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# NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF APARTHEID IN DAMON GALGUT'S *THE PROMISE*

Dr. Valiur Rahaman<sup>1</sup>, Esha Bhagat<sup>2</sup>

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## Abstract

This study focuses on neuro-sociological impact of apartheid as depicted in lifestyles and lives of characters in Damon Galgut's novel *The Promise*. It studies his sharp portrayal of a white family in post-apartheid South Africa. It chronicles the experiences of a white, affluent family who runs a small farm over the course of several decades. It focuses on a dying family member's promise to leave their belongings to their black domestic worker. Future generations of the family ignore this commitment. The paper presents a comprehensive analysis of alienation, suppression and quest for home and identity as the results of neuropsychological conditions in the novel. The impact of alienation is revealed in the forms of anxiety, despair, loneliness, and struggle for identity. The consequences of alienation and suppression of the characters in the novel are studied. This novel will be examined with two proposals in mind: first, to view the alienation and suppression and its consequences on the characters and second, to observe the mental status of characters for the quest for identity and home.

**Keywords** Alienation, Suppression, Quest for Identity, Cultural assimilation, Apartheid, African Literature.

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Punjab  
[valiur.bsb@gmail.com](mailto:valiur.bsb@gmail.com), [valiur.28139@lpu.ac.in](mailto:valiur.28139@lpu.ac.in)

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Punjab  
[eshabh11@gmail.com](mailto:eshabh11@gmail.com)

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## 1 Introduction

Neuropsychology impact of apartheid studies how apartheid badly influenced the mindset and lifestyles of people living during the apartheid. It accomplishes this in a number of ways, such as the humiliating effects on Black people and the ignorance influence on White people. This can be seen as the result of instability of family life by the forced migrant labour system. This leads to the stunted brain development and psychosocial effects that result from the unconscionably widespread childhood malnutrition in that wealthy country. The distortions and alienations in personality development, on racial lines and the mental breakdowns and suicides that result from the physical as well as sexual abuse played a major role in changing their identity. Galgut's *The Promise* reflects apartheid impact on characters including children under the post-apartheid influences of social and political environment under apartheid. The paper begins with interpretation of the word 'colony' connecting with apartheid and settlement issues and ends with illustrations of neuropsychological impact in the novel, *The Promise*.

## 2 Meaning of Apartheid

Merriam webster dictionary defines the term 'apartheid' means 'racial segregation'. It was specifically a former policy of segregation and political, social, and economic discrimination against the non-white majority in the Republic of South Africa, whereas post-apartheid means existing or occurring in the time after apartheid and especially after the end of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa. OED defines that History is "the study of past events, particularly in human affairs." The word apartheid is historical term; hence the word refers to its strong connections with people and the conditions of people of the age, period, era they belong to. the divisions that plague the entire society have long been the focus of South African literature/fiction. Apartheid is defined in terms of "black spots", "bantu", "endorsed out" to refer apartheid as complete attempt to destroy a race with specific color as explained by Hilda Bernstein in her book *For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears* and other courses Influx control and endorsed out books. White South Africans thus enjoy a system of social, economic, and political privilege

because of the National Party's racial segregation policies, while black South Africans were denied access to basic material resources, opportunities, and freedom. Stresses imposed on families by the apartheid regime in South Africa have an impact on all facets of their psychological health (Taitt, 1980). As a result of apartheid policy, psychological evaluation was utilised in South Africa to support the exploitation of black labour and to deny black people access to economic and educational opportunities. White people were given work preference under apartheid, and a job reserve programme was implemented to guarantee employment for whites. The black community developed a broad scepticism of psychological testing as a result of this approach, educated black South Africans, and career opportunities were validated by the findings (Laher & Cockcroft, 2018). In the past political regime of the nation, psychology—particularly psychometrics and assessment—had a critical role to play. As a result, there is now an urgent need for study and practise in the area to address the detrimental repercussions of these practises. Around this period, the testing and assessment unit of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) underwent a repositioning (Laher & Cockcroft, 2018). Sales of HSRC tests were made to private businesses like Jopie van Rooyen and Partners, Saville and Holdsworth Limited (SHL), Psytech, and Mindmusik, as well as foreign tests like the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF), for which the HSRC controlled the copyright in South Africa (Laher & Cockcroft, 2018). The dissemination, adaption, and development of tests were taken over by these organisations.

