The South African Dream: Representations of the "Rainbow Nation" in Damon Galgut's The Good Doctor (2003) and The Impostor (2008)

Auteur : Di Lillo, Nicolas
Promoteur(s) : Delrez, Marc
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Université de Liège

Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres

Département de Langues et Lettres Modernes

The South African Dream:

Representations of the "Rainbow Nation" in Damon Galgut's *The Good Doctor* (2003) and *The Impostor* (2008)

Sous la direction de Prof. Marc DELREZ

Mémoire présenté par Nicolas DI LILLO en vue de l'obtention du grade de Master en Langues et Lettres Modernes, orientation Germaniques, à finalité spécialisée en didactique

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1. Introduction

"The sun rises, gloriously ignorant that a new day is not necessarily a good day."
– Caryl Phillips

The first word which comes to mind when South Africa is mentioned is usually "Apartheid", this word which has shaped the global view on the country. The word itself means "separateness", "apartness" in Afrikaans. In 1913, four years after South Africa gained nominal independence over Britain, the Natives' Land Act was passed, restricting the "non-white" majority of South Africans from owning land that was not in a scheduled native area. Then in 1948, the Afrikaner Nationalist Party (NP) came to power and passed numerous segregationist laws which reinforced the segregation already in place under British and Dutch rule. Many countries around the world, notably member states of the United Nations, were against the Apartheid and condemned it as a crime against humanity. In South Africa, resistance came from discriminated people as well as people who were not persecuted by Apartheid laws. The African National Congress (ANC) was one of the major groups in the resistance against Apartheid. Their fight against the regime started with peaceful dialogue and ended in armed conflict. In the early 1990s, the Apartheid was progressively dismantled through a series of negotiations which were held to solve the climate of violence that surrounded the country. On 27 April 1994 was held the first non-racial election which was won by the ANC and following which the NP became, therefore, the opposition party of the government. Nelson Mandela became president of the country and, from 1994 on, the ANC has won all six democratic elections. Although South Africa now grants equal rights to all South Africans, the country is still grappling with the social disparities that decades of segregation have built. Inequalities in employment, income, and also education are still prominent in the country, as well as corruption.

Born in Pretoria in 1963, the novelist and playwright Damon Galgut graduates in drama at the University of Cape Town before becoming a writer. He writes his first novel at 17 and it is published in Johannesburg. Three decades later, *The Good Doctor*, set in the early years of post-Apartheid South Africa, propels him to international fame. The novel is shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2003 and wins the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book. It is followed by *The Impostor* just a few years later set in a similar post-Apartheid climate. In these novels, Galgut writes a terrifyingly realistic South Africa, without omitting the inequalities and the corruption that are an integral part of the country.

By closely analysing these two consecutive novels, I shall examine the state of post-Apartheid South Africa in its early years, as penned by Galgut, and therefore deconstruct a certain "rainbowism" according to which one were to believe in a South Africa rid of its race-related issues. The "Rainbow Nation" ideology emerges from Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Prize-winner Anglican archbishop and South African human rights activist, and is further instrumentalised by politicians such as Nelson Mandela who uses the term in his 1994 inaugural speech. However, this overly optimistic philosophy does not sit right with just everybody and consequently ignites a firestorm of criticism from people denouncing its tendency to utterly obliviate the country's real state.

This dissertation will, therefore, consist in studying how post-Apartheid South Africa is represented in Galgut's *The Good Doctor* and *The Impostor*. I will argue that the author rejects the idea of a "new" South Africa which is, to him, a sham by which the country would be clothed in a so-called new identity to hide its pre-existing problems and to sugarcoat them in order to give the illusion of a healed country.

So as to support my arguments, after summarising both novels, I will assert that their contexts evaluate and deconstruct this concept of the "Rainbow Nation" by exposing and confronting harsh facts about the country's actual status, addressing topics such as corruption, as well as economic and opportunity disparity. Furthermore, I will argue that the setting serves as a tool to express a variety of concepts and feelings, ranging from relaying some of the characters' mental states to generating a dreamlike environment which makes one feel uneasy at times. The setting is crucial in both works as it allows the author to explore dimensions that the characters cannot articulate and to exploit parts of the plot that words could not explain because they are far too intricate to convey. Moreover, I shall study the interracial heterosexual relationships between white men and black women in the novels, analysing the power dynamics between these characters and what they tell us about cross-community interactions, notably between a white man and a black woman. I will finally observe the white – main – characters' opposing views regarding post-Apartheid South Africa, arguing that there exists a rich spectrum of diverging views among white South Africans. Whereas some are either naïvely optimistic or plainly pessimistic, others range in a more ambivalent and complex view on post-Apartheid South Africa, finding their origin in false consciousness, guilt and bad faith.

2. Synopsis of the novels

a. *The Good Doctor* (2003)

South African author Damon Galgut was recently awarded the Booker Prize for his latest novel *The Promise* (2021) about an Afrikaner family through four successive decades. The first time Galgut was shortlisted for the Booker Prize was in 2003 for *The Good Doctor*, in which Laurence Waters, a young, optimistic doctor, arrives in what appears to be a deserted hospital. He is welcomed by Frank Eloff, a more experienced and sensibly less enthusiastic doctor, who is discontented by this new arrival. Set in a former homeland, *The Good Doctor* is a tale of hope versus fact, of blind optimism versus dystopian pessimism about the new country, bringing together two characters embodying these contrasting outlooks and forcing them to share a bedroom. Their boss, Dr Ngema, is the one who made that decision upon Laurence's unforeseen arrival. Her motivation behind this choice is the colour of both men's skin. Early in the novel, Dr Ngema manifests the form of residual segregation that the "new" South Africa in which the novel is set, still demonstrates: white people on one side, and black people on the other, tend to be living together in the same place, yet they mostly remain segregated.

The novel invites the reader to wander through the empty halls of the hospital and the empty town until two patients arrive at the hospital: one is a man who crossed the border illegally and is dehydrated, and the other is a woman with appendicitis. She is in such a bad shape that Frank and Laurence have to transport her to the other hospital for, due to short budgeting, the staff is frequently required to bring patients to the other side of town – outside the ex-homeland – to the other, better-equipped hospital. Frank attempts to enlighten Laurence as to why that place receives better funding even though the Apartheid is over but Laurence is utterly oblivious to the situation of the country. "It's all politics," he repeats all through the novel, constantly wondering why people still bother since it is now supposed to be all over. On the drive back, Laurence and Frank stop at a shack where a black woman, Maria, sells random items for the tourists. In an almost psychic surge, Laurence asks Frank whether he has had a sexual relation with Maria. While Frank denies, he meets her that very night for an encounter which is far from being their first. The nature of their relationship is undetermined, and as vague for the reader as for the characters. Occasionally Frank offers Maria some money, as remuneration for some time spent with a body, though she was the one who asked for money the first time.

As intrusive as Frank might find Laurence's many remarks, Dr Ngema seems the most irritated by them. After being continually refused a better position, Dr Ngema has been trapped in this hospital and Frank – her supposed successor – along with her. So when Laurence arrived and opposed Dr Ngema's ways, she wished him out. Therefore, she orders Frank to usher Laurence through the hospital, in hopes that the sight will discourage him and lead him to request a transfer. On the contrary, Laurence sees it as an opportunity to, as a good doctor would, heal the hospital and bring it back to life.

Frank and Laurence gradually get better acquainted. Laurence shares a story about what motivated him to become a doctor – which winds up being a lie – and along the lines, he expresses his views towards war and conscription, which does not fail to irritate Frank as he himself was enrolled in his youth. This episode indexes the generational gap between the two as Frank's reality is history to Laurence. Laurence goes as far as wishing he had been conscripted himself as he believes it would have been formative, while all Frank took away from his experience in the military is an ongoing trauma. When he was in the army, Frank was called in by a certain Commandant Moller to medically monitor a captive SWAPO soldier who was being tortured. Moller asked Frank whether the prisoner will be able to take some more torture or if he will succumb from it. In fear of getting in the way of his superior and thus risking death, Frank opted to simply answer the question by saying that the prisoner could take more torture, knowing that this would mean that the prisoner would eventually die in atrocious pain. Frank still carries the guilt of his inevitable decision.

In an attempt to spread the word about the hospital, Laurence decides to take a walk through the homeland and invites Frank to tag along. His goal is to find a village and establish whether it would be possible to open a nomadic clinic there as a way of bringing medication and vaccines to people, along with educating them about diseases and mostly to draw attention to the hospital. Frank is once again irritated by Laurence's blind positivism and asks him whether they live in the same country because Laurence seems to have a mistaken understanding of the drab realities of South Africa.

While Frank has frequent sexual intercourse with Maria, Laurence too has a significant other. Zanele is an African-American woman who likes to appear African to the extent of having changed her American name – Linda – to an African-sounding one, and wearing bright, multicoloured West African dresses. She has dedicated her life to volunteer work, namely a famine relief programme in the Sudan where she encountered Laurence. She is visiting him and upon her arrival, Laurence asks Frank to spend some time with her while he works a shift – which he could have easily changed to spend time with his girlfriend, had he desired to. As

Frank accepts, he and Zanele embark on a perilous adventure to the Brigadier's old house. The Brigadier was the chief minister of the homeland who had become known after a military coup which he conducted with a view to overthrowing the homeland government. Charged with corruption and fraud, he fled and was never seen again until that night when he caught Frank and Zanele trespassing into his old home. After an altercation – terrifying for Frank and fascinating for Zanele, in which the Brigadier appears as a ghost from the past, ornamented with old medals and the uniform of an army which has ceased to exist – the Brigadier ushers them through and out of his previous property. The thrilling escapade leads Frank and Zanele to have sexual intercourse.

In honour of Zanele's visit, Laurence had organised a party in his bedroom in which Tehogo, the unqualified nurse, had brought some cassettes which he had left in the bedroom once the party ended. Frank then decides to bring Tehogo his cassettes back but instead finds his room filled with medical material which he has stolen. Before he can do anything about his discovery, Frank must go and sign divorce papers in Pretoria with his soon-to-be ex-wife Karen who left him for his ex-best friend, Mike. He confides this to Laurence and then leaves for Pretoria.

In Frank's absence, Laurence brings a clinic to life and it is a great success. Meanwhile, on his way to his father's house, Frank is arrested by soldiers for control. Once there, he is welcomed by Valerie, his stepmother. He meets with his father, Dr Frank Eloff, a doctor who became famous after rescuing minors from a crumbling tunnel when he was young and then became rich from all the media coverage which ensued. He is disappointed in his son's career as he does not understand how a white man can bear to work for a black woman. His appointment with Karen too is somewhat of a displeasure for Frank as after having signed the divorce paper, Karen suggests a get-together with Mike because he supposedly misses him. Frank refuses and adds that he has a girlfriend, which surprises himself as much as his ex-wife.

Frank drives back to a light and joyful hospital, which does not fail to spark some astonishment. Laurence tells him that the clinic was a success, and it was indeed for it attracted many patients to the hospital. The issue, however, is that although Laurence's clinic is bringing people, it is not bringing new material nor staff. They are therefore still unable to help them.

The main attraction of the town is Mama Mthembu's place which has always been deserted, until recently. Among the clients there are many soldiers, including Colonel Moller, whose sight does not fail to strongly impact Frank. So much so in fact that one night he whispers in the Colonel's ear that the Brigadier is still alive and that he must go to the old camp and seek him out. This consequently prompts a chain of events, among which a fusillade in which

Tehogo gets shot and is brought to the hospital in a critical state. Frank, who believes his conversation with Moller triggered this accident, nurtures Tehogo back to health. However, before his efforts begin to pay off, Tehogo is abducted during the night and Laurence disappears with him. Frank drives up to the old camp to look for Laurence but only finds Colonel Moller who acts as though he knows nothing.

Months go by until Frank realises that Laurence will never come back. He gathers all of Laurence's belongings. With the passage of time Frank becomes head of the – still empty – hospital. His main goal is to keep it from being closed down. Ironically, he uses the argument of Laurence's clinics, calling into question which of the two was the good doctor, whose way is the best to heal the hospital – and by extension, the country.

b. *The Impostor* (2008)

Galgut's very next novel, *The Impostor* (2008), offers a much less dichotomous portrait of how South Africans view their "new" country and tells the story, this time as well, through the eyes of white people. Galgut transports the reader into a dreamlike, almost surreal experience throughout the Karoo, a semi-desert. The novel is segmented into three parts, respectively called "Before", "Gondwana" and "After", so as to show that the middle part allows for a certain transition between a before-state and an after-state.

BEFORE

The opening scene has Adam Napier driving his modest car through a desert where he is arrested for ignoring a stop sign and having an out-of-date number plate. The police officer announces the cost of the infractions: two thousand rand. Adam refuses the officer's suggestion of a two-hundred-rand bribe. The offer gives the reader – as soon as the first page – an impression of a corrupted South Africa. Adam's destination is his brother Gavin's old remote and dirty holiday house in the Karoo. After losing his job to a black intern – whom he had been training himself – for reasons of racial quotas, Adam has decided to dedicate his life to his poetry and opted for Gavin's grimy house in the Karoo to do so.

Adam attempts to make the house a home, on several occasions, and to write poetry. To find inspiration and courage, he leaves the dump to socialise and is confronted to several exasperated white people. Their town is changing: the new mayor is black, the streets are adorned with prostitutes, and the crime rates have seemingly increased. The changes even extend to the place and street names. The town used to be named after an Afrikaner "hero" and now bears an "African" name which these irritated citizens cannot pronounce. In an attempt to

clear out his mind, Adam drives to the farming co-op to buy some materials for the weeds in his back yard. There, he hears a word which bears a heavy history for him: “Nappy”.

GONDWANA

The voice behind that word is the ambivalent Kenneth Canning, supposedly an old school friend of Adam’s, though the latter turns out to have absolutely no recollection of the former. Canning invites him over for dinner and picks Adam up in his brand new Jeep, dressed in costly clothes, neither of which really fit. Canning introduces Adam to his two favourite possessions: his ridiculously huge house and his wife Baby, a resplendent black woman with whom he is obsessed. In a throwback to the past, Adam mentions the first black boy to ever attend their school. Canning remembers that boy just about as much as Adam remembers Canning. Back home the next day, Adam asks Gavin over the phone whether he has any recollection of Canning but the younger brother is more interested in the weeds. The next day, Adam decides to remove them from his yard when his mysterious neighbour, Blom, approaches him and advises him on ways that will make the task easier. Later, on a drunken night, Blom confesses that he is about to be assassinated for the people he abducted, tortured and killed for the government during the Apartheid.

As would become his custom, Adam returns to Canning’s house, where he meets Sipho Moloi – a business associate of Canning’s – who asks Adam whether he too is in business with Canning. Unknowingly he would eventually be in business, though unconsciously, when Canning requests him to deliver a parcel in town to the mayor.

Adam’s writer’s block is finally overcome when he discovers that the theme of his poetry can be his longing for Baby, despite the fact that she is his friend’s wife. Their acquaintance grows into a regular affair, which turns Adam into one of the impostors of the novel, since this illicit affair does not prevent him from posturing as Canning’s best friend – though it is not the main reason why he can be seen as the “impostor” referred to in the title. The second impostor is Baby who, contrary to Canning’s original story about their first encounter, met Canning when she worked as an escort. Therefore, both of Canning’s relationships with the people who are the most important to him are based on lies.

Months go by, until on one particular day Canning suggests that he and Adam should go on a walk. Canning points to a beautiful farm which used to belong to his father – who used to be very harsh to Canning – and reveals his plan to ruin it and turn it into a golf course. For the first time, Adam sees Canning as a greedy person and it makes him feel very uneasy. Adam’s affair with Baby turns into an obsession. The weekends he spends at Canning’s are mostly

focused upon his sexual activities with Baby, even though she claims to have married Canning out of love. She tells Adam that Canning might commit suicide if he learnt about the affair and that she would not be too bothered. As a joke, Baby mentions that Adam could kill Canning so that the two of them might be able to live together freely, a fancy which later resonates in Adam's head.

One evening, Blom visits Adam, drunk, and he confesses that he is being hunted down. He tells Adam that Blom is a fake name and that he is in fact in the witness protection programme for the horrors he committed during the Apartheid, giving as an excuse that what he did was for "people like [Adam]" (170), white people.

Adam is invited by Canning to the launch of his golf course, Ingadi 300, in Cape Town. At the event, Adam asks for Canning but nobody knows who he is for the main protagonist of this event is Nicolai Genov. An inebriated Canning is on the side, watching Nicolai Genov from afar. As Genov hands the microphone to Enoch Nandi, their black empowerment partner, Canning is openly full of disdain. Moreover, he tells Adam that Baby and Nicolai have been having an affair, which is a shock to Adam.

Back in the Karoo, Adam does not visit Canning on the weekend. The next day, he drives near Gondwana to observe the progress of the construction of the golf course. Adam meets Baby and, as they have agreed to be intimate for the last time, they are surprised right in the act by Grace, a longstanding servant of the family. Baby consequently resolves to fire Grace and her husband Ezekiel, telling Canning that they have stolen from them. Consequently, the unemployed Ezekiel and Grace wander door-to-door to find work and appear on Adam's doorstep. As Canning and Baby refuse to help, Adam calls Lindile, Ezekiel and Grace's son. Upon his arrival, a guilty Adam gives them food and clothes, and even offers to sleep on the floor while they use the bed, until they leave with their son. Lindile arrives and unsubtly shares his views on the differences in economic status which separate the communities in the country. When Adam argues that he does not have any money either, Lindile retorts by telling Adam that even in his "no-money" (222), he still has much more than Lindile has. Adam is deeply irritated by the conversation in which he feels like the victim of the outrageous suggestion made by Lindile that Adam should take care of his parents instead of him. This further supports the argument in which Adam's imposture consists in inventing an identity as a victim, even though he figures on the side of the privileged, as is confirmed by the outcome of the novel.

Having had enough, Adam packs up his belongings to move back with Gavin, when the phone rings. Canning on the line wants to meet him for a very important reason. Genov's men are planning to assassinate Adam because he knows too much about their dishonest business.

Adam enters his car and rushes out of the town. This is made easier by his realisation that Genov's henchmen are in fact very likely to mistake his neighbour for himself, because he had given out Blom's address as his own on the one occasion when Canning came to pick him up in order to take him to Gondwana for the weekend.

AFTER

Months later, Adam is living with his brother Gavin in Cape Town for a while until he finds a job and moves into his own flat. Gavin puts the old house in the Karoo on the market. As Adam receives a fine for his car, he is required to appear in court because he has failed to pay a number of other fines. In court, he apologises and pays them all off. Outside the court, Adam inadvertently sees Canning. He now lives close to Adam. His golf course has opened but Canning has left it all behind. Baby has divorced him for Nicolai Genov. Adam eventually admits that he never recognised Canning from school. Canning then explains that one day, as he was about to commit suicide, Adam was there crying because people were ridiculing him about his tendency to urinate in bed. Canning opted not to take his own life and instead they talked all night. Adam told him then that they would both get their revenge someday – Adam on his bullies and Canning on his father. Therefore, the destruction of Gondwana and the transformation of the wilderness into a golf club turn out to have been all because of Adam.

