

# The Social Formation of Post-Apartheid South Africa

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## Abstract

This article offers an overview of the changing social formation of South Africa from the institutionalisation of apartheid in the late 1940s to the present, and its representation in the literature of the country, reflecting the translational literary history of the “New” South Africa as a nation undergoing transformations, particularly in the labour situation, land struggles and the politics of the Rainbow nation. Thus, the article envisions literature as providing incisive historical analysis of the South African life “from the inside” the social and economic processes as lived by the diverse cultures in South Africa. Drawing on the racial structure of the economy, the paper lays the historical basis to South Africa’s economic challenges such as poverty, joblessness and deprivation, and argues how these inflections have been mapped in the literature of the “New” South Africa. The paper also shows that the analysis of socio-cultural, economic and political transformation must begin with the disclosure of the genesis of the human exploitation of labour that generated the disparities prevalent in the “New” South Africa. Hence, because of the shifting socio-cultural, economic and political boundaries, post-apartheid South Africa can be represented as a “national imaginary”, a future after apartheid, representing new narratives of a socially, culturally, economically and politically transforming nation.

**Key Words:** social formation, national imaginary, Rainbow nation, political economy.

## **The Process of Disclosure: Baring Inequalities of Apartheid**

In South Africa, the material conditions of apartheid were responsible for the existence of socio-economic inequalities. These inequalities were mainly grounded on the system of labour control, which was the most important factor in the sustenance of white capitalism. Hence, South African social formation can best be captured through the study of apartheid's system of labour organisation that set forth an array of other socio-spatial, economic, political and cultural inequalities. Thus, South African society developed along racial profiling and stereotyping, creating a convoluted system of racial groups that did not relate, socially and economically. Apartheid's economic and social legislations set off the conditions upon which the (white) dominant and the subordinate races were positioned in relation to the production of labour within South Africa's means of production.

The provision of labour was racially defined, and sustained by apartheid's systematic racial exploitation. Burawoy (1981: 324) locates the origin of this form of economic exploitation on "the labor process and the patterns of the reproduction of labor power". The labour operations at the mines in apartheid South Africa reveal this racial and exploitative organisation of labour power, and provide a starting ground for the analysis of the racial nature of labour organisation. This "colonial labor process", as Burawoy (1981: 301) argues, set up "gangs" of African workers under the mean and unfeeling supervision of white bosses in the gold mines. In this, subjugated Black labour power was required to expand and sustain the mining industry, while the white government pumped in capital.

The majority of the Black people in South Africa produced cheap labour power to advance the capitalist interests of the whites who were in political power. In the South African labour relations during apartheid, the Afrikaner government advanced their economic interests by establishing and managing the means of production, and strategically, the majority of the Afrikaners invested in state corporations, controlled imports and established a huge Afrikaner capital to sustain Afrikaner capitalism. This Afrikaner bourgeoisie was not interested in the welfare of the Black population, including their Black workers (Burawoy, 1981: 320). In apartheid South Africa, Black people were confined to poorly paid and unpredictable jobs, which was a direct consequence of the 1953 "Bantu Education Act" that laid the ground for "a separate and inferior education system for African pupils" (TRC, Vol. 1, 1998: 32). Consequently, Black labour, and by extension, the growth of Black capital, had/has been marginal and unproductive, and largely remained manual in nature.

This system of the reproduction of labour power continued for decades, the result being that Black people sold their labour power for wages, while the whites structured their economic and political base. In this master-servant relationship, the apartheid state constructed a labour process that was prone to frequent racially defined industrial action, and was affected by a dominant Black labour force fighting for better working conditions and improved wages.

South African writers, such as Peter Abrahams and Zakes Mda, have represented the effect of harsh working conditions and difficult economic circumstances for Black people, and the ensuing social tensions that cheap labour power and Black migrant labour had on the African population. Abrahams, in his apartheid setting of the novel, *Mine Boy* (1963), depicts the suffering of African miners, and the reality of having to confront white subjugation and mistreatment in the mines. In the novel, Xuma, from “the North”, the Black protagonist of the novel, moves from Malay Camp, a native location in the poor Northern provinces in search of work in the mines in segregated apartheid South Africa. When he comes to the city, he is a figure of poverty, but in spite of a few material advantages from his labour, he finds himself dehumanised physically and mentally. Xuma’s life is a testimony to the degrading effects of African migrant labour, and the damaging conditions of the South African industrial capitalism of the mines.