## 3 Neuropsychological Impact of Apartheid

Apartheid is not only a social and political incident in world history, but also a medical emergency period. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) is a classic work on the black colonial subject. It examines the medical predicaments of both black patients and the white psychiatrists (Castle, 2007; Fanon, 1967). There was a medical racism (Hoberman, 2012,

pp. 1–14) during apartheid. Dr. Jonathan Carr<sup>1</sup> describes the general South African medical experience of people during apartheid 1. the high functioning private system called “on par” in terms of the US health care system and patients are considered underserved and were facilitated less medical supports due to very poor doctor-to-patient ratio in other region “relics of the apartheid”(Wesolowski, 2010). JSTOR contains 19,574 results on searching the topic entitling ‘medical apartheid’. Hoberman’s *Black and Blue* critically reviewed the racism and regional partiality during apartheid. He defined the African American medical condition as a form of “internal colonialism” and the three factors for defining it:

1. the comprehensive demoralization of blacks “that inheres in the colonial experience makes colonial status a state of mind and an emotional complex as well as an economic and political condition”(Hoberman, 2012).
2. lack of understanding of the social and emotional barriers that separate American blacks and whites, and
3. preoccupied mindset that blacks are less complex human organisms than whites reflect “colonial” power discourse.

Due to the above racial and discriminatory activities “job preference was given to white individuals and a job reservation policy was put in place that ensured employment for whites during apartheid(Laher & Cockcroft, 2018). It influenced the indigenous people who never followed the white system of human settlement and medical assessment criteria.

#### 4 Features of Post-apartheid Fiction

The Black majority in South Africa and other people of colour were denied the right to vote and other basic rights under apartheid, which was instituted in 1948. For many years, resistance increased, and by the 1980s, the nation had established a significant military and security infrastructure to quell uprisings in the townships where Blacks were imprisoned. The post-apartheid fictions(PAF) reflect the sense of disconnection from parent culture, and sense of alienation revealed in the

forms of anxiety, despair, loneliness and struggle for identity as impact of individuals’ fight against racialization, black uprooted and relocated people, sense of suppression, lonely and isolated state of emergency, feelings of regret, guilt, and self-hate, search for redemption, insecurity, jealous out of colonial stress, aggression and other cultural assimilation effects.



Figure1: Themes of Post-apartheid Fiction

As illustrated in Figure 1, the Post-apartheid fiction depicts the themes of racial identity and race relations, individual traumas and personal histories, personal experiences, spatial disorientation, political and cultural normalization, and interracial relationships. The PAF South African works produced after the country's first democratic elections in 1994, depicted these major themes. Elleke Boehmer has rightly remarked that “South African fiction is in transition”(Boehmer, 2011) and reflection of the losses of Apartheid and the struggle are main issues in the writers of the post-apartheid era(Ibinga, 2019). Lauretta Ngcobo’s *And They Didn’t Die* (Ngcobo, 1990), Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying* (Mda, 1994), J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (Coetzee, 1999), Farrida Karodia’s *Other Secrets* (Karodia, 2000), and Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup* (Gordimer, 2001) are portrayals of the contemporary social realities of post-apartheid urban, rural, semi-rural and suburbs. Nadine, for example, mirrored

<sup>1</sup> Head of the Division of Neurology at Tygerberg Hospital and the University of Stellenbosch in

Cape town, South Africa, said in an interview with *Neurology Today*.

Johannesburg, the novelist's resident. The fight against racialization and the road that led to it are race and race relations. Additionally, writers have evolved to write in a new style that addresses social and cultural issues because of the change in political rules. More African writers were published following World War II when Africans started to call for their freedom. Writing in European languages, authors like Wole Soyinka (Attwell, 2003), Chinua Achebe (Zezeza, 2014), and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Zuhmboshi, 2018) frequently addressed the same issues: the conflict between colonial and indigenous cultures, criticism of European subjugation, pride in the history of Africa, and optimism for the continent's independence in the future. The atrocities of apartheid have dominated South African literature even until the present. The experiences of living in a racially segregated society are explored in varied degrees by Nadine Gordimer (Clingman, 1981) and J. M. Coetzee (Barnett, 1999), for instances.

## 5 Colonial segregation and Crisis of Homeland

Colonial segregation was entrenched once the National Party took office in 1948 with the passing of apartheid laws. Those classified as "non-white" were forcibly separated from white South Africa and moved to different locations. Most black people were uprooted and relocated to what apartheid planners cynically referred to as "homelands" (Jolly, 1997). Homelands, were unrecognised international entities that the apartheid state cynically regarded as "autonomous." They denied citizenship to black South Africans, kept them out of the country's economic and political core, and divided them based on language and racial differences. Homelands were created because of violent relocations, re-zoning, and mass deportations. Along with the destruction of homes and buildings, partition also meant being cut off from family members and communities. The very heart of South African literary history is

situated in "the narrative of colonialism, industrialization, and the struggle for democracy" (Irele & Gikandi, 2004).