3. The context:

"The Apartheid's past": the left traces of the Apartheid in the present

a. *The Good Doctor*

For decades on, the Apartheid shaped the South African socio-political ideology, ingraining itself into the minds of people, even when they were trying to sketch the perimeters of post-transition South Africa. Year after year, act after act, the Apartheid – entrenched in centuries of racial segregation and white supremacy which had already established important parts of South African politics – reshaped the country. From requiring black South Africans to live in reserves to making it unlawful for them to work as sharecroppers, the Apartheid has, even after its end, left behind an uncomfortable legacy. In both novels, Galgut assesses and deconstructs the idea of the "Rainbow Nation" by exposing and addressing painful truths about the country's current[1] state, tackling such issues as corruption and inequality – of income as well as of opportunity. As *The Good Doctor* was published in 2003, it means that less than a decade had passed since the Apartheid was abolished when Galgut wrote it. The novel suggests that the ideologies buttressing that regime did not disappear along with it and, in the contrary, took on a new shape. This feeling is echoed by Cabarcos-Traseira:

> As the country projects an image of itself as a rainbow nation […] the novel suggests that, at the level of everyday life, optimistic, grand movements forward are symbols of progress that mean nothing or – in the best cases – a transient very little. (Cabarcos-Traseira 2005: 52)

As early as in the first pages, the hospital welcomes Laurence, a newcomer there on community service, as part of "a new government scheme, aimed at staffing and servicing all the hospitals in the country" (7), which was introduced under the presidency of Nelson Mandela in 1998. During the Apartheid, funding in all sectors was extremely unequal, quite obviously in favour of the white majority. However, after those laws were lifted, funding remained unequal, especially in what had become the previous homelands. Therefore, the hospital in which Laurence lands is dangerously underfunded and understaffed and consequently does not welcome many patients, falling into an unescapable loop of looking for temporary solutions to make up for the shortcomings of the hospital. To remedy this situation, the hospital is forced to

[1] Respectively around 2003 (*The Good Doctor*) and around 2008 (*The Impostor*)

take some measures such as hiring a nurse, Tehogo, who does not meet the qualifications and who disregards his responsibilities.

> "Tehogo […] is an unqualified nurse […] who neglect[s] [his] duties and steal[s] from [his hospital], and in so doing, represent[s] systemic corruption." (Barris 2005: 25)

All those inequalities make the hospital an unconventional home for the sickest and force the employees to relay the most extreme cases to the other hospital situated on the other side of town which was "the white dream" (18) during the Apartheid. That hospital, as Frank attempts to explain to Laurence, receives all the funding because, as he puts it, "[the government has] to prioritise" (18). Though the Apartheid is not in place anymore, many inequalities are still very present and they do not, as the novel suggests, go away. The previous homelands remain heavily underfunded and the white areas of the towns are still prioritised by the government.

As inconceivable as this is to Laurence, who is convinced that it is all past, Frank has come to accept that this is what the country has come to for, from their generational gap, Frank, like other South Africans of his own age, has had a very different life from Laurence's. While Laurence is doing community service – "an effective strategy for recruiting health professionals to rural and underserved areas, but […] ineffective in retaining them in the absence of complementary longer term human resource interventions" (Reid 2018: 42), Frank was forced, in his time, to serve in the army as an aspect of conscription. In South Africa, young white men of at least 16 were expected to do their military service. Conscription was abolished by the government in 1993 and there would be no further military training call ups the following year. While this is history to Laurence (60), Frank must live with memories of atrocities that have been committed before his very eyes. During the Angolan War, Frank was sent to the border to treat war casualties as a lieutenant because he had a medical degree. He worked under Commandant Moller, a figure who would remain imposing and menacing for years to come, even after the end of the regime. One night during his service, Frank was called in by the commandant after batches of SWAPO[2] prisoners were brought in the camp. The commandant ordered him to diagnose the state of a black SWAPO captive. "In your opinion, as a doctor," Moller asked, "how much more can he take?" (65), meaning how much more torture. Under pressure, Frank responded that the prisoner would not succumb from his wounds. He thus decided between life or death, knowing very well that going against the commandant's way

[2] The South West Africa People's Organisation, a Namibian political party and former independence movement.

would likely cost him. Therefore, he chose to favour his own life and allowed for the prisoner to be tortured to death.

Thus, when Frank catches sight of Moller at Mama Mthembu's place years later, traumatic events from his past resurface, and Moller has lost none of the imposing status he already had for Frank:

> Despite the changes that have overtaken society in terms of its history (most notably its transformation into a rights society), [Colonel[3] Moller] has lost none of his stereotypic menace as an agent of that unaccountable power typically associated with the apartheid regime. (Barris 2005: 27)

Moller appears not only as a ghost from Frank's past but also as a ghost from the country's past, an unwanted present representative of the Apartheid. The deep fear which Frank still feels at the sight of Moller works as a symbol of the past creeping its way back into the present, terrifying and powerful as ever, along with an army of soldiers settling at Mama Mthembu's place. There are rumours going around that the soldiers are there to plug up the border from smuggling, which inevitably brings up speculations about the Brigadier, another ghostly figure who haunts the town in the form of a statue and of his previous house, still standing tall.

The Brigadier was the chief minister of the homeland and after his military coup, he was sentenced on "twenty-four charges of corruption and fraud that sent him running for his life" (38). It is therefore not surprising that his name is mentioned when the subject of large-scale fraud is on the table. The rumours of his being back in town spark different reactions in town:

> The truth was that I wasn't sure about any of the rumours surrounding the Brigadier. He was such a mythical figure by now that any scraps of idle talk stuck to him like facts. It was possible that he was just a lost and burnt-out piece of the past, not really here at all. (83)

Much like Colonel Moller, the Brigadier comes creeping back into town like a ghost from the past, as if they were both asserting their inescapable presence in the country, respectively a symbol of imposing military force and one of corruption, proving that, although the Apartheid laws were lifted, the country's psyche has not yet changed much. Their dichotomic and simultaneous presences – though that of the Brigadier is still hypothetical as early in the novel – work as a chaotic shock and a throwback to a past of turmoil.

Later on, the reader is made aware that the Brigadier is indeed still present in town, lingering in a halo of past glory and then ripped off his grandeur. When Frank and Zanele

[3] Commandant Moller has been ranked up to Colonel in the meantime.

trespass in the Brigadier's old house on their exciting escapade, they actually come face to face with him. This encounter is the first confirmation of some of the rumours. The Brigadier was not "dead and gone" (102) but rather still alive and very much present:

> And it could only have been with the help of bigger, unseen friends that he had emerged from the shadows with such sudden support and power. After he had appointed himself chief minister, he heaped numerous honours on his own shoulders, including his rank and a handful of medals. (107)

Frank seems to believe in the possibility that the Brigadier is only a pawn in a much larger-scale operation going on at that moment. Were this true, it would mean that the Brigadier was a part of a significant fraud scheme in which he was smuggling "refugees and stolen goods and arms and stuff back and forth over the border" (102). Moreover, these speculations can be supported with what the Brigadier told Frank: "People, small people, nothing people, they think I am the past. But I am not the past. My time is still to come" (112). This serves as a warning that he is neither retired nor hiding. This comes to confirm several rumours when the atmosphere of the town switches over a sense of crisis. Progressively roadblocks are installed and cars are randomly arrested to check what they are doing as well as where they are going (see 160), as a sign that something questionable is going on in the town. The crime rates are also increasing as demonstrated by the night when "[a] gang of four armed men wearing balaclavas went into the supermarket […] beat up the manager and emptied the safe" (163). Along with these events came other rumours, such as those which argue that some of the offenders were in fact Moller's soldiers, showing again how the corruption blur surrounding South Africa is still perceptible.

Frank, in an upsurge of imagined bravery – or in a fever dream caused by his post-traumatic stress disorder after the war – seizes an opportunity to share his own theory on the criminal actions going on in town. He confidently and drunkenly tells Moller that the Brigadier is still around and running a criminal operation, using the old military camp as a base. Frank admits himself that "maybe [Moller] was right" in rationalising his speculations, that "maybe [Frank] wanted [the camp] to be full of ghosts. Maybe [he] needed to believe in the Brigadier, with the past pinned to his chest […] Tending his midnight flowers. Using [Frank's] bones for fertilizer" (185). This suggests that this whole improvised altercation with Colonel Moller has everything to do with Frank and his deep connection to the past.

This decision does not come without consequences as, the next day, Tehogo is admitted into the hospital after having been shot in the chest. He is chained to the bed and closely watched by a soldier (see 186). Tehogo is portrayed as untrustworthy: he is a relative of the Brigadier's

and this is, according to some rumours, the reason why he was accepted at the hospital even though he is unqualified (see 53); he stole materials from the hospital (see 127); after he learns that Frank turned him in – though indirectly – his fishy friend Raymond mimicked the slicing of a throat to scare Frank (see 156); and he did not come to work for a while (see 180). As suggested by Barris (2005), Tehogo represents systemic corruption and smuggling and it is therefore rational to imagine that he was shot by one of Moller's soldiers – though Moller never admits it – and that potentially the Brigadier's men are the ones who came in the hospital during the night to take Tehogo and abduct Laurence. This is nevertheless only conjecture for the author never officially endorses any theory.

Galgut chooses to leave gaps in the diegesis without making it impossible for one to try to fill them in, partly thanks to the characters' own speculations and to Galgut's "realistic representation of a postmodern and postcolonial world" (Lenz and Wenzel 2016: 134):

> *The Good Doctor* […] offers no catharsis and the author denies his readers a convincing denouement or satisfying resolution. This, of course, reflects conditions in a postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa. (Lenz and Wenzel 2016: 136)

As suggested by Lenz and Wenzel, it is likely that Galgut decided to leave these gaps open to reflect the reality of a country which is still struggling to reconstruct itself and to fill in its own gaps, taking the country as a social patient "in crisis that requires a "good" doctor to heal it" (Lenz and Wenzel 2016: 134). The fact that it is so easy to do so also shows in how bad a shape South Africa is and still how fragile the first decade after the Apartheid has been.

b. ***The Impostor***

Similarly, the action of *The Impostor* is set a few years later and conveys the same notion that the societal structures of the Apartheid continue to govern the minds in the present, thus determining the direction in which the country is going. This novel does not shy away from showing yet again the deep-rooted disturbances left behind from the previous regime. "The miasma of corruption, xenophobia and deepening economic inequality which characterised the ensuing fifteen years [after the Apartheid]" (Kostelac 2020: 43) is still present and Galgut represents it skilfully early in the novel.

When Adam arrives in the Karoo, he is arrested by a police officer. After debating, the police officer offers a bribe to let Adam go: two hundred rand to avoid the thousand-rand fine – a bribe which he refuses (see 3 – 4), insisting upon the need to abide by the law. In his tendency to disregard the injustices of the past, Adam fails to see the bribe as a notion that black

South Africans, such as the police officer, may have revenge to take. This altercation therefore sets the tone of the novel: Adam leaves Cape Town and as soon as he arrives in the Karoo, minutes from his final destination, he faces corruption from a representative of the maintenance of order. The Apartheid did not only segregate the black majority from the white minority, it also restricted them in many ways, notably by "denying them access to the political system, restricting their economic opportunities, amassing vast wealth on the backs of African labor, and forcing them to live in designated "tribal homelands'" (Larson 2009). His dreamlike journey to nature to bloom as a poet is interrupted when he is struck by a harsh reality: that of a fraudulent country which has not yet healed of the damage of decades in an inhumane regime. These conditions normalised corruption throughout the years up to the point where such petty fraud comes to happen daily. According to a survey lead in 2004, respondents claimed that they "do not know how to report corruption and many are afraid of the consequences of whistleblowing. The belief that reporting corruption will not change anything is also of concern" (van Vuuren 2004) as it suggests the possibility that white South Africans are hesitant to condemn corruption in their black compatriots because they believe they might owe a historical debt to them. No less than 100% of the respondents indicated that they had at some point paid a bribe. Moreover, the survey showed that interactions with traffic authorities were the most corrupt, which is what is demonstrated in the case of Adam who, for that matter, decided to accept the fine, much to his brother's astonishment:

> 'What was all that about?' Gavin said.
>
> 'He wanted money. He just asked for it, straight out like that.'
>
> Gavin snorted. 'How much did you give him?'
>
> 'I didn't give him anything.' Adam glanced anxiously at his brother.
>
> 'What would you have done?'
>
> 'Well…' Gavin said, moustache twitching. 'It's a lot cheaper than the fine.'
>
> 'That's not the point.' (5)

This also proves that while some – like Adam – refuse the bribe and opt for the legal solution, others – like Gavin – tend to accept the opportunity to save some money and ignore the bigger problem of petty corruption which has remained, to this day, a serious problem in South Africa, impacting public services and everyday life.

About eight months after Adam was stopped by the police officer, he realises that he has received an official letter about the fine that he has received and which he has yet to pay. It is a summons to court because he has not paid the fine. The letter says that if he misses the court

day he will be arrested. Though it scares Adam, Gavin seems not to care very much as he believes that "nobody bothers about that sort of stuff these days" (176), meaning that since the Apartheid is over, nobody will check if you have paid a simple fine because the government has bigger fish to fry. He advises Adam to "tear it up" (176) as it is what he does with all the tickets he gets. The story does not end there for almost a year later, Adam's car disappears while he is at work. He discovers that he has parked it in a loading zone and that it has been towed by the traffic department. When he goes to pay the fee, they refuse to let him take his car back. His file shows the traffic fine from when he arrived in the Karoo, as well as the court summons which Gavin had suggested he tear up. A warrant had been issued for his arrest and he had to appear in court. Before he began defending himself for the fines, the magistrate, a tired black woman, already expresses scepticism towards him. He only tells her that he has been living in the country and has forgotten about the penalty. She informs him that if he had paid in the first place, no summons would have been necessary, to what Adam admits his wrongs and apologises:

> It was all too high-up and out of reach. That was how it felt. There were principles, rules by which one should live, and these hovered in the air, shining and inviolate. Then there was the way one did live, which was a ramshackle construction of compromise and half-truth. Perhaps it was age, but he was learning to accept reality. (241)

At that time, Adam opens his eyes on the reality of the situation. The situation in South Africa is such that people do not live according to an untouchable set of respected rules but rather find subtle – or not – ways to circumvent these rules, partly for their own benefit, and partly also because they sometimes have no other choice. He eventually receives another fine, an admission of guilt – a fine one can pay after admitting to a minor offence instead of appearing in court, and is sent free, paying his way into freedom.

By the same token, when Adam burns some of his poems in his back yard, the mayor appears and tells him that this is against municipal regulations. However, his tone quickly shifts and he furtively tells Adam not to tell anyone about this. The mayor promises to pass it over because of Adam's help (see 201). Indeed, Canning had asked him to bribe the mayor as part of his scheme in the opening of Ingadi 300. This again attests to how corruption is still at the centre of South Africa, even – if not especially – among people of power. This type of corruption is known as "tenderpreneurism" or "tenderpreneurship" and it involves a person who

benefits oneself with contracts and tenders[4] – hence its name. It is often based on some blatant bribery, and it most frequently involves an elected or politically appointed person with interests in the matter. It is therefore likely that Canning bribed the mayor to pass "an environmental impact assessment without running it past the council" (216):

> In governance terms, tenderpreneurship has two major implications. First, tenderpreneurship is (rightly) associated with poor service delivery and overcharging of the state, with tender often awarded to companies lacking competency. Second, tenderpreneurship has become associated with maintaining the political status quo through strategies that include undermining civil society. (Piper and Charman 2018: 3)

In the case of the mayor, he helped with Canning's business in exchange for monetary compensation. Canning has indeed used tenderpreneurism to carry out his plans.

The Napier brothers represent in themselves two versions of the modern South African: the one who thrives in the new economy and who uses the early post-Apartheid situation to his own benefit to build a dubious and unethical empire in real estate; and the apolitical, oblivious poet who is struck with reality on his quest for inspiration. Gavin Napier built a fortune from property development. In collaboration with other real-estate enthusiasts, Gavin rebought old buildings to either rebuild them or tear them down and start from nothing to build beautiful modern apartments. In a heated conversation where his brother calls his business a way to make "a fast buck" (20), Gavin defends himself and his actions, saying that his business is directly contributing to the development of the country by employing hundreds of construction workers. There had, however, been a time right before "South Africa's big change" (20) when Gavin feared he would not be able to take advantage of the system anymore to the point where he had considered moving out of the country. Thankfully for him, the end of the regime still allowed for the privileged to remain privileged. One of his company directors was a black man and Gavin proudly displayed him almost as an act of charity for he was "paid a healthy retainer just to stay at home in Gugulethu while his name on the letterhead brought in legitimacy and investment" (19). This demonstrates how shamelessly Gavin uses the post-Apartheid economic system, together with its encouragement of black empowerment, to his own advantage, to build a fortune on the back of those who do not profit from this new economy. Indeed, Gavin bought a black man to serve as the figure of multiracialism in his company in order to bring legitimacy to his business. This is one of South Africa's most used methods of corruption. It is called BEE-

[4] A tender is a fixed-price offer to conduct labour or to deliver goods. The procedure is intended to guarantee that the work be distributed fairly.

fronting and consists in a company giving an important seat on the company's board to a black individual to rightfully qualify for contracts according to the Black Economic Empowerment policy. This policy aimed at bringing more black people into the economic life of the country but was instead abused and used to get more contracts by employing a black member while giving them no power whatsoever. This policy is very important in the economy of the country, as much as other employment equity and affirmative action policies. The BEE policy is inextricably linked to the overall employment program and for that reason received a lot of criticism:

> Ingadi means 'garden' in Zulu.
>
> 'Personally,' Canning says, 'I wanted a Xhosa name. […] Ingadi just doesn't have the same ring. Not much poetry to it, I'm sure you'll agree. But Enoch Nandi is our black empowerment partner, and he's a Zulu, and he wants a Zulu name. So Ingadi it is. Who am I to argue, I'm only the dumb whitey who's put up the land. So, hey, cool, whatever.' (137)

In this case, however, the black empowerment partner has had one decision-making power, that of the choice of the name of the business and he is also given a voice at the party hosted in honour of the grand opening of Ingadi 300, a voice which Canning characterises of "black empowerment camouflage" (185).

The party in question is a turning point in the novel for it is the moment when the reader is made aware of Canning's real place in the whole scheme. Canning had up until then made it seem like Ingadi 300 was his own creation by passionately describing it. Canning claimed that he would seek revenge on his father through "healthy capitalism" (135) for this went against his father's wishes:

> How the lodge will become a luxury hotel. How half of the current land will be sold off to raise funds to construct another two hundred and fifty rondawels of varying sizes. How the most important principle will be exclusivity. Membership will be very expensive […] How they will exploit the interest in fossils […] How the khaki-clad workers from Nuwe Hoop will be right there, on tap, to work as caddies and groundskeepers and general staff at the hotel. […] It's a win-win situation for everybody. (136 – 137)

Canning makes it seem like this scheme is his until Adam arrives at the launch party in Cape Town, and asks for Canning whom nobody seems to know. It turns out that the design of the golf course is the making of a famous golfer, put in place with the help of Nicolai Genov, an Eastern European entrepreneur with whom Canning had already worked in the making of the

"Nuwe Hoop" settlement, a set of cheap houses built for people who were chased off one of Canning's father's farms so that they would drop a land claim they held against him. As Canning puts it, he is "just a business man" and says that "[i]f everybody just plays their part, it's no big deal" (204). Therefore, everyone played a small role in a famous golfer's dream golf course: among others, Nicolai Genov, a hotel and casino owner who still has dubious connections in Europe in "money laundering, drug smuggling, maybe human trafficking" (188); Enoch Nandi, the black empowerment partner who brings legitimacy to the business; the mayor who took part in tenderpreneurism, along with Sipho Moloi, a government member from Cape Town; and Canning on whose ground the golf course is built, as a white landowner partner. This golf course business ends in disaster, as described by Gavin who read about it in an article:

> 'It's unravelling, that's what's going on. What started it is this government character, what's his name again, somebody Moloi, giving the construction contract to a company that happens to have his uncle and brother-in-law on the board of directors. Now all kinds of unsavoury things are creeping out of the woodwork. Your mayor is also involved. Seems like he passed an environmental impact assessment without running it past the council. People are calling for his head. Fanie Prinsloo – remember him? – has come out and said it publicly. Corruption.' (216 – 217)

In this case, the corrupt business was called out and taken down, to show that corruption is not always looked over and that some people in South Africa use their voices to denounce corruption in the country and among them, the ambiguous advocate for justice and the law, Fanie Prinsloo, a right-wing nostalgic for the Apartheid.