Burawoy (1981) historicises the difficult labour conditions for the African mine labourer. For example, 76,000 African mine workers conducted a strike in 1946 that paralysed many mines and brought to the fore the poor working conditions that the African miners worked under (Burawoy, 1981: 316). The mining industry easily expanded with capital accumulation from the white government and the guaranteed cheap Black labour, at times from neighbouring countries, thus weakening the bargaining power of Black South African migrants (Burawoy, 1981: 301; Terreblanche & Nattrass, 1990: 11). Consequently, the Black migrant labour force was paid “cheaply”, in contrast to the white workers who were paid well, in spite of the former force engaging in spurious forms of manual labour (Terreblanche & Nattrass, 1990: 9). The migrant labour situation subjugated the African political economy.

The Afrikaner ideology of separate development in the rural areas was realised through the creation of the “Bantustans” in the 1960s. These arid places became “dumping” grounds for Black people dismissed out of “white” urban spaces, and it became a strategy for influx control of Black people into other forbidden spaces (Keenan, 1988: 143). In areas such as Transkei and the Eastern Cape where these Bantustan policies became actualised, there was resultant underdevelopment and massive suffering of the African population (Beinart & Bundy, 1987: 42). The African communities were disintegrated and exploited socially and economically.

Before the 1990s, Black people were relegated to townships and homelands, in accordance with apartheid’s Group Areas Act, which restricted them to specific Black designated areas. These concentration camps were delineated by boundary restrictions, separating them from white productive areas. Early anti-apartheid writing explored the socio-economic and political ramifications by the legislative restrictions of apartheid. Apartheid legislations served the socio-economic purpose of lifting the white South Africans, and especially the Afrikaners, into positions of wealth and privilege, in contrast to the other races.

The result of these pieces of legislation ultimately influenced how and where the different races lived, the kind of amenities they had legitimate access to, the quality of education allowed for each group, among other restrictions. The turbulent race relations of the apartheid era also found expression in the writings of many scholars. Athol Fugard, an acclaimed South African playwright, whose plays chiefly deal with families and/ or individuals of mixed descent, sets his dramatic works in the traumatic and divisive South African period of apartness. In *The Blood Knot* (1968), Fugard plays on the dialogism of racial fear and hate. Fugard foregrounds that Black people and the coloureds fear rejection by the whites. Fugard reveals the absurd nature of race relations. Whereas the different races anticipate meeting each other, the fear of rejection looms large, making that meeting infinitely impossible.

The apartheid system also instituted barriers against interracial sexual liaisons, because the whites feared that these networks would have rendered the white race “impure”. Bessie Head is one notable South African author who suffered the immorality of the apartheid system. Head’s life epitomises the turbulent South African history. Born to a white mother and a Black father in apartheid’s period of sexual transgressions and restrictions, she faced recurrent hardships and constant rejection. Similarly, her characters suffer from identity disorientation, emblematic of the difficult circumstances that she faced while in exile in the rural village of Serowe, Botswana, away from South Africa’s political upheavals of the 1960s (Eilersen, 1995). Early apartheid years were chiefly marked by Black exile.

Writing about the 1950s and 1960s apartheid South Africa’s system of migrant labour system, May (1990) avers:

The prevention of rapid Black population growth in cities, together with the expulsion of surplus urban-dwellers and the massive relocation or the ‘dumping’ from both urban and rural white-designated areas to homelands, created increasing social and economic differentials between urban and rural sectors, sharpening the relative poverty of the latter. (177)

In this regard, the African peasantry developed as a disparate group. There were those who lived in the designated Reserves, while others remained as “squatter-peasants” in the lands that they originally owned. Others, however, were lucky as they managed to live out of the “traditional economic and social structure” relatively independent of white control, but this group was insignificant in number (Bundy, 1988: 238; Wolpe, 1972). In the period preceding the fall of apartheid, there were already signs of the emergence of a “Black petite-bourgeoisie” (Wolpe, 1988: 51). There were also economic differentials between the Blacks who lived in the “Bantustans” and those who resided in Black “urban” settlements. Those at the African Reserves were reeling under poverty and neglect, while those in “urban” settlements got means of livelihood through temporary jobs in the “white” city. Wolpe (1988) foresaw the fracturing of the Black class structure, which was/ is later to mark the emergence of the Black middle class of post-apartheid South Africa.