Overpopulation, an unbalanced economy with underdevelopment in some areas and destructive exploitation in others, cultural disintegration, racial and ethnic tensions, inadequate educational and healthcare facilities, and the absence of an effective representative or democratic system for the natives are among the colonial areas' most serious issues. The organisation and ideology of colonial administration as well as the relationships between the superimposed bureaucracy, which is largely staffed by nationals of the dominating power, and the native peoples, are fundamental to solving these problems. This bureaucracy frequently only responds indirectly to the requirements of the subject people (Kimball, 1946). The experience of the years since 1970 indicates that, despite official attempts to create entirely separated communities, apartheid was not only morally objectionable but also practically impossible. Over 90% of the population now adheres to the official plan of vast new suburbs that are home to a single group that makes up the majority of the population (Christopher, 1990).

## 6 The Promise: A Post-apartheid fiction

"Apartheid has fallen, see, we die right next to each other now, in intimate proximity. It's just the living part we still have to work out" (Galgut 99). The quoted line establishes the aim of the writer i.e., he targets to decode the effects of apartheid. *The Promise* (2021) (Galgut, 2021) is a moving contribution to the canon of works written by white South African authors (Welle, 2021) as it indicts and positions the Afrikaner at the centre of South Africa's slow and arduous political and economic revolutions because of his occupation of the centre and margins of racialized and gendered authority. It is set on a highly significant but desolate piece of land or farm close to Pretoria, halfway to the Hartbeespoort dam.



Figure-2. Hartbeespoort Dam (Modiselle, 2021)

### 7 Fictional History as Real History

The memories of apartheid, bridging the rural and urban divides, economic divides, the impact of fractured society and the country's colonial heritage are prominent themes in South African literature in general and fiction. Anton, the heir of the Swart family is trying to find out the interaction between the past and the present, and the challenge of forming an identity as has been quoted here:

That's the question. A divide, a chasm, a widening gap. But what that division is, and where it lies, that is another matter. No answer to that, or not in him, or not today. (Galgut 206)

Apartheid's legacy and the colonial era's themes of bridging the rural and urban divides as well as the fundamental racial and economic divides served as the basis for most of the writing that followed. Examples of significant subjects for these authors include the fight for democracy in society, the interaction between the past and the present, and the challenge of forming an identity. The fractured society has an impact on every aspect of an individual's life. The character in the novel, Anton faces various challenges in his life and faces identity crisis as he says: "Interesting how the self can be split into segments, orgasm and observation at the same time, the eye that watches the I. Neither is

me, but both might be" (Galgut 195). In reality, South African literature frequently explores life narratives (Klima et al.). The divided society serves as a backdrop for contemporary South African writers' representations of their subjects' disintegration. The most polarising and divisive aspect of apartheid is a sense of a failed or unfulfilled society, as well as severed relationships and dislocated selfhood. This form has been used specifically in the tradition of stories about alienation or estrangement that has long dominated and perhaps plagued fiction in English-speaking "white" South African writers, a tradition that has been dismissively referred to as "the sad, tired, dated and, ultimately, draining paradigm of the angst of the homeless, placeless, white English-speaking, disaffected South African" (Marais, 1995). As a result, South African writers are becoming more interested in bridging literature and history as illustrated in Figure-3 below which depicts the interrelation between the two. It depicts the interconnection of literature with the South African history.