In other respects, a ghost of the Apartheid's past in the country is the mysterious character of Blom, Adam's neighbour. After weeks of strange altercations and bizarre behaviour, Blom addresses Adam openly and admits that he was afraid of him when he first moved in because he feared that he was there to kill him. However, another man does indeed come and informs Blom that he is soon to be assassinated if he does not appear in court to give testimony. It turns out that:

> [Blom is] in hiding. He's got a fake name, a fake identity. He's on the witness protection programme. Somebody came today to tell him he has to go up to Jo'burg soon to give testimony in a big trial.' That a man so apparently ordinary […] should have a past like that…! Of course, he knows about such people; there's been a lot about them recently in the newspapers and on the television. But they were always, somehow, somewhere else, living, as it

> were, in another country – not in the house next door […]. That the dark and dirty past of South Africa should have taken on form and come to visit Adam at home […] Gavin grunts […], 'Ja, well, there's a lot of these guys around.' (171)

Blom, seeking sympathy and absolution, admits to his dark past as an Apartheid government assassin and torturer, who must now go and testify at what one may imagine to be the IJR – Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, previously known as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – which was a Cape Town-based non-governmental organisation whose goal it was to guarantee a humane transition from the Apartheid regime to a democracy as South Africa moved forward. The commission urged victims of the regime to give testimonies about their experiences, and allowed perpetrators of violence to testify and seek amnesty from civil and criminal punishment. It is likely that Blom left to the Karoo under a fake name to avoid a prison sentence after having committed political atrocities in Angolan military camps or on home ground. Though this seems inconceivable to a naïve Adam, Gavin accepts it as a truth, mentioning how "apparently normal white men […] had committed rape and murder and cut off SWAPO ears" (172). This strikes Adam who is bewildered by the idea that such people live inside the country among normal citizens, acting as if they had not committed cruel and shocking acts in the name of the preservation of a sacred whiteness in the country. Again, then, what characterises Adam in the book is his consistent tendency to disown any personal connection to the former regime, despite the fact that, as Blom pointedly reminds him, segregation had been implemented for him or people like him.

4. The setting:

"Pathetic fallacy": an analysis of how the landscape and places mirror the emotions of the characters and their position towards the country, but also the state of the country itself

a. *The Good Doctor*

In both novels, Damon Galgut uses the setting as a tool to convey multiple ideas and feelings and he exploits it to its full effect, from conveying some of the characters' states of mind to creating a dreamlike atmosphere in which the reader wanders throughout the book, feeling uneasy at times. The setting plays an important role in his two novels, for it allows Galgut to explore dimensions that the characters could not express, to exploit aspects of the story which words would fail to explain for they are much too complex to describe. In that sense, I will look at the town in which the story happens, the hospital, Zanele's welcoming party as a metaphor, Maria's shack as well as the grass and weeds and what they represent.

The first thing one might notice about the town in which the story of *The Good Doctor* is set is that it almost seems like it does not exist. Galgut indeed never confirms where the town is or whether it is based on any South African town in particular. What we do know, however, is that the town is situated close to the Tropics of Capricorn and therefore it means that it is somewhere in the north of South Africa. This nevertheless is not of high matter unless one takes a look at the weather of the town. The seasons in the town importance unless one takes a look at the weather of the town. The seasons in the town do not have a strong effect on the weather, "the same things happened every year, all in their usual places" (80). Except for a dry and a rainy season, the days all look the same qua weather. The climate here works as a mirror to the country, how stagnant it is according to the narrator, Frank Eloff. Galgut uses nature and the climate as devices to convey more abstract ideas, such as that of a country which, despite its change of regime, has not been through that big a difference. The narrator of this story is Frank Eloff, the pessimist who believes that South Africa's past is "not past yet" (6) and, more generally, that life – his life – is devoid of change. This was the way Frank saw things but when he first arrived in town, what struck him was the versatility of the place:

> Heat made the leaves blurred, like a solid wall you couldn't penetrate […].
> The vitality and heat became oppressive and somehow threatening […] nothing stayed the same. (15)

This quote ends with "nothing stayed the same" (15) while the eighth chapter opens with "Nothing changed" (80). This shows how the climate reflects the characters' emotions and their evolution. When Frank first arrives at the hospital, he is full of hope for the future and looking forward to a new start in life. However, as years went by, his views on life started to switch and fall into pessimism reflected in the very ambivalence between these two quotes.

The town itself is described as a vast, empty space, impressively vacant. One thing that strikes Laurence when he arrives in town is how empty it is, as there are "no hotels, shops, restaurants, cinemas… Nothing" (5). What is even more striking is that this town used to be the capital of the homeland and therefore a densely inhabited place. Homelands, or Bantustans, were ten areas created by the Apartheid government to which most black South Africans were resettled after being expelled from their homes for them not to live in metropolitan centres among white people. Under the Apartheid's various laws, the homelands were an administrative tool to deny black South Africans any political right and to enforce segregation. Black people therefore were supposedly independent in their Bantustans according to the Bantu Citizenship Act of 1970, though this independence is only nominal for they had to rely entirely on the economy of white South Africa. The ground did not allow for them to farm and grow their own food and black people had to, therefore, work in white cities to make money. After the Apartheid, the homelands were abolished but they left behind a legacy. Millions of people left the Bantustans to go and live in major cities in search for better opportunities.

> The Bantustans, or "homelands", as they were renamed in the attempt to foist ethnic nationalities on black South Africans, formally ceased to exist with the first democratic elections of 1994. Rooted in the 1913 native reserves, after the coming to power of the National Party in 1948 the Bantustans became one of the cornerstones of apartheid ideology and policy. […] Hence their legacy remains inscribed in South Africa's cultural, political, economic and physical landscape, though their historical importance has not been fully appreciated. (Phillips & Chipkin 2014)

In the novel, the capital of the former homeland is empty. Most people from that homeland have migrated to – or closer to – a major city and have left the town behind (see 38). All the buildings are closed and the people are nowhere to be seen.

> The empty hospital/empty town device is allegorical, becoming an emblem which to some extent generates the form of the novel. (Barris 2005: 32)

Emptiness plays a huge role in the novel for it shapes the perception of the reader, how the reader feels when wandering around the town and when stepping inside the houses of the

characters. The parliament is closed, so is the library which never had any books, while the school, which was never put to use, has become a "useless place" (38). When Frank goes to the city to sign divorce papers with Karen, she asks him if he is bitter because he has been in the "bundu" (142) for so long. She then suggests he comes "back to civilization". A "bundu" is a slang word for a remote area which is mainly deserted and mostly uninhabited. It is inconceivable for her, as well as for other city-dwelling characters, that someone would want to stay in an area so deprived of opportunities. Karen's mother, Jacqui, refers to the ex-homeland as "up there […] Among the rural blacks" (140). Both Karen and Jacqui distance themselves in their rich, white, exclusive suburb from the Bantustan where Frank decided to go work. To them, this is like a completely different country.

The hospital is "a ghost town" (4), in fact, as empty as the town that surrounds it, and Galgut interestingly uses the phrase for both the town and the hospital. Frank even describes it as a "strange twilight place, halfway between nothing and somewhere" (34), creating doubt around its very existence. So much so in fact that when Laurence arrives, he even suspects that this is not the hospital he is supposed to do his community work at. Perhaps the hospital represents contemporary South Africa, since it too is in a broken and neglected shape. Many scholars maintain this idea that "the hospital […] functions as a metaphor for South Africa" (Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 139), suggesting that the unfinished hospital left in decay is a device allowing one to look at the country as if under a microscope (see Hope 2003: 141). From its major dysfunctioning to its decaying condition, Galgut uses the hospital to denounce a post-Apartheid South Africa:

> The African wasteland is reconceptualised in the form of Galgut's dysfunctional hospital in the homeland. With its surplus of drugs that the doctors rarely administer, shelves and shelves of condoms but hardly any vital medicines, swabs and sterile gloves, the hospital – an instance of colonised space – represents a sort of nothingness. (Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 138)

The hospital was built as a project of the first chief minister of the homeland around ten years before the story takes place. However, its construction has been repeatedly interrupted by major political events, starting from the Brigadier's military coup which suspended the construction for two years, then the white government gave in and "all was left hanging again" (33), and eventually, the homelands ceased to exist and their inhabitants were redistributed across South Africa, which is when "the future of the hospital became unclear" (33). The hospital is a record of what it witnessed. By its very existence, it is the ostensible inheritance of the multiple events that it has undergone. It is a symbol of survival, of what is left after the storm. After the

construction was stopped, nobody took proper care of it and it became neglected as well as underfunded. The hospital is simply the obvious character of the town, it is therefore unsurprising that it is in this state for everything is neglected in former Bantustans. Many still live with no drinkable water and no electricity, many do not have access to decent education or decent healthcare. The current healthcare system in South Africa came to be under the Apartheid and therefore there are still many deeply rooted inequalities built into it:

> Each Bantustan had its own health department but these were under-resourced compared with health departments in the rest of the country. […] The post-apartheid policy focus of the National Department of Health (NDoH) was on primary care – this may also have de-emphasised the role of hospitals. (Adams et al. 2017: 102)

Hospitals, as well as other domains, have been overlooked during the transition period and are still, to this day, neglected. Despite all the measures taken to stop the inequalities, despite the country's wealth in terms of agriculture, livestock, ore, which allow significant industrial development, the situation is still such that South Africa is the most unequal country in the world and its healthcare system still benefits the 20% wealthiest people.

"[T]he pink walls, the empty chairs, the dusty desk in the corner, the frail plants wilting in their pots […] the long grass, the ragged trees overhead dropping their burden of leaves" (1), this is how Galgut describes the hospital. The chairs are empty for there is nobody to sit on them, the desk is dusty for there is nobody to clean it, the vegetation is growing inside for there is nobody who cares enough to stop it from happening. When Laurence arrives at the hospital, it looks as if he is seeing South Africa for the first time, in the most brutally honest way possible. He even says: "It's like something terrible happened here" (4). The hospital is "a trope for post-liberation decline" (Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 141), it is thus a token for what South Africa has become due to colonisation, Apartheid, as well as decolonisation.

The hospital has a recreation room which is usually a sad room (see 48) for nobody there feels like they want entertainment. The hospital's emptiness and lack of events understandably fail to generate any desire in the staff to revel. Therefore, the entertainment room works as a reflection of the general spirit of the people in the hospital. It is not even a room in the proper sense of the term but rather a part of a long hall which is used as such. Interestingly enough, although the recreation room does not welcome much recreation, it is the most inhabited room of the hospital for there is not much to do in any other rooms, since there are barely ever any patients. The day after Laurence's clinic, however, there is a "light and happy mood in the room, [a] fresh energy, so optimistic, so young, [which] was connected to what had happened

yesterday, while [Frank] was away" (154). The recreation room, which was always a "quiet refuge" (153), has turned into a party room, loud and joyful. The positive event – Laurence's clinic being a success – changed the atmosphere of the room, bringing in hope and lightness.

Similarly, Frank and Laurence's bedroom also transforms when Frank throws his girlfriend Zanele a welcoming party. The very idea of a party "seemed a bizarre notion" (85) to Frank for the hospital was the antithesis of a party place. A party brings artificial and ephemeral well-being to a group, giving them a false feeling of community and a distraction from reality:

> The room in which the welcoming party for Zanele takes place functions as a microcosm of South African society. It suggests that the only way in which men from different racial backgrounds in the country can really come together and forget about their past experiences, is within the context of a party atmosphere with artificial goodwill, temporary acceptance of one another and with a frenzied sense of madness fuelled by alcohol and music. (Crous 2010: 7)

Crous argues that South African society comes down to different people being unable to live together in the same place unless they have something to distract them from their differences and their past experiences. The party theory suggests that South Africans are yet to learn how to live together in peace without a need for distraction. It is in keeping that Dr Ngema suggests that they organise such get-togethers more often because they are good "for morale" (86). And indeed, although Frank is struck by how peculiar the scene is, seeing the whole hospital staff partying together he finally finds himself enjoying the party with the others, with the help of some alcohol, to the point where he starts dancing and with the unlikeliest of all partners, Tehogo. As soon as the party is over, Frank is thrown back into reality. The music has stopped, the lighting is back to normal and life continues its ordinary, boring course. Once all the fury is down, Frank can see the aftermath, all the "debris and skewed furniture" (91) littering the place.

Another place in town which works as an allegory is Maria's shack. A shack is a small dwelling which is usually badly insulated and offers poor living conditions. In South Africa, around ten million people live in shack settlements away from the city centres. Maria's shack is used as a tourist shop of sorts where she sells, among other things, wooden carvings, handmade toys and hand-sewn blankets:

> Frank's mistress's shack, with its African artefacts, signifies Africa – the world of the foreign and primal other. […] The shack, an "exotic backdrop to a nightly escape" (20), is a place of meetings and exchanges with the other. (Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 143)

In the novel, her shack represents the Eurocentric notion of Africa as primal and exotic, a place where a white man might go according to his will and spend some time with a black woman to take his mind off his otherwise empty life. “Potted Africa, endlessly replicated and served up for the tourists” (19) is how Frank describes the place. The first thing Laurence notices is how “poor” it looks (19). The irony here is that Maria holds what might be considered one of the most useless and poorly thought-out businesses for the town clearly does not receive many tourists. The shack being a visual representation of Maria to Frank, its disappearance could only mean that Maria has also disappeared and this lights a terrible fear in Frank, almost as if the shack took something from Frank with it when it left. The shack disappears but leaves a strong mark on the ground, just like the demise of the Apartheid regime leaving its strong mark as it was abolished.

Galgut also opted for an allegorical representation of nature. Aside from the accurate description of a deserted former Bantustan, Galgut uses nature as a character of its own to convey some feelings and sometimes even to predict the events that are yet to come. The difference in landscape between former homelands and former white towns is such that it can feel to the character like crossing a border between two very distinct countries. The landscape also influences the mood and behaviour of the characters, and vice versa. For instance, when Laurence and Frank go on their hike, even though Laurence is a confident and positive person, he seems to be more rigid “out here, in the wild” (69). It seems that nature, or the natural landscape, affects Laurence’s behaviour. Frank, on the other hand, feels perfectly comfortable and says that he feels “happier than [he had] been in months” (69). Furthermore, after Laurence tells Dr Ngema about what Frank saw in Tehogo’s room – the stuff he has stolen from the hospital – and after Frank learns about it, he feels suffocated by the summer heat: “It was a still and airless night, warm with returning summer, and I felt suddenly how hard it was to breathe” (168). Within the terms of the novel’s pathetic fallacy, the oppressive weather on that night reflects Frank’s heavy feelings, and vice versa.

However, the one striking natural element that Galgut quite skilfully exploits in both novels is that of grass and weeds. Grass is a constant recurring element in the books which has a similar allegorical meaning in both. It always comes down to weeds being a symbol of South Africa or rather of its past which keeps crawling back and which cannot be utterly destroyed and forgotten. There are two major occurrences where weeds come up in that sense. The first one is when Laurence decides to take it upon himself to clean up the hospital and on one of the days which the ordeal takes, he starts cutting the grass in the open plot. The staff’s reaction to seeing Laurence do so is finding it laughable. They are amused when looking at Laurence

attempt to perform an impossible task. After he is done, Frank asks him if he is satisfied by what he has accomplished, and Laurence, though he says he is, does not look so pleased. The next day, he goes up to the roof and pulls out the weeds there. The weeds here might function as traces of the Apartheid which Laurence is trying to pull out in order for the hospital – and therefore symbolically the country – to move forward and leave the past behind. Conversely, the Brigadier has staff taking care of his old house as well as of the lawn. After he was sent running because he was caught committing fraud, his house was emptied and his belongings were searched and confiscated. Therefore, he does not live there, which is why Frank is compelled by the fact that the Brigadier still makes sure that his old house is taken care of, mainly the garden. The Brigadier says that if he does not do it himself, nobody will come here and take care of the garden for him. "Who will cut the grass?" (112), he asks, meaning who will keep his memory alive, the memory of what he has done for the country, according to him. The Brigadier is holding on for dear life to the power he used to hold and this power was the highest during the Apartheid. "I am not past. My time is coming still" (112), the Brigadier says before Frank and Zanele leave his house. The Brigadier refuses to let go of the past and refuses for the country to go further leaving its past behind.

b. *The Impostor*

In *The Impostor*, too, the novel's setting tends to reflect aspects of the character's moods. Galgut takes his readers around a town and through his descriptions of the buildings and nature, he evokes other silent dimensions of the story. The epigraph of the novel, "Your hinterland is there", is a quotation which can be found in Cape Town on a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, a British imperialist politician who was the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in the late 19th century. The "you" addressed here is obviously the category of white people. Rhodes quickly became the richest man in the western world after arriving in South Africa. His aim was for England to rule over the world. The fact that Rhodes' statue still stands in Cape Town is part of South Africa's colonial legacy and white supremacy. Rhodes points to the North and proclaims to his fellow white people: "Your hinterland is there," claiming the country as the dominion of white people. Galgut's decision to open the novel with this epigraph sets the tone for the rest of the novel, in which the setting very much remains the preserve of the whites. I will, in this part, discuss the town in the Karoo as well as its landscapes and climate, the houses of the main characters – Adam, Blom and Canning – and the grass and weeds.

The town where the story unfolds is located in the Karoo, although it is not known exactly where it is. The Karoo is a semi-desert area in the south of the country. When Adam

decides to go on a literary retreat to find himself inspired by beautiful landscapes to write his poems, he chooses the Karoo as his destination. One of the first things which strike him as he arrives is how segregated the town still is. The white town is on one side of the river with its beautiful houses and its large spaces, and the township on the other side, with neglected shacks piled up on one another, as ordained by the "old racial division" (29):

> The obvious irony here is that the "old racial division" which strikes Adam as ahistorical and atemporal is clear evidence of the extent to which history has irrevocably imprinted itself on the landscape. His aesthetic pastoralism is thus shown to rely on an act of wilful blindness which has a troubling ethical consequence: it naturalises politically engineered inequalities and places them beyond the ambit of human intervention; they simply appear "as preordained as the weather." (Kostelac 2020: 46)

Adam feels that he has stepped into the past, looking at the place as if the Apartheid was not over for, from the comfort of his Johannesburg apartment and then Cape Town house, he did not see how things really were in the rest of the country. Indeed the place is still segregated because of social inequalities, themselves deeply rooted in the previous racial inequalities of the country. Adam sees South Africa through a beautifying lens, which makes it difficult for him to realise the harshness of the conditions in which most people live. He believes these inequalities are much like the natural world, they were not decided for, they are the product of fate.

