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APPROACHING THE END OF APARTHEID: THE NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY AND MEANING IN ATHOL FUGARD'S PLAYLAND

Abstract:

A critical analysis of Athol Fugard's *Playland* will show that the characters' identity is shaped by the choices they made in the past, the way they live with others in the present and their perception of the future. South Africa's apartheid regime has psychologically damaged both its white and black citizens. Owing to the crimes of the past and in the absence of absolution, *Playland*'s protagonists, who embody contrasting facets of the fragmented national psyche, find themselves trapped in time and consumed by guilt. Without a stabilising force on which to base their subjectivity, the two men experience the world as merciless, indifferent and meaningless. When they journey back into the past, they begin to forgive themselves and each other. They realise that they are responsible for choosing who they are and the reality of their own lives, and that their potentiality for being whole lies in going out from their centredness to interact with others and accept and affirm them.

Keywords:

apartheid, responsibility, meaning(lessness), forgiveness, time and identity

JEL Classification: Z00