the wool of his pate shaved into queer patterns, and three ornamental scars on each of his cheeks. (Conrad, p. 59)*

In extract 7b, there is an instance of animal metaphor as the African fireman is described as having wool instead of hair grow on his head. This person is portrayed as a complete antithesis to all of the white fellows on the ship. In spite of his improvement as a specimen, the narrator compared the appearance of this African and the feeling that came with seeing him to the edification one gets upon looking at a dog dressed in an old-fashioned trousers that end at the knee, breeches. This comparison with the dog highlights the racism in this narration. Like a sheep, he is described as

having wool growing on his head/pate and his tribal marks are paradoxically ridiculed as ornamental scars. This racial discourse clearly illustrates the notion that people with black skins were, pejoratively, considered as lesser humans and even lesser animals; this explains why even after 'a few months of training', this man now compares with a dog. One predominant animal metaphor is the racial slur that the black man is a monkey and this is sometimes implicated by some racists who throw bananas at some dark-skinned persons. In *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, this form of racism is depicted in the discourse of Baas Bradley, the white employer of Styles.

Extract 8

Say to them, Styles that they must try to impress Mr Henry Ford that they are better than those monkeys in his own country, those niggers in Harlem who know nothing but strike. (Fugard, p. 154)

If the animal metaphors in extract 7 were indirect, extract 8 provides a clear indication of animal metaphor where the black men of Harlem are compared to monkeys, a common racial slur even in contemporary societies. Such racial slurs are means through which one race subjugates the other through intimidation and victimization. The Black men in Harlem have earned this animal metaphor because they challenge white hegemony and refuse to be discriminated in their work place. The depiction of blacks as creatures walking on all fours, woolly-headed specimen, monkeys, among other dehumanising attributes is congruent with the view held by Fanon (1986) that there are various racist theories which assert that the black man is seen as a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man.

5. CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine racial discourse in three selected texts from different cultural perspectives to ascertain the depiction of racism. The study arrived at three main findings which may well be considered as racial habits: white-black binary, race-based discrimination (unequal access to opportunities) and the use of animal metaphors as racial slurs. First, it was found that segregation or white-black distinction was a key racial habit as this led to the marginalization of the less dominant group, the blacks. There were expressions which clearly highlighted a divide on the basis of colour. This finding corroborated earlier findings by Mushaq (2010) and the stipulations by the CRT in Delgado and Stefancic (2001). The former found that in the process of 'othering', there is marginalization as indicated in the treatment of blacks in the extracts 1a, 2 and 3. As averred by Mushaq, white-black binary leads to lack of solidarity and a deprivation of one group. Second, the analysis revealed traces of race-based discrimination in all three texts. As posited by Fanon (1986) and Delgado and Stefancic (2001), blacks were denied certain opportunities in the selected texts merely because of their race. Finally, the racial discourse in *Heart of Darkness* and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is characterised by the use of animal metaphors as means of slurring a particular race. This finding is congruent with Fanon's (1986) stipulation that some racists regarded blacks as semi-humans. The study contributes to scholarship on racism and racial discourse by

projecting some racial habits as identified in these texts. It has implications for theory as well as practice.

REFERENCES

Primary Texts

- Conrad, J. (1996). *Heart of Darkness*. Retrieved from Free eBooks at Planet eBook.com
- Fugard, A. (1976). *Sizwe Bansi is Dead and the Island*. Viking Press.
- Soyinka, W. (1963). Telephone Conversation. In T. R. Arp, G. Johnson, & L. Perrine, *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense* (pp. 1006–07). Thomson.

Secondary Texts

- Al Hafizh, M. (2016). Racism in the Post-colonial Society: a Critical Discourse Analysis to Jacqueline Woodson's Novels. *Humanus: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-ilmu Humaniora*, 15(2), 177-194.
- Ashcroft, B., Gareth G., & Helen T. (Eds.) (1998). *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*. Routledge.
- Brantlinger, P. (1985). Heart of Darkness: Anti-Imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism? *Criticism*, 27(4), 363-385.
- Brink, A. (1993). "No Way Out": Sizwe Bansi is Dead and the Dilemma of Political Drama in South Africa. *Twentieth Century Literature*, 39(4), 438-454.
- Cima, G. A. (2009). Resurrecting Sizwe Bansi is Dead (1972–2008): John Kani, Winston Ntshona, Athol Fugard, and Post-apartheid South Africa. *Theatre Survey*, 50(1), 91-118.
- Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. The New Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press.
- Desimone, L. M. (1993). Racial discourse in a community: Language and the social construction of race. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 62(4), 414-418.
- Doane, A. (2006). What is racism? Racial discourse and racial politics. *Critical Sociology*, 32(2-3), 255-274.
- Erritouni, A. (2006). Apartheid inequality and postapartheid utopia in Nadine Gordimer's July's People. *Research in African Literatures*, 37(4), 68-84.
- Fanon, F. (1986). *Black skin, white masks*. Pluto press.
- Forrest, J., & Dunn, K. (2006). Racism and intolerance in Eastern Australia: a geographic perspective. *Australian Geographer*, 37(2), 167-186.
- Hawkins, H. (1979). Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in Heart of Darkness. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 286-299.
- Jakobson, R. (1960). Linguistics and poetics. In *Style in language* (pp. 350-377). MA: MIT Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/54g7j6zh>
- Lopez, I. F. H. (1994). The social construction of race: Some observations on illusion, fabrication, and choice. *Harv CR-CLL Rev.*, 29, 1.

- Mushtaq, H. (2010). Othering, Stereotyping and Hybridity in Fiction: A Post-Colonial Analysis of Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1899) and Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians (1980). *Journal of Language and Literature*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256007568>
- Ngo, H. (2016). Racist habits: A phenomenological analysis of racism and the habitual body. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 42(9), 847-872.
- Olaiya, K. (2008). Deconstructing Apartheid's Global Gaze: Death and Resistance in Fugard et al.'s Sizwe Bansi Is Dead. *The Global South*, 2(2), 75-91.
- Oni, S. B. (2014). Racial Prejudice in Wole Soyinka's *Telephone Conversation*. Accessed from <https://www.academia.edu/27320561>
- Seymour, H. (1980). 'Sizwe Bansi is Dead' a study of artistic ambivalence. *Race & Class*, 21(3), 273-289.
- Stolarek, J. (2015). Political, Social and Cultural Aspects of Racism in Post-Apartheid South Africa in John Maxwell Coetzee's Disgrace. *Political Discourses in Contemporary Anglophone Literature and Culture*, 87.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2000). New (s) racism: A discourse analytical approach. *Ethnic minorities and the media*, 37, 33-49.