What Adam feels as he arrives in the Karoo is disappointment. He does not like the reality which is in front of him. He came for beautiful nature to inspire his pastoral poetry, and was instead served with a lesson. What strikes him at first is the sense of emptiness. Although he had already passed through the Karoo, he had never paid full attention until the reason for his visit was to write about it. When he considers it, he tries to imagine what his poems might look like. He says that this landscape is not African but rather like an "airless planet" or like "the bottom of the ocean" (25). There is basically nothing for Adam to write about or to admire. The town is depressing, uncared for, there are still Christmas lights hanging from the previous year (see 6). He feels almost betrayed by the land because he did not get what he expected when moving to the Karoo. As he explores the town, Adam feels "trapped somewhere that was nowhere" (29). He is dissatisfied in how his new South African dream is nothing but an illusion. He feels it is the "wrong landscape", which he says he cannot respond to because of its "arid spikiness" (40) as he calls it. His walks around the place do not bring him much inspiration but rather a painful writer's block and a naïve white South African eye opening:

> Adam's perception of the landscape here is in the tradition of the English-colonial poet, to whom the African landscape appears impenetrable, alien and desolate and whose intellectual, rather than physical, labour is required to "conceive not a social order capable of domesticating the landscape, but any kind of relation at all that consciousness can have with it" [quote from an article by Coetzee] (Kostelac 2020: 46)

Adam's complete estrangement in the Karoo is almost unsurprising due to his atemporal and apolitical view of the country. To him, South Africa is Cape Town and Johannesburg. He knows what he sees every day, rich white South African cities where rich – or middle class – white South Africans live. Adam expects the Karoo to provide him with inspiration, he sees it as an empty land of which he can take advantage without having to give anything in return, as a colonial poet.

The nature and climate of the town mirror the events as well as the emotions of the characters. For instance, after he and Baby – his muse and only source of inspiration for his poetry – start having an affair, quenching his long thirst and distant forbidden admiration for her, he cannot find it in him to write anymore. "The earth is tilting into winter […]. [Adam] wakes to a pale furring of frost on the ground […]. The poems have frozen in him too" (157). When Adam cannot blame his lack of inspiration on the external world anymore, he blames it on the woman he is having an affair with.

In one of the last scenes of the "Gondwana" part, Canning urges Adam to a meeting to tell him that there are people who are looking for him to kill him and that he consequently must flee for his life. During this scene, the sky is scarlet red, which "adds to his sense of intrigue and unease" (226). Adam wonders whether Canning was attempting to be dramatic when setting up the appointment at this time of the day when the sun sets and the shadows appear. "He is alone in a shadowy half-circle of gravel, littered with plastic bags and beer cans and used condoms, smelling of urine" (226 – 227). All these elements create a surreal atmosphere, dreamlike scenes filled with drama and peculiarity.

> What immediately strikes the reader about this novel is how Galgut manages to create a hallucinating and surreal atmosphere through superb realism and a peculiar attention to the material world: the interiors and exteriors of houses, commodities, cars, clothes, bodily accessories, but also environmental descriptions of nature and landscape. […] After the novel, the reader has the impression of having wandered through a hyper-real dream. (Borzaga 2020: 4)

The hyper-reality of the setting which Galgut sets in both novels is such that he can use it to switch the mood and to match with the events described in the novel. When the character suffers from writer's block, he is frozen like the weather; when he dramatically learns that there are people looking to kill him, the sky is scarlet red; and such instances of pathetic fallacy and hyper-real descriptions are used all through both novels.

The house in which Adam moves in the Karoo is in fact not his own but that of his brother Gavin. Gavin purchased the house when it was a popular thing to buy a house in the Karoo and he did so to please an old girlfriend. He bought the house for barely anything and never really used it. Houses in the novel are not simply places where the characters live but rather they play an important role in the character's fate and in the economy of the plot:

> Houses are not inert or passive either. Instead, they are depicted as relational and dynamic sites, invested with traumatic repressed material. Houses also function, in Galgut's novel, as character reflectors. They are metonymic of their psychic life; the ways the protagonists feel in their houses, transform them, destroy them, or compulsively clean them sheds light on the complicated and labyrinthine ways in which they struggle to cope with and/or resist their traumatic past. In other words, through their houses, characters spatialise and mediate their traumatic memory; their interiors speak of family secrets and intergenerational hauntings – of failed loves and neglect, loneliness and anger, humiliation and shame. (Borzaga 2020: 4)

The houses are so precisely described, they entirely contribute to the plot, they are part of the story and of the character's selves. They are external membranes of the characters and how they feel. The houses also hold a history to them and they convey implicit messages throughout the novel. The three main houses in the novel are Adam's house in the Karoo, his neighbour Blom's house, and Canning's house. All three of their houses tell the reader more about their inhabitants and their respective past than the dialogues themselves.

Adam's house is situated at the edge of the "white town" (6). It is in a very bad state, uncared for, and the air inside is dead and heavy (see 7). Adam's first reaction is utter shock, but the state of the house enters his consciousness by degrees (see 10). He does not directly realise or understand the extent of how bad a state the house is in. Between the flies, the fumes and the stink, the inside of the house is very uninviting to the point where even Gavin seems to have forgotten how bad it was. There is dust everywhere, there is no power and many weird noises can be heard every now and then (see 9). When the night comes, Adam feels very uneasy in the house. He feels it to be charged with the past, potentially even with ghosts as Charmaine

suggested with her theories of presences in the house. “It was as if another person, from another time, was buried under his skin” (9). The house feels so charged that Adam feels that he is haunted by a ghost of the past, as if he had moved in somewhere he did not belong. He decides to sleep on the back porch to be outside of the house for the night. The back yard itself is also neglected and abandoned. Gavin says that he feels “depressed” (8) about this when they step outside into the back yard:

> He had opened the back door out of the kitchen. There was a small cement stoep, from which steps led down, and then the yard stretched away. It was choked with tall brown weeds that had died long ago and set solidly in the baked ground. They were thorny, massed together into an impenetrable wall. For some reason, those weeds were overwhelming. All the neglect and abandonment took form in them. There was a tall windmill and concrete dam to one side, but they were diminished and eclipsed by the weeds. (8)

The one element in the back yard which strikes the eye is the weeds. Indeed, the weeds play a rather important and prominent part throughout the novel, just as in *The Good Doctor*. Adam goes on a constant battle against his back yard, trying to overcome it and bring it all under control. When he starts cleaning up the house for the first time, he feels a sense of relief and satisfaction. He feels it is important to rearrange the furniture, push the dust out and thoroughly clean the house. The weeds, “massed like a besieging army,” feel like an “enemy to overcome” (27) to Adam, even more so than the inside of the house.

At first, Adam finds it in himself to clean the house every week but soon afterwards he starts to let it go (45). The house has taken over Adam, to the point where he starts to humanise it. He feels like the house is a person and that it talks back at him. Throughout the novel, the voices follow him even outside of the house but his first thought is to associate the voice with the house:

> So he was alone, but he didn’t feel alone. He remembered what Charmaine had said about the house; about presences. […] It was more the accumulation of tiny signs into a single presence: […] of the house itself, made of time and neglect and leftover intentions. (46)

However, Adam does not directly fall into illogical thoughts but rather rationalises it directly and laughs it off as a game:

> It wasn’t real, of course. […] It moved around the house as he did, behind him or off to one side, watching him. Listening. (46)

Adam takes it a step further and starts speaking to the house, imagining a dialogue where the house answers him and they have a conversation:

> He began speaking to it. Not in a serious way […] 'Hey, are you there?' he might say. […]
> Then he imagined how it might answer. *Yes, I'm here. Always here. Reading you loud and clear*. (46 – 47)

As Adam rationalises the voice he heard and decides to almost put it behind him. The last person to speak in the dialogue is still the voice of the house even though Adam has rejected it:

> 'I'm the only one here,' he announced. Very loudly, so that the words rang back at him. He listened after the echo. Nobody answered.
> *Except me*. (47)

Adam is ashamed of the state of the house. When Canning offers to pick Adam up at his house, he does not give him his real address and instead gives that of his neighbour Blom. When Canning does pick him up, he asks who lives "there", meaning in Adam's house, and Canning qualifies the house of "an eyesore" and suggests that Adam "should set fire to it by accident" (82).

Blom's house, on the other hand, is the total opposite of Adam's. His house is perfectly orderly, the garden is neatly taken care of. Adam is struck by the tidiness of his neighbour's house which is such a noticeable contrast with the decay and neglection of his own house. The way both houses are situated so close to the other and yet are in such a different state – one perfectly neat and the other barely habitable – almost reminds one of the differences between the white cities and the townships around them, contemplating life in the white middle class from their shacks, abandoned by the government. Adam is, however, not black nor is he part of the country's impoverished population – contrary to what he persuades himself. The neatness of Blom's house is a direct reflection of how anxious Blom is:

> Adam observes how he "slaves away furiously" and senses that there is something "febrile", "anxious", and "frenetic" (I 28) about his work. When he is not toiling in his garden, he is doing metalwork, making burglar bars and security gates. From a distance, his house looks like an "infernal industry" (*I* 28). (Borzaga 2020: 6)

Blom's anxiety can be sensed at the very first glance to his house. Once the paint is dry, he packs them up in his car and delivers them somewhere. All these suspicious elements find an explanation once Blom admits his secret to Adam about the witness protection program and the

atrocities he committed. Blom uses his house and his metalwork hobby as a therapeutic coping mechanism for the great fear he feels of being murdered.

Adam finds himself accepting Canning's invitation to visit his house. Canning lives out of town, in the country. There are mountains surrounding the house (59 – 60), emptiness and dust. Canning lives on his late father's game farm, a place prevalent in South Africa where farmers raise wildlife to eventually sell the animals to hunters or to sell them as food. Once they have passed the guarded gates, they drive along a path for ten minutes until they make a turn and the landscape entirely shifts. It feels to Adam like he has stepped onto a tropical island next to the emptiness of the town (see 62) and of the Karoo in general for in Gondwana, his stereotypical conceptions about pastoral Africa finally find a confirmation:

> The place is very strange. It is like an old colonial dream of refinement and exclusion, which should have vanished when the dreamer woke up. But here it is, solid and permanent (62).

Canning's house feels out of space and out of time to Adam who steps into an "old colonial dream" which plays in the South African way of having shockingly different landscapes so close to each other being segregated from each other. Canning's father named the game farm "Gondwana," like the supercontinent which fractured around 200 million years ago. When it broke up, the new world started to appear with all parts separated from the other and everything on the continents was disrupted. One might compare the fracture of Gondwana with the abolition of the Apartheid laws when the whole country was disrupted.

What surprises Adam after seeing the grandness of the game farm is how huge but empty Canning's house actually is. Canning takes the visitor on a house tour and Adam's first reaction is to feel that the place "should be jammed with people" (64) and he is therefore shocked at its emptiness:

> 'I don't understand,' he says. […] 'This whole place.' He gestures at what's around them.
>
> 'Ah.' Canning takes him literally. 'It's a bit of a geographical freak. Something to do with the mountains, a sort of microclimate in the kloof […]'
>
> 'I wasn't talking about the kloof.' […] 'The whole place.' (67)

Adam, who was already confused about Canning, is now even more confused about his house. He is unable to "understand" it, why it is so big yet so empty, lifeless. During all of Adam's sleepovers at Canning's house, although he gets more familiar with the place, it always feels like a somewhat peculiar place. One of the main surprises is that there are barely any animals on the actual game farm. Canning explains that when his father died, everything was poached

by people from the town as well as by the local community which Canning had paid to guard the farm from poachers, hence the emptiness. “The guards and the thieves were the same people – there’s South Africa in a nutshell” (116), he says with much cynicism.

The town where Adam resides contains another one of Canning’s projects: the “Nuwe Hoop” settlement, which is situated behind the toll booth of the new road. These “rows of replicated houses” (35) that were built to make up for his father’s eviction were “small and very basic”, even though “care had been taken over appearances”:

> It wasn’t quite poverty, but something close to it, dressed up as gentility and correctness – an impression deepened by the name on a board at the turn-off to the settlement: Nuwe Hoop. (35)

Adam seems to notice how this settlement looks like it is covering up for some wrongdoing. As later demonstrated (see 60), the settlement further indicates the exploitative nature of Canning’s endeavour, how everything he does has an ulterior motive which does not take into consideration the people affected by these efforts.

Many a time, Adam is asked about the weeds and about whether he has managed to remove them from his garden, to get rid of the “enemy” (27), the “besieging army” (27) in his back yard. The first person to advise him to take the weeds out is Fanie Prinsloo, the famous ex-rugby player. Prinsloo suggests he “get those weeds out the back” (31) and to “‘Get a boy to do it’ […]. ‘Hire yourself a couple of boys’” (31). The wording here is quite interesting for Fanie Prinsloo suggests a mode of operation confirming the white man in his traditional role of the master, by all means as if he, too, were finding it difficult to put the former regime behind.

Later, the mayor visits Adam to kindly ask him to get rid of his weeds. The first thing he says to Adam that he his “garden is a mess” (36) in a way which is “against municipal regulations” before even introducing himself as the mayor. According to these new regulations, the weeds and the “unwanted aliens” (37) – referring to the trees which are apparently not indigenous – must go. The mayor’s attitude gets on Adam’s nerves, notably when he calls him a “little man” (38). This attitude leads Adam to question his ability to be the mayor and to give out such orders. Adam shares the sentiment that he is feeling like “an unwanted alien” himself, just like the weeds and the non-indigenous trees.

Adam keeps pushing back his battle against the weeds in the garden. Gavin calls him rather regularly and almost every time he asks him about the weeds, which leaves Adam feeling “irritated” (48) by these conversations. In one of those conversations, he notices that the weeds “seem, somehow, more numerous than before, rustling and hissing, mocking him in a foreign tongue” (83). The weeds here appear as strangers making Adam feel that he does not belong on

this piece of ground, or that he is out of place. Gavin suggests to Adam that "clearing out the weeds" (83) would be a good way "to mark a new beginning, advancing that if the weeds are a symbol of the Apartheid, South Africa had better get rid of everything which reminds them of the regime if they want to move forward.

When Adam gets to work on the yard, he realises he is not doing the work thoroughly. He is only breaking off the stems at the base, "leaving the roots buried" (84). Adam tackles it superficially, not looking at what lies under the ground. Adam only cleans out the weeds he can see, not worrying that they might grow back. Blom, on the other hand, perfectly knows his way around weeds. His garden is immaculate and when he manages to converse with Adam, he offers to fix his windmill so that the grass can get muddier and the weeds would lift out more easily. Once he does so, the weeds come out of the ground the next morning with "no resistance" (88). However, after a while, the weeds start growing back from a patch of ground which Adam had cleared:

> But it will: the future is encoded in its cells. It's the water that's done it – the same water he'd used to soften the ground. Generations of seeds are lying dormant under the surface, waiting for his labours to release them. The very means of clearing the yard is what will fill it again. He has a melancholy insight into powers that he cannot understand: there are thousands and thousands of weeds, a rising green tide made of numbers and fecundity, and through them an intelligence is at work, larger than each individual plant, replenishing itself through secret strategy.
>
> He's distracted from these metaphysical qualms by the abrupt appearance of his neighbour at the fence. (109)

This excerpt is the closest the metaphors have gotten to explicitness. Taking the weeds as the Apartheid, Adam seems to believe that the problems which have arisen with years of colonisation and of racial segregation are now encoded into the country, steering the future of South Africa. Adam would then suggest that there are generations of seeds, or of deep underlying consequences to the colonisation and Apartheid, which are "dormant under the surface" and which, once stimulated by what he used to fix the problem – the water – the problem becomes bigger from the very means which were used to tackle it in the first place. However, Adam feels foreign to it, he feels like he is not part of the problem and, on the contrary, he is a victim of the consequences. He believes that the weeds are working together against him in a "secret strategy" (109) to grow back and invade his personal space. Adam is interrupted in his chain of thoughts, or "metaphysical qualms" – which reinforces the idea that

his perception of the weeds goes beyond the sensible idea of weeds as their natural state, by Blom who is the symbol of the neat garden. Blom's garden would therefore allegorically represent his political stance in the post-Apartheid period:

> The seemingly "immaculate" state of Blom's house […] speaks of an impossible mediation, of the failed but re-enacted attempt to keep ghosts from the past at bay that are not easily put to rest. (Borzaga 2008: 7)

His house and garden both reveal his aim to "erase and forget" (Borzaga 2008: 7) everything that happened during the Apartheid (notably what he did), and this by any means necessary. Blom suggests that Adam use poison on the weeds to utterly destroy them from the roots (see 110). Adam is reticent to the idea for he does not want to soak the whole garden in poison and had rather instead pull out the weeds one by one. Adam's preference for a meticulous cleaning of the garden would then reveal his own political stance: an inclination towards solving problems one by one as they come even if it gets overwhelming rather than resolving them with one fatal solution.

Time goes by and the weeds fade out yet again of Adam's mind until Baby asks "What kind of future can you offer me?" (153). One of the first things that come to Adam's mind is "his back yard is still full of weeds", meaning that he cannot offer Baby any sort of luxury according to the state of his house and garden. Her words get in Adam's head and the little voice becomes insufferable. To mute it, Adam decides to tackle the weeds again, months after the last time he has tried to clear out the back yard. The following week, the weeds turn into an obsession. They are the only thing on his mind. Later on, Baby suggests – as a joke – that Adam kill Canning so that the two can live together freely. However, Adam cannot shake off the idea from his head and decides to pick up his battle against the weeds, as some sort of therapeutic activity (see 160). Every time Adam goes out to clear the weeds, he sees his neighbour Blom and inevitably associates the weeds with him. Although he tackles them regularly, there is always "a last remaining strip of them at the bottom" (173). When Adam drives to Cape Town for the launching party, Gavin asks again about the weeds. Adam says that in a couple of days he will be done clearing them and Gavin answers that he could now "plant something decent there" (175) replacing the ugly landscape of the weeds with something more pleasant to the eye.

Around the end of the section entitled "Gondwana", the weeds in Adam's garden have dried out so he decides to put them on fire:

> It's been a couple of weeks since the last rain, so the weeds have had time to dry out; the brown stalks roar, sprouting new leaves of flame. In the yellow

> conflagration, everything becomes one: no way to tell the difference between poetry and parasite. The hot heart of destruction lets exaltation loose in him; he has a primitive urge to dance, and does in fact caper a bit. But then becomes uneasy at the burning fragments that whirl away in spirals – the thatched roof is very close. (200)

Adam feels like he has finally won his battle against the weeds. However, he quickly feels troubled by the bonfire in front of him and therefore rushes inside to grab water and put out the fire. This circles back to his preference for less radical ways of cleaning his garden. Suddenly, the mayor appears as if from nowhere and angrily lectures him about fires close to residences. He threatens him with a fine and then agrees to forget about the incident because of the bribe he paid in Canning's name. At the end of Adam's stay in the Karoo, there are "new weeds […] growing with a fresh infusion of pace and power" (225). He has lost his battle against the weeds after all, he was unable to fix the problem and still they rise "like some insidious ambition" (225), which would suggest that, no matter how hard Adam tries, he never manages to put his life in order and, furthermore, that Adam's way of solving problems would not allow for a post-Apartheid South Africa in better shape.

5. The communities:

"Ebony and Ivory": The relationships between white men and black women and what they tell us about power dynamics; on Maria, Zanele and Baby

In 1949, the Apartheid government voted a new law, The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, which forbade marriages between "whites" and "non-whites" in the country. These prohibitions have reshaped the already unbalanced power dynamics in South African interracial relationships. These Apartheid laws have normalised monoracial relationships in the country and even after these laws were abolished, they continued to have a hold on the country's psyche. Across the racial spectrum, interracial relationships were often viewed as unimaginable or as unacceptable. Being in an interracial relationship is also a symbol of a non-racial country which, to many South Africans, was – and sometimes remains to this day – inconceivable. To some black South Africans, welcoming a white person into the family can be seen as welcoming the oppressor, or the enemy, into their home. For romantic as well as non-romantic relationships, the country's past has shaped the way people of different races interact with each other and view each other. Nelson Mandela was a defender of the idea of forgiveness which, to those who followed his lead, helped rewrite how some South Africans interrelated with compatriots of different races. The relationships which will be discussed in this chapter are interracial heterosexual relationships between white men and black women.