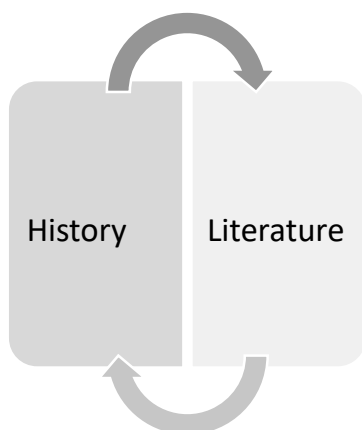


Figure-3

Tom Penfold (Penfold, 2012) discusses the evolution of social space in South Africa since 1994 in his article on Damon Galgut's *The Good Doctor*. He contends that literature written after apartheid provides evidence of the persistence of a "fundamentally dystopian society" (Penfold, 2012). The hopes of South Africa for true equality have generally failed. Many conservative ideals, such as sexism and nationalism, are at odds with South Africa's constitution. The conflicts between conservative culture and liberal freedoms may be the root of many of South Africa's present problems. After the dystopian extremity of apartheid, South Africa hastened to try to envision and realise its utopian alternative. The democratic state has not yet achieved perfection, despite the constitution's goals. His investigation of this 'open state,' which is paradoxically inaccessible, will frequently bring up conflicts between public and private space. The urban environment, crime and security, and sexual and gender equality will be the three social phenomena he used to examine the conflicts between utopian and dystopian order. Each of them is preoccupied with the prevalent concerns of the new South Africa and offers different conceptions of public and private space.

In "Confronting 'Self' and 'Other' in Damon Galgut's 'The Good Doctor'" (Lenz & Wenzel, 2016) primarily discusses the fall of apartheid. White South African men are becoming increasingly conscious of their identity's contradictions and non-African elements. It demonstrates how the effects of colonisation and apartheid still have an impact on how descendants of settlers view themselves, other people, and their place in society. It discusses

the structural unfairness that came along with the introduction of apartheid and the hope that faded with time. White South African men learn to recognise their paradoxical African identity and minority status when apartheid is abolished. Former settlers are forced to deal with sentiments of marginalisation and isolation in a postcolonial and post-apartheid society (Henrard, 2003) where the formerly oppressed now hold the positions of political power. They are forced to make do with obsolete mind-maps of the world as they attempt to find their identity within the self-other dichotomy established by imperialism because they are psychologically, and in some cases, physically, uprooted (Lenz & Wenzel, 2016). They also question their ability to contribute significantly to the development and reconstruction of the new society.

South African novels (Klopper, 2014) include J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Justin Cartwright's *White Lightning*, and Damon Galgut's *The Impostor* are studied as the post-apartheid fictions. Each one has a white male with a refined aesthetic sense who escapes to the countryside. Cartwright's *White Lightning* (2002) is the subject of his article since it expressly makes the promise of a physical, imaginative reconnection with the world of natural things. Both British colonialism in general and colonialism in South Africa were modelled after an idea of empire that was converted into a mission of civilization (Klopper, 2014). Not just a sense of harmony, a knowledge system, or the pursuit of virtue, colonialism is captivated by a discursive order that encompasses tropes and topographies as well as an imagined or figurative body of meaning with pastoral writing but with post-apartheid writing. Graham Pechey in his essay "The Post-Apartheid Sublime" describes post-apartheid literature as "post-traditional, liberated both from white liberalism and from black nationalism, the traditional is epitomised, he says, by an "untotalizable heterogeneity" (Klopper, 2014).

A disturbing portrayal of post-apartheid South Africa is depicted in Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*. It received criticism for maintaining racial stereotypes and encouraging inter-race violence. It investigates the persistent presence of people with physical abnormalities in the new South Africa as well as the violence that results from their presence. The new South

Africa has a social reality that lessens the possibility of a just and non-racial society: the persistent presence of character deformity and pathological intersubjectivity (Beyad & Keramatfar, 2018). In *Disgrace*, Lucy refuses to speak within a normative discursive framework and opposes the politics of human rights that organise narrative voice as a way to witness to a fragmented and traumatised narrative voice (Rickel, 2013). Her father, David, is furious that she won't talk about being raped by two of the three perpetrators and is upset that her tale is being spoken rather than spoken. David is comparable to Lucy's rapists in that he forces himself on his companion, Melanie Isaacs, and that he shares traits with them by narrating his own story. Since David sees her rape as a part of his own descent into disgrace, Lucy fights being the subject of his story and refuses to help choose how it will be understood.

*The Good Doctor* is a tale of two distinct spaces. Frank accepts a position at a small hospital to succeed Dr. Ngema, but his transition into a new room is delayed back for seven years. Frank mentors the doctor with whom he must share a bedroom at this time, and the disagreements between the two affect how Frank views himself and South Africa. This focuses on the questions highlighted by Frank's experience of spaces, including how post-apartheid South Africa has adjusted to sharing space, the envisioned new place that is distinct from the past, and how it is undermined by the presence of an Other (Penfold, 2012). The ideal new order in South Africa is no longer a reality; instead, a dystopian conflict where the past still rules is taking place. Although it aimed to embrace everyone regardless of colour, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, South Africa's dreams of full equality have mostly fallen short.