It can be argued that black women – in South Africa and around the world – have often been exoticised as well as eroticised through the (mainly white) male gaze. Black women have tended to be viewed through their hypersexualised physical appearance. In both novels, black women have either been portrayed as useless and hypocritical (Dr Ngema), as exotic and sexual (Maria and Baby), or as imposturous (Zanele). This chapter will, however, mostly deal with three women: Maria, Zanele (*The Good Doctor*) and Baby (*The Impostor*), and with their involvement in more or less romantic affairs with white men. One thing which strikes the reader is how these women only exist through the male's respective gazes. Galgut barely ever gives them a voice or an individual storyline. Maria, Zanele and Baby's entire identities are determined by the white men of the stories as well as their experiences with them, to the point where even their names are often fake (either Europeanised or even Africanised in the case of Zanele). In the novels, probably intentionally, these three women are reduced to a poor stereotype of an exoticised woman who does not have an existence of her own but rather only

exists through a white man. This is the case in *The Good Doctor* with two black women, Maria and Zanele, who have a relationship or some sexual intercourse with a white man, though their profiles are very distinct from each other.

a. Maria (with Frank; *The Good Doctor*)

Out of the three women on which this chapter focuses, Maria is the one about whom the reader knows the least. She is introduced as a store owner living in a small shack on the side of a road. Most of what the reader learns about Maria is from her experiences and interactions with Frank. Maria works as an extension of Frank's plot, as if he were only exploring a slice of his (sexual) life, using a stranger for his own release and experience. Consequently, Maria's worth is only determined by Frank and by what she provides to him.

A surprising fact is how Laurence directly assumes that Frank has slept with Maria the first time he sees her. This reaction either originates from how the two behaved together in the same room due to some potential sexual tension, even though it is never explicitly mentioned in the novel; or it originates from Laurence's white male preconception of the black woman as a prey to the white man, so that their sexual mating is considered only natural. This speaks a great deal about the power dynamics of interracial heterosexual relationships between a white man and a black woman. However, Frank is startled by Laurence's unexpected question which serves to enhance the almost inevitable quality of a form of exploitation that he typically refuses to acknowledge.

The first time that Frank and Maria met was two years prior. Frank regarded her then as an inanimate object. Maria was, next to the other "things" displayed in the store, "one more thing to look at" (22). The way this sentence is worded also holds much meaning: the use of the demonstrative determiner "this" objectifies the subject. Out of the context, the sentence "this was one more thing to look at" would not lead the reader to believe that the determiner refers to a person. The first time that Frank sees Maria, he does not see her for who she is but rather he sees an object of lust, something in a store which he could buy and take home with him. Moreover, Frank looks at Maria rather than seeing her. He looks at her clothes and her bare feet:

> Wearing that same red dress, *maybe*, her feet bare. […] 'I'm just *looking*.' '*Looking* is free.' 'Yes,' I said. Or *maybe* none of this was said, *maybe* her dress was black. I don't remember any of it. I don't even have an image of her face from that first day. (22; emphasis added)

The use and repetition of the adverb "maybe" underlines the uncertainty of Frank's recollection for, after all, none of this matters to him. Maria is to him of little importance, she is but a piece of flesh. She is an attraction, something pretty to look at for free, something whose face is not memorable enough for him to recall. Frank sets foot in Maria's shack and colonises with his gaze all that constitutes the shack, he objectifies it all and desires to lay claim to it. The little regard Frank displays towards Maria and her shack attests to how the white man perceives Africa and black Africans: i.e., as a potential property.

After this altercation, Frank asked Maria her name and was astounded by the Latin-sounding name. Taken aback, Frank naturally asked whether this was her "real name," indeed her "African name" (23) and Maria's reaction to the reiteration is one of disappointment or shame. Her eyes dropped, her face closed as she repeated: "Maria". According to Frank, "[t]he name was wrong on her, it didn't fit into her mouth" (23). He had rather she had said a more African-sounding or maybe a less European sounding name. However, Frank "liked the demure determination with which she'd set up this little barrier" (23). Somehow, the fact that Maria wishes to hide her "real name" comes off as exciting to Frank who, at this point, sees Maria as nothing but an attraction. For an African person to use a European name for their identity is a clear indication of a postcolonial mentality construct. The African psyche was utterly and profoundly impacted by European imperialism to the extent that some Africans are yet to de-Europeanise themselves. Some claim that naming an African child with a – considered – European name can be a step backwards from the de-Europeanisation of Africa. In an interview with Claudia Nsono, the Kenyan politician and human rights activist Koigi wa Wamwere advances the Pan-Africanist idea that people should want to change their names to an African name "so that they could be […] as African as they could". The name Maria is a Latin name which gained popularity with the spread of Christianity as the name of Jesus' mother. Although it found its origin in the Middle East, Christianity is often associated to Europe and, therefore, Maria is often perceived as a European name. When an African person uses a European name instead of an African name, it can be received as an attempt to conceal one's African identity:

> Eloff's lover Maria is more complex, but even so passes beyond anonymity with difficulty. Her name is not really Maria; the villagers with whom she lives do not recognise it; her real name remains unknown to Eloff and so to the reader. In this important respect, a European construct masks her aboriginal identity. (Barris 2005: 36)

Barris argues that Maria's African identity is being censored not only by the fact that she introduces herself as Maria but also by the fact that she refuses to tell her real name. Maria

seems to be the name she gives to strangers – or maybe to white people – for the people with whom she lives do not recognise it as one of her names and, when Frank asks them for Maria, nobody knows whom he is referring to. Maria's hiding of her real name and, therefore, of her real identity allows her, on the one hand, to keep some anonymity and, on the other hand, it contributes to her almost non-existence. Maria's anonymity is such that to the reader as well as to Frank in the beginning of their relationship, it is almost as if Maria did not exist or as if she was not human. Instead, her pseudonym makes her real existence irrelevant and reduces her worth as a human being in the eyes of Frank.

The way Frank and Maria communicate contains a notable barrier. The first time they talk, Frank says that it is not a conversation but rather a sort of enquiry where he asks the questions and she simply answers. Frank claims that he wants "to know everything" (23) about her. However, Maria's English does not seem much advanced for she speaks "in half-words and mime", which fascinates Frank who calls it a "language of signals and signs" (23). The fact that Frank and Maria are not able to communicate properly also plays a role in how their relationship evolves. Frank is unbothered by this fact for, up to that point, Maria is still only a pretty object to look at and her way of speaking is fascinating to him:

> Despite his "disturbingly powerful" (28) attraction to Maria, for example, Frank admits that it "suited me […] that we weren't able to talk in any real way. We came together for the primal, intimate act, while keeping a huge distance open between us" (28). (Kostelac 2017: 48)

The fact that the couple can barely talk is even welcome for Frank who is not looking for anything serious but rather for a regular escape from his boring life. Frank finds comfort in his oblivion and ignorance of Maria. He likes "not knowing much about her" (25) for it brings him relief not to have to worry about whether she is married with no wedding ring. This "wordless obsession" (25) is Frank's way of distancing himself emotionally from Maria, of using her and her body for his own needs. That way, he can simply stay disconnected and enjoy the company of a woman:

> Frank makes no attempt to connect on a personal level with his black mistress: she is just an object to gratify his sexual needs and the silence between them suits him. (Lenz & Wenzel: 149)

His easy affair with Maria is a matter of leisure, a simple and unrestricted activity which he can indulge to his own liking. Frank's absence of obligation to verbally communicate with Maria is only beneficial. Moreover, the fact that Frank is the only one who can hold a proper discussion

in English gives him a sense of power over the conversation as well as over the relationship. Maria depends on Frank, notably on the money he gives her in exchange for sex.

Frank and Maria's main activity together is in fact sex. "The sex was quick and urgent" (25), as Frank describes it, even before he knew that she was married. Then, Frank saw danger in his affair with Maria and he liked it. Their intercourse happened "half-clothed, always with an element of fear" (25). Frank never gives the reader a reason for his own fear because the first time they have sexual intercourse, Frank does not know that Maria is married for she does not wear a wedding ring. While Maria fears that her husband could arrive to the shack at any time and catch them in the act, Frank has something of an irrational fear before learning about her marriage:

> Exploring the "illicit and intense" (26) other side of himself in his relationship with Maria, Dr Eloff navigates historical, racial and intra- and interpersonal boundaries. (Lenz & Wenzel: 143)

Frank uses Maria and their intense sexual affairs as a self-exploratory experience in which he plays with the border between the allowed and the forbidden. He perilously enjoys Maria's company and, in doing so, relishes the danger into which he places himself. Maria is a black woman whom he is allowed to colonise without having to ask for permission or consent which she would anyway not be able to verbally give and he would probably not be able to nonverbally recognise. When they are both done with the sexual act, Frank would give her some money as a compensation in what Frank calls their "transactions" (28). At other times, Maria would even ask for it:

> I started to doubt everything. I had a lot of questions: that first night, when she'd told me to come back later, what was going on in her mind? All the times I'd come here, looking for comfort and relief, had she been looking for something else? Was money the motive all along? (28)

Money is one of the things which separate Frank and Maria. While Frank receives the salary of a doctor, he has very little financial responsibility and he seems to not be spending too much apart for the money he gives to Maria. She, on the other hand, is "very poor; she has nothing" (28). This detail stirs anxiety in Frank to the point where he starts to doubt everything. Since the moment money entered the equation, Maria has become a source of stress to him. He sees the widening of an inevitable gap between him and Maria: "Money couldn't close the gap; it was the gap" (28). This realisation changes the course of his affair with Maria. In an instant, Frank becomes filled with insecurities about the nature of their relationship, about her intentions and about the accuracies of everything she said about herself:

> Oh, there was an element of craziness to my thinking, I knew that. But my suspicion and mistrust were boundless; as big, in fact, as my own dishonesty. (29)

Frank cannot help but feel anxious at the idea that Maria might not be interested in him after all and that she only agrees to see him for the sake of the money involved.

Frank starts going to see Maria in the daytime, "in a normal way" (29), so as to – according to him – do "the proper thing". In doing so, their affair supposedly takes a turn towards something closer to a serious extramarital relationship – for both of them since Frank is also still legally married at that stage. Frank obsesses over Maria to the point where he finds himself spying on her for entire days, observing the shack from a safe distance. This affair has become everything Frank did not want it to be: work. He feels the need to learn everything he can about Maria and the only way for him to do that with the certainty that what he learns is not a lie is by observing it through his own eyes. However, as his investigation turns out to be a failure, Frank comes to accept that his once exciting night-time liaison has only become "an ordinary daytime affair" (29). Frank observes that there is no "clear climactic moment" anymore in their get-togethers. Instead, his "weird romance" has become "ordinary", "as real as [his] life." Therefore, with the very source of his excitement gone, Frank gradually ceases to visit Maria:

> In his mind, his involvement with Maria has changed from a clandestine affair into a real relationship. His sense of obligation and responsibility towards her increases to "an obscure weight of guilt" (160), which testifies to his self-confrontation and personal growth. Frank begins to look at Maria through different lenses. She is no longer an abstract problem or an other "on the side somewhere"; Maria is "solid and warm and real, a human body" (171) he has slept with. (Lenz & Wenzel: 149 – 150)

As soon as Maria becomes human in Frank's eyes, and as soon as she begins to matter to him, Frank flees the situation. He can only benefit from her if she does not exist or if he does not care about her existence. Therefore, Frank decides to stop meeting her for a while – until the "while" extends for years – in order for their reunion to be more intense and for things to be "like when [they had] started" (30). After he and Laurence visit Maria's shack, Frank starts seeing Maria at night again every once in a while, as had been his plan all along.

When Frank and Maria reunite sexually, something has changed in the way they have sexual intercourse. Frank claims it is "hard and brutal and hungry" (58), and his theory is that the whole romantic aspect of their get-togethers has vanished and left its place for something

more animal. The sex is rough but not violent. Frank's position is always on top, as if asserting some sort of power over a submissive Maria. "I held her down," Frank claims when describing their intercourse, he pushes himself on top of her and penetrates her roughly with no tenderness whatsoever. They "didn't really touch each other", their act is devoid of any romance or warmth:

> I paid her every time now. And that's what it was: a payment. Our meetings were transactions, the limits of which were practical. When we did talk it was about arrangements. A couple of times she warned me not to come on particular nights. I accepted these restrictions without letting them conjure any personal feelings. (58)

This time, Frank is utterly distancing himself from Maria, having learnt the lesson that his attachment to her only brought him anxiety and took away the passion of their meetings. They barely talk about themselves, and the only times they do is when Maria tells Frank not to meet her on certain specific nights because her husband will be around.

However, Frank finds himself falling into bad habits. As he visits Maria one evening, he does not feel any sexual desire towards her but instead has a feeling which he can only describe as "subversive" and "strange" (80). As their bodies detach, Maria notices the sudden distance and asks Frank if something is wrong. Frank suggests that they talk instead of having sex. For once, he asks her questions he had already asked her the first times they got together in this fashion. Maria is indignant at these reiterations from the past and Frank's distressed response is to remind her that the door is open if she wants to take it, which she understands as a suggestion. The language barrier is set back up, and they cease to understand what the other means:

> But she shook her head. 'I don't want this talking,' she said, and rolled over on to me. She'd heard, perhaps, a false note in my voice, and her hands moved me back into the old, true tracks of habit. And nothing was different after all. (81)

Maria, again, refuses to talk, especially about herself and her life, preferring to stay in total anonymity and to keep things with Frank exclusively sexual. This remains identical as before, a matter of history repeating itself. As Frank concludes, nothing has changed from before, he has fallen back into his old self, and Maria just reacted exactly as she did the first time this happened.

One evening, after his affair with Laurence's girlfriend, Zanele, Frank meets Maria at her shack and her reaction is unusual for she questions him on why he has not come for a couple

of days. For the first time, Maria shows herself emotionally vulnerable. After a while, Frank notices that she is bruised and concludes that the reason she asked why he had not come sooner was because she had been in some form of danger. When Maria sheds a tear, Frank instinctively moves closer to comfort her but she, however, turns away from him to hide the bruises. Maria asks Frank to go as she warns him of a "danger" and a "problem" (118) and Frank obeys:

> I stood up, dusting off my knees, feeling awkward and ashamed. Because I didn't know what else to do, I fished in my pocket for money. I held it out to her: fifty rand. But tonight, for the first time, she didn't want it; she seemed almost not to see it; she shook her head again. It was something else she wanted. (119)

This time, Maria seeks Frank's presence, she asks him to come the following night – which he does not do because he feels certain that she will always be available: "I knew the shack would still be there, whenever I was ready to go" (131). This suggests that even when Frank feels an emotional connection to Maria, he still sees her as an inferior and a distraction, which he can use to his own liking without caring about her. When Laurence comes to Frank with the loaded news of Maria's pregnancy, he does not feel any fear that he may be the father. He instantly assumes that Maria has asked Laurence for an abortion which Frank seems perfectly fine with. Frank appears indifferent to the situation, as well as to how Maria must be feeling. Still, he drives to the shack to meet her even though he does not know what to say to her.

As Frank arrives at the shack, Maria's husband's car is parked there so he decides to wait until he leaves. However, Frank falls asleep in the car and has "a strange dream" (160) about Maria. In the dream, Frank and Maria are very close emotionally and he asks her to flee to the city with him to get married. However, Maria seems reticent at the idea as she shakes her head and Frank feels helpless:

> Albeit in the abstract space of the dream world, Frank is able to evolve beyond "the resigned fatalism that has crippled him until now" (Titlestad 112), navigate the division between self and other and assume a more inclusive identity. (Lenz & Wenzel: 150)

The dimension of the unconscious has allowed Frank to see things more clearly as he learns about himself that he wishes to leave everything behind to leave with Maria. However, in the dream, as well as in reality, Maria shows herself reticent vis-à-vis emotional closeness and she seems unwilling to forego everything to leave with Frank.

When Laurence gets ready to go to Maria's shack to perform the abortion, Frank insists on going and doing it himself. However, when Frank arrives at the location, the shack has

vanished. The sight of the pale square where the shack used to be is a scene of horror to Frank. For the first time, he loses the insurance that "the shack would still be there, whenever [he] was ready to go" (131):

> When Maria and the shack vanish, the doctor suddenly registers the other absences of attachment in his life (Jacobs 95). This produces an extreme anguish in him – an anguish that is "like the first feeling ever to touch him: its rawness, its power, [is] almost like love" (173). (Lenz & Wenzel: 150)

Frank now realises how much Maria means to him by her very absence. Her disappearance is a wake-up call to Frank who now feels a feeling which resembles love. He makes it the centre of his attention and it becomes his main goal to find Maria, may it be out of guilt or a semblance of love. When a man comes to the hospital to tell him that Maria is alive and to show him where she is, Frank does not get the reunion he was expecting. Once he manages to explain to the people behind the hut that he is looking for a woman called Maria – which is not her real name – she eventually shows up and turns sharply away at the sight of him before leaving:

> But she is alive […]. She had sat at the core of my life, like a cryptic symbol, but to her I was just a background detail, bringing mystery and disturbance. I would never see her again, but she is alive. (213)

Frank makes peace with the fact that she is alive and that they will probably never see each other ever again. He believes that while Maria has taken up all the space in his life, he was only a "background detail" to her.

b. Zanele (with Laurence and Frank; *The Good Doctor*)

The first time the reader is made aware of Zanele's existence is in the fifth chapter when Laurence puts out a photo of her as well as a couple of decorative objects with an emotional significance to them. At the sight of the photograph, Frank instantly knows that the "small black woman" (43) is Laurence's significant other. For the first time, Frank shows some interest for Laurence and asks him about Zanele. Zanele met Laurence whilst she was doing some volunteer work in the Sudan and from then on, they have led a long-distance relationship which seems to bring them a sense of reassurance in their non-obligation to hold any regular intimacy, according to Frank. In that sense, their relationship comes off as imposturous and Zanele herself appears to be misleading in more than one way. On the day of her arrival, during the welcoming party, Zanele emerges decorated with a "bright West African dress" (85). However, as she speaks her first words to Frank, the American accent startles him into muteness. "[I]t was a shock" for Frank "to realise, after all the occasions when she'd been mentioned, that she wasn't

African" (86). It is almost as if Laurence liked the idea that people would think that Zanele was African:

> [Laurence] refers to his black girlfriend by her recently adopted African name Zanele, so that people will assume that she is African, as this fits his narrative idyll of the multicolored South Africa, while – in fact – her name is Linda and, in order to wash off her American, middle-class guilt, she actively embraces her African roots by doing volunteer work in Sudan, braiding her hair and wearing bright West African clothes. (Cabarcos-Traseira 2005: 48)

Cabarcos-Traseira seems to argue that although Zanele has chosen the name for herself and dresses according to her own will, Laurence is the one who overplays Zanele's "adopted" Africanness for it supports his peaceful multicoloured South African utopia. When Frank asks Laurence for an explanation, he is surprised that Frank should conclude that Zanele was African as he claims that he never said she was. Laurence seems to ambiguously mislead people into thinking that his girlfriend is African in order for his own narrative to succeed. When this conversation shifts, Laurence asks Frank for a favour: he wants him to hang out with Zanele for a while during his duty. Frank is taken aback by the demand because Laurence could easily change his shift – the hospital is anything but a busy place. Laurence and Zanele agree for him not to change his shift because "work comes first for both of [them]" (88), which serves to question the nature of their relationship, whether they are together for love or rather to support their multicoloured South African utopia. When the party is over, Laurence takes Zanele back to her hotel room and instead of staying with his long-distance girlfriend whom he has not seen in over a month, he stays with her for a few minutes before going back to the hospital:

> Their relationship was just another idea – dry and sensible, like everything they did. And they had started to realise it too. Which is why she and I were sitting at this table now, while Laurence was a kilometre away, doing a shift he didn't need to do. (97)

To Frank, Zanele and Laurence's relationship is but an apathetic cover and Frank believes that they are both aware of it which is what explains their distance even in their current situation of proximity. Zanele confesses that she does not find any happiness in her relationship and that she believes that neither does Laurence. When Zanele leaves, she and Laurence only spend a few minutes together before she drives back to Lesotho (115). After a while, he receives a letter from her in which she ends the relationship (129). Laurence's reaction is quite abstruse and ambiguous for at first, he seems to show some "distant pain" (129) after reading the letter, but then shrugs and tells Frank: "The funny thing is, I don't care too much. You think you love

something so badly, but when it's gone you find out you don't care so much" (130). Laurence now appears emotionless to the loss of Zanele, confirming the hypothesis that Laurence appreciated the idea of Zanele more than Zanele herself.

Frank's own relationship with Zanele is one which is worth mentioning, too. The two are brought together not by chance but because of Laurence's demand for a favour. After insisting on covering Laurence's shift so he could spend some time with his girlfriend, Frank accepted to spend some time with Zanele to the face of Laurence's repeated refusal. When he picks her up at her hotel that night, Frank notices that Zanele has "taken some trouble to look good" (95) by wearing some make-up and "another of those West African suits", whereas he has not paid any effort to his appearance for, to him, this is but a friendly get-together which comes close to babysitting. As they sit across each other, Frank recognises that it was not "so unpleasant sitting opposite a pretty face, whisky in hand" (95), which is when he realises that he is enjoying himself in Zanele's presence. During their conversation, Frank learns that Zanele's real name is Linda and that she comes from "middle America somewhere" (95). Although Zanele tries hard to cover up her Americanness and her past to leave it all behind, Frank notices that "she had the manner and confidence of another continent completely" (96). However hard Zanele tries to appear African from the outside, her Americanness fails her from the inside out. During their conversation, Frank gets annoyed by Zanele's hero complex and how she diminishes the work that Frank does for the hospital. As Zanele shows herself similar to Laurence in their naïvety, Frank in a burst of anger decides to give her a sense of crude reality which resolves in Zanele leaving the table, fuming. It seems that Frank feels a certain discomfort in the way he feels about his own Africanness because when someone, Zanele in this case, imposes themselves and misrepresents themselves as African, Frank reacts in a surly way. Where he feels uncomfortable in his position in a post-Apartheid South Africa, Zanele seems to bring out this discomfort in her way of embracing a certain outer Africanness which feels very off to Frank since she is American and therefore has, in his opinion, no right to pretend otherwise.

After a short while, the tension gives way to guilt and Frank walks up to Zanele's room to beg for her forgiveness. When Frank manages to crawl his way to pardon, he and Zanele have a moment of gentleness and honesty. Zanele suggests they go on an adventure together to leave the messy emotions behind them. She evokes the Brigadier's old house as a potential adventure destination. Although he is reticent because of the danger of this idea, Frank accepts because he "wanted to make her happy" (103). When they meet the Brigadier in his old house, Zanele is fascinated:

> I didn't exist for them. Since our little walk had begun, he hadn't once looked at me. She was his sympathetic ear. And I felt for her a rising revulsion that was not unconnected with desire. (111)

Either Frank feels revulsion towards Zanele because she is socialising with an old enemy, or because her attention has shifted to another man than him. The revulsion is connected to desire, as Frank claims, which leads to believe that in that instant, Frank sees Zanele not only as Laurence's irritating girlfriend anymore but like a woman who is not giving him attention he believes he deserves from her and who, in that way, poses a challenge: that of gaining back her attention and therefore some power over her. Frank faces a competitor in his search for Zanele's full attention and he feels frustrated in his desire for her as well as in his desire to colonise her. Once their adventure is over, Frank drives Zanele back to her hotel room:

> As I stopped outside Mama's place, I had a moment of dry-mouthed uncertainty: was the silence empty with failure, or heavy with possibility? But as I turned towards her I knew. She was turning towards me too. Our mouths locked hotly. And even then – before the climb up the stairs, the room with the hard little bed – all the echoes from the evening were with us, so that more than two people were grappling together there in the dark. (113 – 114)

Frank has won, in his mind, and proceeds to have intercourse with the woman he has decided to set his claws on. For having been intimate with his friend's girlfriend, he feels very little guilt and even when it starts to grow in him (see 115), it does not last for very long.

c. Baby (with Kenneth and Adam; *The Impostor*)

Baby is a notable and ambiguous character in *The Impostor*. She is Kenneth Canning's trophy second wife, a black woman about ten years younger than him. When she first comes into the picture, the scene is written cinematically as she turns around to face the focalisation, in front of a beautiful sunset (see 62 – 63). Baby almost appears as part of the landscape, even though she remarkably stands out of the background with her transcendent beauty.

Canning first met Baby when she was working as a high-class escort in Johannesburg (see 126) although she prefers saying that they met through a "mutual friend" (92). When asked by Adam whether it was love at first sight, she mysteriously answers "something like that" (93), leaving doubt hanging over the issue. Canning and Baby's relationship is quite interesting. When he picks up Adam to drive him to Gondwana, he shows off his "newest baby" (58): a brand-new car. Interestingly enough, Canning names his latest purchase the same as his wife's name, Baby. This leads one to believe that Canning sees his wife as one of his purchases, as

something beautiful he acquired to show off. In the same spirit, when Canning introduces her to Adam, he does so by praising her and by asking him for his opinion on her, "proudly" (63). "What do you think?" he asks, before adding a comment about how amazing his wife is. After that, Canning lingers around her for a second too long which makes Baby uncomfortable:

> [Canning] stands there, smiling fixedly, appearing almost desperate, staring at his wife as if he's the one who's just met her. She pulls the coat tighter around herself and gives a languid little shrug, before turning around and gazing into the distance. (63 – 64)

Baby's body language shows some discomfort at her husband's behaviour towards her, which triggers the reader into questioning the nature of their relationship. After showing Adam around the house, Canning asks him unclearly if he is surprised by his wife. When asked for a clarification, Canning explains: "because she's black" (65). While Adam believes that this is "the least surprising thing about her", Canning proudly labels them as "a new South African couple", almost as if to suggest that his main reason for marrying Baby was to appear as such: a modern, multiracial South African couple. Canning tells Adam that he loves Baby "badly" (65) – and repeats it (see 244), which strikes Adam who wonders how this is even possible. The adverb "badly" is mostly used in negative situations, even when used as a synonym for "very much". This word stands out and resonates in Adam's head who now feels doubt about the nature of Canning's feelings towards Baby. Adam qualifies Baby as "the power of the relationship" (78). Where Canning is in a "dreamy prosperity" (77), he does not belong in this relationship in the eyes of Adam. While Baby is a mysterious, "gorgeous black woman" whose origins carefully remain hazy, her relationship is all the less obscure: "The devotion and love between them is a one-way affair" (78). Adam, in a burst of clairvoyance, knows, hours after meeting the couple, that they will end up separated, and that by Baby's doing. Whereas Frank was the power in his relationship with Maria (*The Good Doctor*), the roles here seem reversed. Canning appears to be prepared to submit to the will of a wife who "barely glance[s] at her husband" (78), who shows herself distant and independent, while Maria appeared dependent on Frank – or rather on his money, and as someone who had very little say in their affair. Canning is not utterly oblivious to the difference in power dynamics between himself and Baby:

> Canning often worries when [Adam and Baby] go off on their walks, but his insecurity has nothing to do with jealousy. Rather, he seems to have an irrational fear that his wife will disappear without a trace when he isn't looking. 'It's crazy, I know,' he confesses to Adam a little later, when they're

> alone together, 'but it feels like something will take her away if I don't keep watch.' (122)

Baby plays a central role in Canning's life and he knows that at any time, she is susceptible of disappearing as fast as she arrived (see 123). Canning has had to give up his family to be with Baby, since he "destroyed a happy home" (123), a wife and a daughter of whom he has lost custody because of his wrongdoings towards them (see 124). Canning confesses that he is aware of Baby's disregard towards him, how sometimes she does not notice him at all for days on end. He talks about her "obsessively" (123) with an emotion which resembles "religious fervour" before leaving way to another feeling: "brooding introspection" about her detachment towards him. Canning confesses that he and his wife have lost all bedroom proximity. Indeed, "he and Baby no longer sleep together" (124) and that ever since they got married, which feeds the idea that Baby had some ulterior motive in their union and that once that was settled, she no longer cared about seeming loving to Canning. In the face of Canning's repetitive attempts to try and regain some intimacy, Baby had "one night […] pushed him away definitely, and it had never happened again" (124).

Baby, on the other hand, does not cease to try and prove to Adam that she loves Canning (see 152). Adam, in disbelief, claims that it is untrue, that she barely ever touches him, that she does not notice him:

> 'There's no sexy spark between the two of you,' he says. 'You can't fool me, it's obvious. You're more like brother and sister.'
>
> She considers this seriously, before telling him: 'There's a lot of love possible between a brother and a sister. I owe Kenneth a lot. I won't forget what he's done for me.'
>
> 'What has he done for you?'
>
> 'I've got a good life now, Adam. It didn't used to be like this.' (153)

However, in half-truth, Baby jokingly lets slip to Adam that she holds a secret fantasy in which "something had to happen to Kenneth" (159) and he might die. As Adam understands it, Baby is asking him to kill Canning so that they can be together and, due to the ambivalence and ambiguity in Baby's character, it is not impossible that this was her intention after all. Baby appears as a manipulator and the anonymity which she covers herself with fails to help the reader's attempt to understand her behaviour. Much like in Maria's (*The Good Doctor*) case, it is likely that the anonymity in Baby's character works as a security blanket for other people not to see her inner feelings and to protect herself from people, namely white men.

The launch party of Ingadi 300 marks the real start of the demise of Canning and Baby's relationship. While Canning stays withdrawn in the corner, Baby finds herself enjoying the company of another man: Nicolai Genov. Canning confesses to Adam that Genov has been Baby's lover for the past six months:

> Baby […] as she leans toward Nicolai Genov with the same air of heightened excitement that she's worn all evening, whispering something to him behind her hand, and in the tilt of their bodies towards each other, the casually possessive way he is holding onto her elbow, it is blindingly obvious. (186)

Canning is repulsed by Baby's lack of discretion in her closeness to Genov. "In front of everybody", Canning says, "[s]he doesn't care who knows" (186). He then tells Adam not to take it too "badly" (187) for it is but a little affair which does not matter "as long as [he does not] lose her". Here again, Canning's fear lies not in Baby's affair but rather in the possibility that he would lose her. Of course, this possibility turns out to come true as Baby eventually leaves Canning for Genov whom she is planning to marry. Canning adds that "[e]verybody's just a step on the ladder to her" (245), meaning that any man she gets involved with is meant to contribute to her rise in status. Canning's reaction to Baby's infidelity with Genov is incomparable to his response to her infidelity with Adam. Indeed, on the night when Canning warns Adam about the hitmen coming for him, he says that he knows his friend was "fucking" (230) his wife:

> 'What did you think? That you were subtle?' Canning is flushed, his rapid breathing close to tears. He has a graze on one cheek. His cap has fallen off the bridge, and he keeps running a hand anxiously over the top of his head. He says, 'She's the most precious ... the most precious thing I have. I notice her all the time.' (231)

Canning qualifies his wife as a "thing" which he has, his most precious possession. However, he is open to "sharing [his] good fortune" with Adam, which Adam did not stop himself from doing.

When Canning and Adam are on their way to Gondwana for the first time, they see a black prostitute on the side of the road. When Adam sees Baby for the first time, he "has a flash of the woman on the road" (63), almost as if she had been "transported" there, "improbable". Adam's very first impression of Baby is that which reminds him of a prostitute, setting the tone for his perception of her for the rest of the novel. Adam uses the adjective "garish" to describe how he sees Baby, which is a word seldom used in a complimentary manner as it rather connotes a sense of bad taste in describing a physical detail. Adam describes Baby as "garish" and

"gorgeous" at the same time, meaning that his first impression of her is ambivalent and also that he finds beauty in garishness. Once his first impression fades, Adam says that "[s]he is like an exotic doll" (63), dehumanising her in comparing her with an object and by qualifying it of "exotic". In characterising a woman of colour as exotic, one places a distance between her and the person who says it, for the word "exotic" refers to something distant and foreign, something different to the norm, suggesting therefore – when used to describe the beauty of a woman of colour – the existence of an exotic beauty opposed to a normal beauty. Moreover, the word "exotic" rarely refers to a person but rather to an object – or to nature, food, etc. – which, especially when combined with "doll", dehumanises the person who is described by these words. Adam sees Baby's features as "tiny" and "in immaculate proportions," which raises many issues. In seeing and appreciating her features as "tiny", Adam could support an underlayer of paedophiliac attraction to women which is observed in Western society, namely with the male obsession with the hairless woman reminds one of the body of a child. The fact that her name is Baby, as well as the fact that she is about ten years younger than both men, also play a role in her infantilisation. Her first physical contact with Adam is initiated by her as she shakes his hand:

> She holds out her hand. He can feel her long nails in his palm. The sensation lets something loose in him – distaste mixed with desire. He holds her fingers for a second longer than is necessary. (63)

The sensation he feels is that of her long nails on his hand which stir an ambivalent feeling in him. That sensation, that first physical touch, "lets something loose" in Adam, it triggers a sort of lust which will follow him subsequently. The fact that he holds the physical contact for an instant longer than the appropriate – according to Adam – amount of time also adds to the idea that Adam, from his first contact with her, already cannot let go.

When Adam and Baby are left alone for the first time, she keeps a distance between the two, her body language showing her uninterested but comfortable as she is facing the other way but she is sitting comfortably with her eyes closed which can show a sign of blind trust towards Adam:

> He notices something peculiar: she has green eyes, which he's never seen in a black person before. And not only that – one eye is distinctly larger than the other. This tiny imbalance seems to reflect a deeper imbalance in her character, which both draws and disturbs him. (69)

Adam is surprised by the green colour of her eyes because he had never seen a green-eyed black person before. He seems to believe that ethnicity and eye colour are related and he finds it

"peculiar" that a black person should have green eyes. Adam, who had only seen Baby as a whole, now sees her face in detail. He notices the size of her eyes – which are of different sizes – and interprets it as a sign of her own personal ambivalence. This, ironically, makes him feel ambivalent towards her as it stirs up both attraction and disturbance in him. And when Baby confesses to Adam that she "hate[s] it here" (69) in Gondwana, somehow Adam sees this feeling as a form of ungratefulness, almost as if Baby should be honoured to be given the opportunity to live in such a house when she did not deserve it for herself. Adam's opinion of Baby shifts, he starts to feel what he qualifies as "an obscure anger towards [Baby]" when she says she hates living in this huge house with the rich white husband who can buy her anything she desires. Against all odds, "[h]e has started actively to dislike her" (70). The tension shifts back to normal when Baby walks Adam to his bedroom. For the first time, Adam says the name 'Baby', which makes them both rigid, probably because it is also a hypocorism for a lover (see 74):

> The look between them lasts for a moment longer. It's as if they're having another conversation–a conversation completely different to their words–and then she turns and heads for the door again. (75)

After a short chat, Adam feels like his relationship with Baby takes a turn during a – perhaps imagined – non-verbal conversation the two hold as he shows him his bedroom for the night.

The next time Adam and Baby are left alone together is an effect of Canning's own doing. While busy with some business, he asks Adam if he can wait with Baby until he is done with a meeting, which is similar to when Laurence asks Frank if he can hang out with his girlfriend Zanele while he is on duty (*The Good Doctor*) – an event which also starts an affair between the two. This time, Adam sees Baby with no artifice: she has no make-up on, her hair is undone, and she is wearing night-time clothes (see 91). As she begins small talk, she does not look at Adam, who is still outside the door, but rather she continues reading her magazine, showing no interest in him whatsoever. However, as soon as he steps inside, her behaviour shifts and she shows herself more interested, for she smiles at him and puts the magazine aside so as to open the door to conversation. Baby offers Adam a cup of coffee which is served to him by their help, a black woman called Grace. Adam thinks to himself how it must feel for Baby – a black woman – to be served by another black woman when "a few years ago they would've been in the same position" (92). Adam starts the conversation by asking about how she and Canning met, a story which she briefly tells while doing her make-up, as if uninterested in her own anecdote. Adam apologises for having been forced on her but Baby reassures him verbally that she is happy about the situation. However, "she looks indifferent" rather than happy about Adam's presence.

Baby initiates physical touch with Adam which, once again, involves Baby's hands and, more precisely, her nails, which Adam had found distasteful the first time he felt them against his palm:

> He crosses uncertainly to the bed. She is holding the hand out to him, coolly. He sits down on the edge of the mattress and goes to work with the brush. The lacquer is green, the same shade as her eyes, and the artificial smell of it stings his nose. At the same time he's conscious of her long, slender fingers in his palm, and the nearness of her breasts under their filmy white cloth. He can feel that she's looking at him, but he doesn't return the gaze. (93)

Adam remains uncertain about how much proximity he can allow himself to have with Baby. Even though she is the one who asked him to do her nails and therefore to initiate some close proximity, he feels uneasy about the situation, partly because of his attraction to her, and also because of her being married to Canning. He tries his best to remain oblivious to the closeness but fails. The moment of tenderness is broken when Canning's voice erupts in the room, which triggers Adam to "involuntarily" move quickly away from her, because "his nearness to Baby feels illicit and dangerous, something he must conceal" (94). However, Canning often suggests that Adam and Baby should spend some time together (see 149), which seems to mean that he does not see their hanging out as anything "illicit". Moreover, "[o]n almost every weekend that he visits Gondwana, Adam is left alone with Baby at some point" (119) while Canning is busy with some business. Therefore, not only does Canning encourage Adam and Baby to get together, he does so repeatedly.

After suffering of a writer's block syndrome for quite a while, Adam finds himself overflowing with inspiration. It only takes him a couple of hours to complete the first poem he has written "in half a lifetime" (104), and the flow continues during the following days. Caught up in the excitement of the long-awaited return of his inspiration, he fails to notice right away that his poems have a common theme: his longing for Baby (see 106). The poems reveal a subconscious metaphysical "yearning" for Baby, an intense inner longing which interrupts his original intention of writing about the landscape. Somehow, quite similarly to how Baby first appears in the story (see 62 – 63) as she absorbs the attention away from the landscape and onto herself, she also takes away the landscape in Adam's pen. The form of the poem is also notable as Adam has moved from his usual "rhyme and meter" to a type of "free verse" (106), testifying to an inner loosening in Adam's mind. While Canning has left the two alone once again, Adam builds up the courage to tell Baby about his poems, not entirely sure what he is expecting in return. Baby's response does not exactly satisfy his unclear expectations:

‘You’re like a kind of muse,’ he tells her now.

‘A what?’

He starts backing off, feeling oddly hurt by her bemusement. ‘Well, it doesn’t matter,’ he mumbles. ‘They’re just scribblings.’

‘I don’t really know about poetry,’ she says, looking away.