*The Promise* is set on the background of 1986 state of emergency in South Africa (Chapman, 1988), reminds the depiction of Indian Emergency of 1975 in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (Gohrisch & Grünkemeier, 2019) and Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (Bhattacharya, 2020). A hot township environment, political unrest/violence, and ambiguous feelings of entrapment, nostalgia, loss, and defeat within the Afrikaner country characterised this period. The Swart family members, who serve as a

microcosm of the Afrikaner people, are central to the novel. In this text, the family is employed as a narrative device to go through apartheid and its aftermath in a way that opens new possibilities for racial relations outside of apartheid. He contemplates physical and emotional separation as well as the aloofness and detachedness that come through in the actions of his characters. An important takeaway from the novel is that the question of home and belonging can only lead you towards more 'ambiguities'-the state of mind flux in two directions:

Who belongs here now? The solution is no longer obvious. Among the various people who've stayed over, there's now a general sense of restiveness, an itchy need to move on. A spirit of agitation flickers in the corners of the house. All the rituals are completed, why are we still here? (Galgut 153)

The story revolves around the end of apartheid and chronicles the death of four members of the Swart family over the span of forty years. "A human figure approaching, filling itself in slowly, putting on age and sex and race, like items of clothing" (Galgut 20) connotes to the human condition in general. It focuses on a dying family member's promise to leave their belongings to their black domestic worker. Future generations of the family ignore this commitment. And it turns into an allegory for the broken promises made to black South Africans at the beginning of the nation's non-racial democracy in 1994. The novel is divided into four chapters (Ma, Pa, Astrid and Anton), each chapter portrays the death of a family member reflecting death as major theme: "you think there's an order, you think your actions matter, that they'll be weighed and judged in some final reckoning. But there is no reckoning. For each of us, death is the last day" (Galgut 70)

The first chapter is "Ma", it starts with the death of Rachel, the lady of the house. At the time of her death, she was left isolated by her family members. She was thus attended only by the black maid who herself was struggling for her identity. Rachel decided to give her the house but her husband was not in her favour. Thus, her death wish was suppressed by him. He promised her to give the house to Salome, the maid but never did so.

My mother wanted Salome to have the house where she lives and the plot of land it's on. My

father promised he would do it, but it's never been given to her. (Galgut 149)

The youngest daughter of the house, Amor was also in the favour of giving the house to Salome but could do nothing in front of her father who was not ready for the same. Salome is the most isolated character in the novel. In the whole novel she hardly speaks rather we see others speaking on her behalf. She is struggling to get an identity and when she got to know about the promise made, she says:

Me? How will I do that? She sighs and starts to dry dishes with a big cloth. Is it true, she asks, that I am getting my house? (Galgut 52)

Amor also faces the struggle for her identity as the novel reveals: "For she too has her little pains, and they wear her out, though she does not speak of them, or is not asked, and when they show themselves, it tends to be when she's alone." (Galgut 128)

In the second chapter entitled "Pa" starts nearly ten years after the death of Rachel, the mother. This starts with the death of Manie; the father and the news of his death is conveyed to Anton and Amor as both have been living away from the family. Manie, as the patriarch of the family is impulsive, arrogant, and ignorant. This can be seen from the stance when he refuses to bury her wife according to the Jewish tradition as was her wish. Anton had joined the military service and Amor had left the home after Rachel's death as she felt suppressed there and her quest for identity has made her to move from one place to the next. It is only her who again raises the issue of giving the house to Salome as suggested by her mother. But no one seems interested in fulfilling the promise made. Amor thus felt lonely in that house and decided to leave the house without telling anybody.

In the third chapter entitled "Astrid" reveals the life of the older daughter named Astrid. She is unhappy in her married life and has an extramarital affair with a security man named Jake. She felt lonely and isolated even after getting into relationship with her new boyfriend, who is a black. She thus feels that she is committing a sin by dating a black man and thus moves to church for the atonement.

She does, actually, think of it that way, as a sin, and would like to be absolved. The security man she had the affair with, Jake Moody, is a Catholic, and she was fascinated by his

description of how confession cleansed him of his transgressions and failures. (Galgut 127)

She decides to settle for marriage and kids, a fate that doesn't excite her and causes her existential anxiety. Astrid, who is just as carefree and ethically corrupt as the older Swarts, dislikes Amor's transition into a stunning lady as her own beauty starts to deteriorate. The siblings' relationships with one another deteriorate over time, they hardly communicate with one another, and they only ever come together at the four funerals. The only thing that unites Anton and Amor despite their strained relationship is their abiding hatred for their collapsing family. Astrid went to church in order to confess in front of the priest but the priest does not accept her absolution. She is murdered by an unknown person who forcefully gets in her car and shoots with gun.