‘It doesn’t matter,’ he says again. (107)

Adam calls Baby a muse, his main source of inspiration. He reads Baby’s response as bemusement – either from the confusion around how she became his muse, or from the confusion of the term muse itself which one might imagine she has not heard of as she adds that she does not “really know about poetry”, leading to believe that she may take it as a literary term. Adam proceeds to change the subject, and their conversation shifts to “less dangerous things”. However, the conversation sticks to him, “giving him both pleasure and pang” as he recalls it. The exchange has made him feel estranged from Baby, “a little colder” towards her. Adam is hurt that his use of Baby as a literary device has bemused her, she has therefore broken his almost biblical fantasy of her:

> Adam’s pastoral reverie and the romantic narcissism which it implies are subjected to no small degree of irony in the second section of the novel, which sees “Nappy” and Baby reduced to a pitiable parody of the originary couple, Adam and Eve, trapped in a dystopia of avarice, egocentricity and betrayal. […] [His] poetic interpretation of Baby as a version of the Eve archetype, for example, makes her both more and less than human. (Kostelac 2020: 49 – 50)

As he steps into Gondwana, which reminds him of an Eden Garden, Adam begins to see Baby as his Eve, immaculate and temptress. She hurts him and he finds pleasure in the way she does so, be it by showing him little interest, or by being bemused by his precious poetic creation. Adam is confused by his yearning for Baby because his image of her turns her into a symbol, something “more” as well as “less” than human – in other words, anything other than human. “[Baby] is certainly conscious of the effect she has on [Adam]” (122) and she uses it for her own amusement. She makes it impossible, by the ambiguous nature of her character, to argue that she most certainly has felt romantic feelings for Adam. Ever since the day she has asked him to paint her fingernails, Adam feels that there is “an unspoken awareness between them” (122), “a curious familiarity” (121) which only appears when they are left alone together.

The sexual dimension does not appear directly between the two – unless one was to take Adam’s comparison of Baby and the prostitute (see 63) or his sudden awareness to his proximity to her breasts (see 93) as a direct sexual dimension per se – but rather progressively

in episodes. Apart from the two aforementioned episodes, Canning's mention of his and Baby's asexual relationship touches Adam, both in "sympathy and a treacherous stab of joy" (125), seeing it as a victory, an open door for him to gain closeness to Baby. When Adam learns from Canning that Baby used to be an escort, something shifts in Adam. He ceases to see Baby as he did before but rather, he now sees her as a hypersexual being. The news "changes everything; [Adam] will never see her in the same way again" (126) as he does not feel "alienated from her" (127) anymore. He feels their bond "strengthened" as he sees her now as an imposturous companion, accompanying him in his act:

> Baby remains typecast in racial and gendered terms as the avaricious 'black diamond' of the new South Africa; a femme fatale defined by her sexual power. This is an emergent stereotype of black femininity (Kostelac 2020: 49 – 50)

This feeling unblocks some inner occlusion in Adam who feels sexually closer and freer to Baby. Surprisingly enough, though Adam is the one who physically takes the first step towards intimacy – i.e., when they kiss for the first time (see 141 – 142) it is Adam who walks to her and grabs her – she is the one who "efficiently" (142) suggests a place where they can further embrace the newfound dimension of their intimacy, almost as if she had premeditated it. The place she suggests is Canning's father's old cottage, in which Canning refuses to step because of the memories it triggers (see 119). "It's the one place [Canning]'ll never come to" (142), Baby argues as she suggests that place for their affair. Baby leaves Adam on that sentence as food for thought. Even before having had sexual intercourse with Baby, Adam slowly begins to feel guilty towards Canning, similarly to how slowly guilt hit Frank after having been with Zanele (*The Good Doctor*). Adam's visits to Gondwana now revolve around his time with Baby at the cottage (see 149). He becomes a different person when he is with her:

> He looks forward to their sessions with a kind of primal excitement. There is an intensity to their joinings that borders on violence. […] when he's in bed with her, the clamour of consciousness draws in on a point of white heat, where past and future converge. He becomes somebody else, a creature he doesn't know: this stranger self is a powerful, goatish, reckless figure, who fornicates without restraint and talks dirty and doesn't care what damage he's doing. (150)

The change in Adam's behaviour, as he has intercourse with Baby, attests of a much deeper feeling. The "primal excitement" Adam feels while having sex with Baby falls within the trenches of a specifically white colonial sentiment which resurfaces in the act of sex with a

black woman. What Adam feels is far from love. He believes in fact that it is closer to "hate", "rapture" or "narcissism". Baby only fuels Adam's self-built and probably repressed fantasy. In seeing her as an "exotic doll" (63), Adam has an image of the black woman as something which can be played with, something exotic, foreign enough to dehumanise it:

> [Adam] is constructing a version of Baby steeped in the tropes of colonial discourse, which merge the black female body with the land to render it similarly available for conquest. (Kostelac 2020: 50)

What Adam feels towards Baby has nothing to do with her as a person but rather with his perspective on her, a black woman, in relation to him as a white man. Baby is a metaphor for a conquerable land, and Adam has a competitor: Canning, the other coloniser of Baby. Adam's feelings towards Canning are not jealousy but rather competition, possessiveness. Adam tells Baby that he knows that he is but a diversion for her, "a pastime" (153). "I don't matter to you," he tells her, before she replies: "You do matter […]. But of course this won't last", making it explicit that their affair is but temporary. Adam surprises himself in telling her to leave Canning, which Baby finds surprising (see 154). Adam "doesn't want to be with her for the rest of their lives; he doesn't even want to be with her for a few hours" (154), for he does not love her for herself but rather feels a certain possessiveness towards her which, once rationality hits, reminds him of how preposterous it is.

During the launch party, Baby's behaviour shifts. When they meet at the party, Baby is "displeased" (181) to see him there, and the next time they meet after the party, Adam feels that Baby has instated a "social remoteness" (196) between them. Her argument is that since the building of the golf course is to start soon, they will not be able to get together for many workers will be there at all times. Adam insists on having sex one last time, which Baby accepts without much need for convincing. However, they are interrupted by Baby's help, Grace, who accidentally catches them in the act. A few days later, Grace and her husband Ezekiel knock on Adam's door looking for help after getting fired by Baby (see 207). Therefore, Adam decides to meet with Canning and Baby to clear things out. As the tone rises between Adam and Baby, she becomes furious at hearing Adam claim that he knows who she is:

> 'I know who you are,' he tells her.
>
> She has a tight, brittle smile on her face, and her whisper is like a thin, tiny needle of hatred. 'No, you don't. You don't know anything about me. Not anything. If you did, you wouldn't speak like this. You don't know how I've fought, the things I had to do to get to where I am. If I'm over here and they're over there, that's because I'm stronger. And part of being strong is doing what

> you have to do. Do you think I'm going to give up my life, give up all *this*, for them? Are you crazy? You can keep your pity and your sentiment, you can keep your white man's weakness. You've never been desperate, not for one day in your life.' (211)

Baby is enraged that Adam would dare think that he knows who she is after her careful attempt at anonymity. As Adam tells her that because she is black, she could have found herself in the same position as Grace, Baby becomes defensive and assures Adam that he knows nothing of her. She calls him crazy for suggesting that she could give up her life for "them", i.e. her servants, intending to say that, according to her, they do not deserve her privileged situation because they have not worked as hard as she has. In Adam's eyes, she should be grateful that, despise her skin colour, she does not have the same social status as her servants. However, she tells him that, because she is not privileged like him, she has had to fight to get to where she is and not to have to be someone's servant. Adam fails to realise his own privilege and in the face of these arguments, he walks away, still refusing to apprehend it.

6. The white characters:

"The idealist, the realist and everything in between": characters' opposing views on the "new" South Africa and its allegorical connection with their personal lives

The situation in South Africa after the Apartheid was abolished was sufficiently new to give rise to widely diverging assessments and predictions. In the world, many countries had supported South Africa's fight against the Apartheid regime. They believed the country could thrive economically in a non-racial democracy and stability could rule over South Africa. The motor behind these hopes and beliefs was Nelson Mandela, who constantly fuelled these aspirations. However, the country is still known for its social inequalities and its high rate of crime. For South Africans, despite the acknowledgment of some improvements (such as more access to electricity and to power), the inequalities have remained too high (qua unemployment, poverty, etc.) for the non-privileged to feel overly optimistic about the country's situation. However, the different views among South Africans are often more complex as portrayed in both novels. *The Good Doctor* offers a somewhat less ambivalent take on the matter, with an optimistic-pessimistic binary, whereas in *The Impostor*, Galgut offers a wider range of views, some more ambivalent, others hesitating or even hypocritical.

This chapter will pay some attention to the main characters of the novels who are white men, and to their relationship towards the country. I have identified three categories of positioning: a naïvely optimistic view of the "new" South Africa as demonstrated by Laurence Waters (*The Good Doctor*), a plainly pessimistic view of the country as seen in Frank Eloff (*The Good Doctor*), and then a more ambivalent and complex view on post-Apartheid South Africa, found in Adam and Gavin Napier, as well as in Kenneth Canning (*The Impostor*).

a. 'Toxic positivity or tragic optimism?': the overgeneralisation of a positive and optimistic view of post-Apartheid South Africa in Laurence Waters

When Laurence Waters steps into the hospital, it does not take long before the reader can grasp who Laurence is and how he thinks. Laurence steps into his nightmare, the other side of the coin, the non-privileged South Africa, something he does not want to see. It does not take long before his naïvety and his overly positive attitude towards all situations overflow the pages. As soon as Frank attempts to explain to Laurence why the hospital – and the rest of the town – are

in such a bad state, he rejects it, claiming that this is but politics which, according to him, does not matter:

> Whereas Eloff is resigned to the intractable complexities of the post-apartheid dispensation, Waters dismisses 'politics' altogether; when Eloff explains something of the homeland's fraught history, he responds, 'You mean politics… But that's all past now. It doesn't matter any more' (p. 6). (Titlestad 2009: 112)

As an excuse, Laurence claims that he is a doctor and that therefore, he is not affected by politics or by the long-lasting effects of the past on the present whatsoever. What gives Laurence the privilege of believing such nonsense is his position as a young, white man who has barely lived through the Apartheid regime of South Africa. Politics come up again in a conversation Frank has with Laurence after they have brought a patient to the other, better-funded hospital. As Frank attempts to explain to Laurence why the situation is as such, Laurence dismisses it again, saying "[t]hat's all politics again" (18), attesting to Laurence's refusal to acknowledge that, as Frank puts it, "[e]verything is politics" whether Laurence wants to realise it or not. These types of conversations – or fights – come up rather regularly between Laurence and Frank as they hold opposite opinions on these matters. Laurence appears very naïve, he argues that it is "only the beginning […] [o]f this country" (50), that the "old history doesn't count". In Laurence's mind, South Africa is now a new place, its past has been wiped out and it is now time to rewrite history, "[f]rom the bottom up" (50).

Laurence's tendency to be oblivious and naïve is at the core of his personality. As he arrives in the hospital for the first time, Frank describes him as smiling expectantly, with shiny eyes, while waiting for his orders to be issued to him (see 11). However, none come along as the hospital is devoid of any patients. When Laurence asks Dr Ngema about his duties, she sharply tells him that he will have to follow Frank around, and Frank describes Laurence as "oblivious" (14) to Dr Ngema's sharpness as well as to the situation altogether. Therefore, Laurence follows Frank around "like a puppy", he shows himself very obedient and ready to take action whenever needed. Laurence appears as an ingenuous character, oblivious or ignorant to the wrongs in the world – as well as in his own country, South Africa. With him, "[a] grand design [runs] through everything" (45), as Frank puts it when Laurence asks him about the necessarily meaningful reason for him to become a doctor – Laurence's being his parents' supposed death. To Laurence, everything has a grand, significant motivation behind it and every wrong thing mystically ends up fixed. When Frank finds out about Tehogo's stolen goods from the hospital, Laurence decides to take the matter in his own hands during Frank's absence and

to attempt to fix the situation, without asking Frank whether or not he agrees with his design. Once this is done, he smiles at Frank and says: "It's all worked out for the best. It always does, somehow" (150). This, again, attests to an ingenuous Laurence, who believes that, "somehow", there is always a happy ending, and who makes it his mission to fix anything that may need fixing. Similarly, Laurence does not even attempt to understand why Tehogo has been stealing, his background as an unprivileged black man, the "rough time" (127) he has had. Laurence only wants him to be punished for the wrongs he committed, because it is, in his eyes, the right thing to do and the right way to do it.

Laurence holds a firm belief that he can, and must, make a change wherever he is. He makes it his allocated assignment:

> Dr Laurence Waters […] imagines that he can make the greatest impact on society […] South Africa is the blank canvas on which he will stamp his own impression. (Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 144)

As argued by Lenz and Wenzel, Laurence views the hospital as a symbol for South Africa, something which needs fixing and he makes it his mission to fix it. He perceives this idealism as a positive trait for one to have, to always see the good or the potential good in everything. He claims to Frank he wants "to do work that means something" (40), which Frank contests due to the fact the Laurence came to a hospital where nothing ever happens and which, therefore, does not qualify as a propitious place for his scheme to flourish. Laurence retorts that "[p]eople change things […] [p]eople make things" (40) when arguing that, because the hospital is in such a static state now, does not mean it cannot change:

> For Laurence Waters, the past is dead and gone, and therefore so too are all political concerns. The brand new South Africa represents, to him a paradise of self-assertion, a place where he can make a difference and be, in return, dignified. (Cabarcos-Traseira 2005: 47)

Laurence sees in the hospital a way for him to grow, as much as an opportunity for him to be a hero. He firmly believes in his own personal ability to change everything around him and he therefore finds himself in a "paradise" where many things need to change and to be fixed. This comes clearly to Frank once he meets Zanele and realises the similarity in her and Laurence's characters. They "were the same kind of person: blindly and naïvely believing in their own power to change things" (97), which, to Frank is a "foolish" belief by the very simplicity of its nature.

The way Laurence perceives himself and his personal ability to make a change can be perceived as a tendency to false consciousness. False consciousness refers to the Marxist idea

that proletarians unknowingly misperceive their true position on the social spectrum, namely in relation to capitalism, because they have been conditioned to legitimise capitalism as the norm. The term has since taken on broader acceptations and, in this case, it can be applied to the character of Laurence. Laurence's belief in his greater power to change things for the better falls under a scope of a false consciousness he might have unconsciously or subconsciously developed throughout his life:

> [Laurence's] enthusiasm for South Africa's "glorious future" (103) is motivated at least as much by a desire to bury his own past as it is by a philanthropic investment in greater social change. (Kostelac 2017: 40)

Kostelac claims that the "enthusiasm" which Laurence expresses towards his role in this new South Africa resides not only in some altruistic commitment in wider societal progress, but also in a wish to conceal his personal history. The reader is made aware thanks to Zanele that Laurence has tried to conceal his past by inventing an alternative story in which his parents have died when he is actually an illegitimate child and the woman, whom he claimed was his sister, was in fact his mother:

> In the novel, Laurence is exposed as a self-serving liar, as the author of the grand fiction of his autobiography. He invents a neat beginning for the awakening of his professional calling […] that unquestioned idealism such as Laurence's might in fact hide sheer egocentrism – particularly when not rooted in any historical certainty. (Cabarcos-Traseira 2005: 48)

However, just as, in the Marxist sense, the proletarians do not seem aware that they have been conditioned to misperceive their position within capitalism through the operations of false consciousness, it seems that Laurence could have some awareness in this position. He has written a narrative about his own life and has rewritten his own past, feeding into it with his eager enthusiasm for his new South Africa.

b. 'Dystopian pessimism': the negative view of post-Apartheid South Africa in Frank Eloff

The narrator, Frank Eloff, is older than Laurence, and appears wiser. Haunted by a failed marriage and questionable choices made while serving in the army, Frank has been conditioned to be pessimistic and, as opposed to an overly positive Laurence, he appears, along with his pessimism, more realistic in his views:

> While Frank is never guilty of the active brutality which Moller exercises, he comes to realise that a sin of omission put him into complicity with Moller

> when he failed to intervene in the Colonel's torture of a SWAPO soldier. (Kostelac 2017: 49)

What Frank has witnessed during the war, as well as the decisions he has made impacting the lives of captives, haunts him and has shaped him into the man he is today, tormented by the past, and refusing to see any optimism in what the future has in store. As a young man in the army, Frank did not have "moral qualms" (63) about his job and, therefore, never saw the bad in what he was doing. However, as the years went by, he started to realise the reality of things and it made him brood. He has a negative impression of himself, claiming that he is "the most selfish person in [the hospital]" (77) after Laurence calls the others "selfish" contrary to Frank whom he considers differently. Frank refuses the compliment and assures Laurence that he is, indeed, "the most selfish":

> Eloff is caught in a present interrupted continually by the past, which prevents an uncomplicated commitment to the future. (Titlestad 2009: 115)

The "bad conscience" [5] (103) from Frank's past keeps reappearing, which triggers Frank into feeling guilty. This feeling and the repressing thereof freezes him and prevents him from being able to evolve and to move on. This guilt turns into anger in a heated conversation Frank has with Zanele once he becomes annoyed by her naïvety:

> Is that too real for you? Ideas are always better than reality, of course. But sooner or later the real world always wins. Laurence will find that out. So will you, when you go back to America and lose your African outfits and your fake name. (100)

In this extract, Frank is particularly downbeat and fuming. He gets carried away by his anger and accuses Zanele of being naïve, of believing in false ideas and placing them above reality. Frank goes on and personally insults her, over her tendency to dress in African clothes and to call herself by an African name instead of her birth name, Linda. Frank's last sentence sets African identity on the spot and displays a certain importance to identity in Frank's character as well as a personal sense of not belonging to the new country:

> Since the demise of apartheid, white South African men have become more aware of the contradictory and non-African aspects of their identity, and some have found their sense of belonging compromised and problematized. (Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 131)

[5] Mentioned in the novel in reference to the Brigadier about what could have triggered his "chest pains" (103).

Along with many white South African men, Frank has seen his sense of belonging to the country questioned and he has become aware of how imposturous his presence in the country can be perceived by people who are not white. Therefore, what Frank accuses Zanele of also applies to himself, and it is likely that this is part of what causes him to become this angry with her. Frank is in a state of uncertainty and it petrifies him in many areas of his life: he disappeared to go and work in a hospital in the middle of nowhere, he let his divorce proceedings drag on for years, and he generally refuses to accept change. Frank believes that "[p]ast a certain point, maybe, a person's character defines itself and stays fixed in your mind" (142), arguing therefore that he is condemned to remain pessimistic as he is past the point of change.

However, with the arrival of Laurence, Frank's character took a turn in a different direction. Laurence's presence in the hospital works as a symbol – for the hospital is a metaphor for South Africa (see Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 139) – for a change, although unsure and unprepared, illogical at times, but much needed to make things move. This presence has made an impact on some characters' lives, notably on Frank's, who sees his judgment confronted:

> *The Good Doctor* does not altogether reject the energetic optimism which his character represents. Despite his exasperation with Laurence's naïvety, Frank is forced to admit that his "involvement and effort showed up a lack in me" (63) and his presence […] compels Frank to examine the basis of his disconnectedness and apathy. (Kostelac 2017: 39)

Throughout the novel, Frank sees his character evolve because of Laurence. He is forced to reconsider his beliefs and his opinions on the country as well as on life itself. Kostelac argues that Frank is "compelled" to investigate the source of his disconnection and indifference, though Laurence does not push his beliefs on Frank but rather influences him in a subtler way. At first, Frank is very displeased with the idea of sharing his room, his personal space, but he eventually starts "looking forward with curiosity to this change" (2), which sets the tone for the rest of the novel which will further document Frank's newfound, if limited, openness to change. The evening right after Zanele's welcoming party, Laurence and Frank chat about the travelling clinic which is to take place at Maria's village. Frank is bothered by the location but as Laurence tells him that he wishes not to talk about the clinic at that moment, Frank thinks that "[t]he past was complex and fractured, but it was past. Tomorrow was another day" (93), which testifies to some evolution in terms of his relationship with the past, as well as with the future. Even though this feeling does not last very long (see 93 – 94), Frank does believe in the sincerity of these words. The very last paragraph of the novel attests to the evolution of Frank's relationship with the future:

> A whole new sense of the future, because of one tiny change. Which makes me wonder if all of this might have happened differently if I'd never had to share my room. (215)

This paragraph alone displays how much the presence of Laurence, so small a change it could be considered, allowed Frank to reconsider the way he sees the future, and shaped the way his life will continue, causing him to wonder whether things would have turned out differently if he had not been made to share his room with Laurence.

There are, however, some major differences between Frank and Laurence. The two men represent the dichotomy of the good and the bad doctor, the optimist and pessimist, without ever stating which is the good and which is the bad one:

> The doctors may be viewed as mirror images of the same individual; but like original reflection, dark and light, the past and the future, "their images are also opposed" (Jacobs 104). Their pessimistic and optimistic personalities contrast, but also replicate aspects of self and other and represent different ways of coping with the past and the present. (Lenz & Wenzel 2016: 147)

Frank and Laurence are like "two different natures thrown in a box" (42), opposed yet necessary to each other. The two are as "two strands in a rope" (170), they are tangled in a friction which binds them together. Although distinct from the other, they manage to cohabit and work in proximity. Their differences include diverging views about the past and politics to the future and change. Galgut comments on these differences:

> [I]n an interview with Lin Sampson (2003) Galgut endorses what the text makes obvious: '[…] Frank might be bleak and pessimistic, but at least he is seeing things clearly. In the same light, Laurence's idealism is dishonest.' In short, the pessimistic view is granted the imprimatur of truth. (Barris 2005: 26)

While optimism can be a positive trait and can help things to move forward, it can also be a dangerous weapon in obliterating the past. Frank believes that the past "has only just happened" and that it therefore is "not past yet" (6), meaning that, although some years have passed, it is, at the time of the novel, still too early to claim that things have changed. Frank believes that, although the laws have changed, the situation is still too similar to that of the Apartheid era to pretend that everything is different now. Where Laurence has a tendency to disregard politics, Frank argues about the relevancy of politics:

> Everything is politics, Laurence. The moment you put two people in a room together, politics enters in. That's how it is. (18)

For Frank, everything which exists and happens is inevitably shaped by politics. The moment when Frank and Laurence were put in a room together, politics entered in as the two were confronted to their own political ideas which they had both taken for granted until meeting each other. Contrary to Laurence, Frank firmly believes that there is no point in trying to make a change now. When Laurence wants to cut the grass in the open plot, Frank tells him that there is no need in trying to cut the grass because it will simply grow back and there is nothing that he can do about it (see 57). Circling back to the argument on the grass and the weeds functioning as traces of the Apartheid, Frank's reaction would testify to his reluctance to make a change and the inevitable stasis he sees in the present situation. Similarly, when Laurence argues that doing his travelling clinic in a place relatively far away would work as a symbol of the possibility to do one in the nearest place too, Frank disregards Laurence's enthusiasm and asks him: "Where do you come from, Laurence? What country are you living in?" (78), meaning that South Africa is not the place for "grandstand[ing] with some big display that meant nothing to anybody except him". As Laurence tells Frank that everybody says that Frank is "not part of […] the new country" (169), Frank asks what new country he is talking about. What Laurence perceives as "building it all up from the ground", Frank sees as "[w]ords and symbols":

> 'You're not a bad man. But you say no to everything. It's written on you. I don't know what's happened to you. You just don't believe in anything […] you can't change the way you are.'
>
> 'Do you think it's so simple? At the middle of your life there's just one word, yes or no, and everything follows from that?' (170)

Frank's refusal of change, to change and to make a change is "written all over [him]", he avoids everything that has to do with change and hides behind the excuse of age, arguing that it is impossible for a middle-aged man to change his stance on things. He rejects the oversimplification of the concept of change, together with the polarity which Laurence supports, the "yes or no" from which everything is supposed to follow according to him. Frank embraces the complexity of his country's situation and accepts it as a fatality.

c. 'The inbetweeners': the ambivalent views of post-Apartheid South Africa in Adam Napier, Gavin Napier and Kenneth Canning

In *The Impostor*, Galgut opted for much more ambiguous characters, as is apparent in their views on the "new" South Africa. Adam Napier, his brother Gavin, and Kenneth Canning all have a personal view on the matter, but they all testify back to a form of bad faith: bad faith, as defined by Jean-Paul Sartre, is the human endeavour to avoid the responsibility of recognising

and realising one's own authentic nature. In other words, Sartre argues that it is part of our nature to deceive ourselves in order to avoid the necessity to figure out our actual selves.

Adam, for one, is an ambiguous character, notably when it comes to his stand on post-Apartheid South Africa which had always been clear to him in the past. However, after the end of the regime, it was no longer the case:

> These days, he found himself taking the opposite stand to whatever political point had been raised. If people liked the new road, he would start to wonder what vices and problems the road might bring. On the other hand, if people said the road was a bad thing, he would think of it as progress and development. His ambivalence was genuine; there seemed to be both a radical and a reactionary buried in him. More than anything, it was this fault-line in his psyche that he thought of as his new South African self. (32)

Whatever political issue is brought up, Adam chooses to oppose the argument being offered, no matter what it is. This lack of coherence in the opinions he defends shows the ambivalence of Adam's character and suggests that Adam's views are not based on rationality and thought but rather on a need to go against the common opinion of the room, to always be the antagonist when he takes part in a discussion about the post-Apartheid situation. Ironically, this very ambivalent trait is what Adam considers to be his "new South African self", his newfound character trait. This reaction shows a certain discomfort around his position within the "new" South Africa, to which Adam is referring here. Because Adam lived most of his life under the Apartheid regime, he does not know how to place himself in this new equation in which the colour of his skin would inevitably set him into the impostor's position:

> His habits of mind and life, in other words, were acquired in relation to a very different social structure and poorly equip him for the challenges of a country in transition. This disjuncture accounts for his pronounced anxiety about being an "alien and unwanted" fraud (2008: 68): his "impostor" syndrome, to phrase it in the terms suggested by the novel's title." (Kostelac 2020: 51)

Adam is very confused about where he fits and how to feel in this new normality. During the transition period, Adam appeared rather positive towards the prospect of change, as he was "full of hope for the future" (20), a future which would, however, have him lose his job, his wife and his house. In the face of failure, his brother offers him a job and a place to live. Adam refuses the job, claiming that he would dedicate his life to his poetry. The privileged position in which Adam finds himself allows him to choose a quest for beauty over money (see 22). Beauty and nature are the main themes of his poetry and Adam has received vivid critiques over this fact.

When his first poems were published, Adam was stunned by one particularly harsh review which accused him of neglecting what South Africa was going through during the Apartheid regime. His pursuit of beauty was devoid of any ideological goal, perhaps as a result of a certain fear of history. Adam preferred to avoid keeping up to date with the state of the country and, instead, made it his artistic mission, to "replace politics with aesthetics" (39). These feelings stir up after the mayor shares his experience as a resistance poet, which leaves Adam feeling a sort of guilt towards his inaction in a time of crisis, hiding behind the idea that "poetry was the antidote to history" (41). Another instance which makes Adam reconsider his place in the new country is right after he starts regularly meeting Canning and getting to know him better. As he hears about Canning's black wife and multiracial associates in business, Adam feels like the one who is not part of the new South Africa (see 102). Indeed he feels like the impostor in the new country, the one who is not behaving as he should. Adam navigates through this "new" South Africa with a sense of seclusion, shining a light on the implicit nature of his hypocrisy.

Adam is represented, in the novel, as a hypocritical white man in his behaviour towards the "new" country. As Canning parades his interracial marriage to Adam's face as a symbol for a modern South African couple, Adam is "irritated" (65) for, to him, there is "nothing very new, or even especially unusual, about [a white man] having a black spouse these days" and "it seems gratuitous to be harping on it" (65). Adam disregards the fact that it was forbidden for mixed-race couples to exist and the fact that they are now allowed to get married is an advancement in the post-Apartheid situation. Although Canning harps on it and displays Baby as a trophy for his own supposed modern South African identity, the fact that Adam is oblivious to the fact that the authorisation of interracial couples is a significant improvement shows his hypocrisy. Adam appears to be embracing the positive changes of the end of the regime and at the same time, he is still estranged by the sight of change as he does not acknowledge it. As Baby offers Adam a cup of coffee, for instance, it is served to him by their help, a black woman called Grace. Adam thinks to himself how it must feel for Baby – a black woman – to be served by another black woman when "a few years ago they would've been in the same position" (92). Although Adam does not word his feelings towards the event, he points out how he wonders, though "abstractedly" (92), what it must feel like for Grace to serve another black woman. This suggests that he must have been taken aback to see a black woman being served, which is a reaction that follows a certain racist reasoning in which a black woman does not belong in a "position" where she is being served. This again happens as Ezekiel, their other black help – and Grace's husband – attends on Canning and Sipho Moloi (who is black too):

> Adam has another moment like the one in the *rondawel*, where he wonders at what wordless perceptions might be passing between this young, well-heeled black yuppie [Sipho Moloi], and the poor old family retainer [Ezekiel]. But perhaps he is the only one who notices: the two of them are so far from one another, sitting at such divergent points of history, that they might be in different worlds. Instead it's Adam who's left with an acute awareness of the life that Canning's thoughtless cross-questioning has evoked. (95)

Again, Adam finds himself wondering how Ezekiel must feel when serving Sipho Moloi, whom he calls a "black yuppie," which is a pejorative term designating an ambitious, cynical young urban professional, a greedy stooge of capitalism. The fact is that Adam is the only one who notices a gap between the two black men, how one climbed up the social scale and the other stayed down in the social hierarchy. He comments on the fact that they live in different worlds, and that he is the one who is acutely aware of the supposed peculiarity of the situation. This second occurrence further emphasises the uneasiness Adam feels towards the idea of black South Africans being served as opposed to serving. Adam's relation towards black people is hypocritical in nature as his thoughts and behaviour suggest that, although he appears tolerant, there is a thick under layer of racism in him. As he sees Sipho Moloi in Canning's house, Adam says to Canning: "[i]t's quite unusual, isn't it, to see" (94) and Canning anticipates Adam's comment, knowing where he was going with it: "[b]lacks in this part of the country, you mean?". Adam does not expect to see black people in "white towns" and is, therefore, surprised to see a black man who is not a servant in the house of a white man. Moreover, Adam's attitude towards the post-Apartheid situation of the country is also hypocritical in that he expects black people to react to it. As Lindile, Canning's childhood ex-best friend, who is black, tells Adam that he now realises how atypical his friendship was with Canning as the two lived in such different positions, Adam is irritated by Lindile's train of thought and tells him: "'Oh, come on […] For God's sake. The whole country's moved on since then. Everything's changed. Can't you move on too?'" (222). Adam is annoyed at the thought that black people are still not satisfied now that the Apartheid regime is over and that they are still not prepared to forget the years of sufferance black people had to go through. He asserts that "the whole country's moved on", which is, rather than the truth, what he wishes were the truth.

Gavin, on the other hand, is ambiguous in another way than Adam. During "the years leading up to South Africa's big change" (22), Gavin had surprisingly been the one who was "gloomy and frightened". However, Gavin is now convinced he is contributing to the country, employing hundreds of people – while making a vast sum. He argues that the country is in great

economical shape at the moment, that it is "rolling along" (22). He adds that there is "a lot of money flowing, if you just know where to look" and that there is "no excuse for a white man to go starving here, whatever anybody says". Gavin seems to disregard the black lower class of the country, being oblivious to them, and only ever caring about white South Africans, saying that things are good because white men cannot go starving in this situation. He implies that it is easy to get a job, reproaching Adam for being a quitter as he lets himself go (17) when he loses his job, telling him that he should just "[g]et another one". Gavin is only interested in what concerns him and what can be profitable to him:

> 'You don't think you should be worried? You're in with a bad bunch. […] The business stuff is a front. There's a lot going on, Ad. Money laundering, drug smuggling, maybe human trafficking. You don't want to get involved.'
>
> 'You're right, I don't,' Adam says […]
>
> 'You can't get me in with these guys, can you?' [Gavin] says. (188)

In this conversation about Adam's involvement with Canning and Nicolai Genov, Gavin appears appalled at what he learns about Genov. He conjectures about how Ingadi 300 is but a front to cover a corrupt business and advises Adam not to associate with such a business. However, as the conversation ends, Gavin changes his tack and asks Adam whether it would be possible for him to get Gavin involved with them, having seen a financial opportunity in the corruption which apparently worried him in the first place.

Similarly to Gavin, Canning has a blind belief that he is actually contributing to the country. He presents himself as a new South African man, working to contribute to the development of a new South Africa. Even though his "Nuwe Hoop" settlement was built for the residents who had been evicted from one of his father's farms in exchange for dropping a land claim they had against him, Canning considers it a "new South African solution" (60). He argues that he is rehousing "previously disadvantaged" people, saying that they "have done very well", therefore claiming that he has helped them. However, Canning is the one who is getting the most profit from this arrangement:

> I gave them the land, I built the houses for nothing. […] But then he goes on in a different voice, more confiding and calculating: 'Of course I got the better deal. No more land claim to hassle with. Cheap labour on tap to build the pass. And I'll be using them in my future plans too.' (60)

Canning, though putting himself in the position of the benefactor who rehoused the "previously disadvantaged", admits that he is the one who profits the most from the deal, having won

financially, administratively – as they dropped the land claim against him, and professionally – as he will rehire the people whom he hired to build the settlement in later business arrangements.

Essentially, Canning comes off as a character who is struggling to determine where he belongs in this new regime, which feeds into the ambivalence of his nature:

> In Damon Galgut's post-apartheid South Africa, Adam and Canning fail to acknowledge this ideological inheritance; they fail to re-locate themselves within the new South Africa – both privately and politically. (Borzaga 2020: 9)

Canning makes it difficult to truly grasp his character for he presents himself as a positively minded man who sees the new state of the country through an optimistic lens. However, every now and then, his true nature resurfaces and Canning shows a repressed side of him in which he struggles to "relocate" himself within this new South Africa he allegedly cherishes so.

After his father died, for instance, his game farm went apart and therefore, poachers started to plunder the place, so much so in fact that when Canning arrived, it had been almost completely demolished. He hired the local community – i.e. the people from Nuwe Hoop – to secure the area. But the fact is that the community too was poaching. "The guards and the thieves were the same people – there's South Africa in a nutshell" (116), says Canning to the surprise of Adam who claims that Canning seemed "so given to flowery declarations of hope and happiness". Canning seems to denounce a corrupt South Africa in which the guards and the thieves are the same people while at the same time parading his new South African couple and his new South African business. This hypocrisy is such that as Adam gets to know Canning better, he "becomes more used to the two warring extremes of Canning's nature" (116), hence the very ambivalence of his position towards the new regime.

In the Ingadi 300 business, there is a black empowerment partner, Enoch Nandi, whom Canning does not seem to despise as they even spend both Christmas and New Year together. However, as Canning explains to Adam how he wanted a Xhosa name for the golf course but that Enoch Nandi chose the Zulu name "Ingadi," Canning says: "Who am I to argue, I'm only the dumb whitey who's put up the land. So, hey, cool, whatever" (137). "Whitey" being an offensive word for a white person, it seems that Canning is sarcastically reiterating what he believes Nandi must think of him, a "dumb" white man who is only there to provide with the land. This suggests a certain "travesty […] made of greed and absurdity, with a big moral hollowness at the core" (138) in Canning's character, implying that the ambiguity of his character is fuelled by a less and less implicit hypocrisy. Moreover, during the launch party, as Nandi takes the floor, Canning's hypocritical side resurfaces:

> Enoch Nandi, whom Adam had met at Gondwana over Christmas. On that occasion Canning had been deferential and polite towards him, but now he murmurs snidely. 'There's the black empowerment camouflage.'
>
> 'I thought you liked him.'
>
> 'Where'd you get that idea? No, I despise him. I despise all of them. It's just a game – a game you have to play.' (185)

Canning, who had shown himself friendly towards Nandi, now claims that he despises him, calling his position in the business a "camouflage", a front meant to suggest that the business promotes diversity. What is more, Canning adds that he not only despises Nandi, but also "all of them", either meaning all of his collaborators in Ingadi 300, or, unsurprisingly, all black people. All of these ambiguities promote certain conceptions that one might have of Canning.

As Adam recalls the first black student they had at their school, Canning says that he does not remember it at all, even though Adam claims it was a "momentous day" (72), suggesting that everyone should remember it. But somehow, this has slipped out of Canning's head, who only adds: "Well, I can tell you, I drove through the school a couple of years ago when I was up there, and it's mostly black kids now" (72). Knowing Canning's character, this comment could be received as racist, for Canning does not remember the first black student of the school but he does, however, notice how most of the students now are black. All these instances attest and feed into a perception one may have about Canning: a man who does not know where he fits in this new South African regime and who therefore behaves in a very ambiguous way, sometimes showing himself to be open to what the new regime has to offer the country, sometimes disturbed by the place that black South Africans have regained in the nation.

Many diverging opinions have arisen about the new regime of the country. On the one hand, *The Good Doctor* offers a somewhat less ambivalent take on the matter, with a rather clear optimistic versus pessimistic binary between a blindly hopeful and enthusiastic Laurence Waters in contrast with a fairly negative, cynical Frank Eloff who struggles to believe that change is possible. On the other hand, Galgut bids, in *The Impostor*, a wider range of views, some more ambivalent, others hesitating or even hypocritical as they conceal a certain disdain for the changes that have been made against them, though it can be argued that all of the narrative focuses on Adam's perspective, so that a sense of his imposterism in fact uniformly saturates all of the narrative.

7. **Conclusion**

In an extensive analysis of *The Good Doctor* (2003) and *The Impostor* (2008), I was able to study the condition of early post-Apartheid South Africa, as described by Galgut, and to, therefore, criticise the "rainbowist" ideology that promotes a utopic South Africa free of race-related issues. As a result, the focus of my dissertation was on how post-Apartheid South Africa is depicted in Galgut's two consecutive novels. I argued that the author contests the concept of a "new" South Africa, which he sees as a ploy to disguise pre-existing issues behind a "new" identity and therefore create the appearance of a healed society.

I claimed that their settings assess and dismantle the notion of the "Rainbow Nation" by uncovering truths about the country's state, including corruption, economic imbalance, and opportunity discrepancy. Furthermore, I asserted that the settings are used to convey a number of notions and sentiments such as transmitting some of the characters' mental states to creating a hyper-realistic experience that may be unsettling at times. In both novels, the setting is a major element because it allows the author to explore aspects that the characters are unable to express and to exploit portions of the narrative that words are unable to convey. In addition, I investigated the interracial heterosexual relationships between white men and black women in the novels, examining the power dynamics between them and what they reveal about interracial relations, particularly between a white man and a black woman. Finally, I analysed the white male characters' contrasting opinions on post-Apartheid South Africa, arguing that white South Africans have a diverse range of points of view, whereas others have a more conflicted and complex perspective of post-Apartheid South Africa, which stems from false consciousness, remorse, and bad faith.

Galgut continues to write about post-Apartheid South Africa, his latest published novel being *The Promise* (2021). It follows an Afrikaner family through four decades, during and after the Apartheid regime. The novel tackles a promise made by the terminally ill matriarch (under the Apartheid), that of bequeathing the family house to her black domestic servant who cares for her in her last moments. From there unfolds a long stride within the family between, on the one hand, the two siblings who do not want the servant to inherit the family house, and on the other hand, the youngest sister who fights for her mother's promise to be kept. After her siblings both die, the youngest decides to honour the promise and bequeath the family house to the black domestic servant. Once again, Galgut uses a novel to reflect an ideology that goes beyond literature. He uses the fact that the family refuses to bequeath their house to their black

servant as an allegory for the moral promise made by white South Africans to their black compatriots but which continually fails to be kept in post-Apartheid South Africa. The novel, however, offers a happy ending, as the promise is eventually kept and the black servant finally inherits the house she was promised over 30 years earlier, suggesting that, perhaps, with the help of well-meaning white people who distance themselves from their privilege, a brighter, fairer future is possible for the country.

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