The fourth chapter "Anton" is focussed on the life of the son of the house named Anton. His life is totally troubled. His wife does not think good of him. Anton's disillusionment has grown as the love between him and his wife, Desiree has weakened. He is overcome by feelings of regret, guilt, and self-hate: "I have lost my mother, he says. Lost her? I shot her with my rifle, to protect the country" (Galgut 38).

He has been working on a novel for years but hasn't even been able to finish it. Anton is aware that his 1986 premeditated, non-political death of a black woman in Katlehong has left him in a psychological hell. His confusion between the death of the black woman and that of his mother causes Anton to experience the nation as a little version of hell as he contemplates: "I shot and killed her in Katlehong, it wasn't God who took her, before her time" (Galgut 70).

He runs away and turns to drink for comfort. He thinks of returning home because of Manie's passing, his search for redemption, his desire for a cordial relationship with his father, and his financial freedom. When Anton returns, the farm is overcrowded. He has to contend with land grabbing on the one hand with the black people and the former dominee turned pastor. However, he cannot manage the family businesses, which include the snake park and the farmhouse restorations. He is unable to procreate and achieve the financial independence that is required of a man; therefore, he must rely on handouts from his father's trust funds. Desiree, his wife, dislikes



him for his drunkenness and impotence. He feels insecure of his wife's friend Moti and is jealous of his strength:

Moti? I thought his name was Mowgli. But look, he's in civvies tonight, where's your grass nappy, wild boy? Surprised by his strength of feeling, the poisonous purity of it, Anton throws his head back and howls like a wolf. Akela, we'll doom our best! (Galgut 242)

In these lines, aggression can be witnessed in the character caused by insecurity and alienation in his life. He does not have anybody to spend time with him. When he eventually commits suicide from depression, his wife receives the debts. Desiree too has been living the life of despair and loneliness and expresses it as:

That's my life, she thinks, miles and miles of brown grass. Even the exciting bits have lost their colour. What's a lady to do, stuck out in the sticks with a drunk man for company? She's going to get fretful, of course she is, and look for consolations in other places, and who can blame her for that? (Galgut 248)

## 8 Discussion

Amor is the only Swart family member to outlast the promise, which has evolved into a regional/family curse. Thirty-three years later, Amor's persistent efforts to bring Salome and Lukas to justice are successful. Apartheid regulations that prevented Lukas and Salome from owning a home, house, or land, as well as post-apartheid land claims that seek to return the land to its "rightful" owners, added to their intricate web of dispossession and a sense of (un)belonging, landlessness, and homelessness. Salome can lose the house despite Rachel's promise being kept because of a pending land claim about the Swart farm. An analysis of the novel shows how the legacy of colonialism in Africa and apartheid in South Africa continues to influence the descendants of settlers' views of themselves, others, and their place in South Africa and Africa. From 1985–1986 until the present decade (with Jacob Zuma's departure), the history of the Swart family is told alongside the history of South Africa as a whole, highlighting the various national climatic conditions that accompanied each president (Penfold, 2012). These serve as the background for each Swart funeral as well. On

the eve of the famous rugby world cup match that briefly brings a country torn apart by racism and political violence together, Manie is laid to rest. During the Mbeki era, which is notorious for a spike in crime and the prevalence of HIV infection, Astrid perishes in a criminal incident (Bickford-Smith, 2009). The impotence of postcolonial nations and masculinities haunts Anton, the Swart family's heir, on a societal and personal level. He is physically, spiritually, and psychologically impotent. His spiritual bankruptcy is mapped onto the Dutch Reformed Church's endorsement of racism.

## 9 Conclusion

The novel deals with the post-apartheid concept. It begins in 1986, in the era of Apartheid in South Africa and the story moves forward dealing with the issues arising in the complicated history of South Africa to dismantle apartheid. It depicts the downfall of a white Afrikaner family as a metaphor for the decline of white colonial rule. The story depicts the structure of modern South Africa in a realistic rather than idealised way. Quest for identity/ settlement, conflicts and struggles, homelessness, disconnections are influenced by post-apartheid era. The Swart family's moral faults have been seen as a parable for post-apartheid South Africa and the promise made by White South Africans to Black South Africans.

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