Many of the peasant workers were exploited in the labour-tenancy situation to sustain white capitalist development, in which the white man used the Black tenant's labour, including that of his livestock on his farm, without paying, in exchange for subsistence land (Bundy, 1988). Ezekiel Mphahlele, in the short story, "The Master of Doornvlei", foregrounds white fear and Black disenchantment by revisiting the labour-tenancy situation and the poverty, unease and the mistreatment of Black labour force in the South African white farms during the apartheid era. In this story, labour unrest brings disagreements between the alienated Black foreman, Mfukeri and his white master, Sarel Britz, and the Black labourers. In spite of fifteen years of dedicated service, Mfukeri is forced out of the white farm after his African bull kills Britz's stallion. The story captures the pastoral problems in the rural South Africa in the apartheid era.

The agricultural restructuring systems in the 1970s and the 1980s led to the suppression of the labour-tenancy, which was finally outlawed in 1981 (Marcus, 1989: 81, 84). Consequently, hunger became widespread among the "surplus" Black population evicted to pave way for white restructuring of agriculture (Marcus, 1989). The result was that African agriculture was made peripheral. In fact, many Black people would find it difficult to sustain subsistence production. The Black population had to continually look for economic means of survival. The situation was made worse by the migrant labour situation that took away productive Black labour. The various segregationist policies, such as the "dumping" of the excess urban dwellers and the relocations, served the primary purpose of alienating people from their lands, and casting them away from (peri)urban spaces. The history of land annexations during the British colonisation before apartheid, and the continued land disenfranchisement during the apartheid era, and the collapse of the practice of labour-tenancy on annexed farms in the later years of the apartheid system, continually and genealogically denied land as a means of livelihood to the majority of the population. Before and during apartheid, local communities that traditionally held rights to the land became landless and therefore dependent on labour provision to the white man.

Migrant work separated families, largely because male migrant workers were often absent, away in mines and in white-owned farms, while their families remained "at home". This fundamentally affected social relations among the Black population. The migrant labour situation led to many males leaving their families in rural "homelands"/"Arid Bantustans"/"urban" concentration settlements in search for work. In fact, more than half of adult males in the Reserves in the 1930s were absent, away in distant places as providers of cheap labour (Bundy, 1988: 225). These African Reserves, for purely white economic reasons, became the source of cheap Black migrant labour. This was almost entirely guaranteed, as the Natives Land Act 27/ 1913 expressly forbade Black land ownership outside the Reserves, and the Black people thereby remained entirely dependent on labour selling to the white man (Wolpe, 1972). This was the culmination of the creation of the economic structure of South Africa that laid special emphasis on how cheap labour and its pattern of reproduction was to be harnessed, primarily through African exploitation and racial segregation (Burawoy, 1981: 324).

The absence of the males had complicated the social set-up of the Reserves/the “Bantustans”, and the urban Black settlements and the townships. Apartheid affected migrants socially, economically and psychologically. The exploitative and alienating situation would ensure that the migrant labourer and his family’s social, economic and cultural situation deteriorate. With limited rights to go home regularly, or agitate for better wages, alongside the payment of unrealistic wages, he would remain wasted away in the white man’s mines and farms (Wolpe, 1972). Coupled with this was the soaring rent and housing costs in the Black areas that rendered life for the Black migrant labourer and his family difficult (Seekings, 1988: 59). In such arduous circumstances, the wife/wives of the migrant worker, and his children, would go to neighbouring white farms to sell their labour to supplement his meagre earnings. Inevitably, the migrant labourer’s wife/wives and children would find themselves in another form of exploitation in white farms, which often translated to sexual exploitation of African women by the white men, and continued cases of Black child labour (Marcus, 1989: 109). White farmers were continually exploiting the migrants’ wives. These women got more children, increasing the dependency levels, while some got children with white men, thereby breaking apartheid’s Immorality Act that forbade sexual liaisons between Black people and whites (Bundy, 1988: 225).

Zakes Mda’s post-apartheid novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, captures the socio-economic and psychological suffering that Black migrants underwent, and the ensuing sexual exploitation of women, and the social and cultural ramifications of the Immorality Act in the historical frontier region of Excelsior in the Free State that captured the national imaginary in the late 1970s in South Africa. The absence of the migrant labourers from the rural areas inevitably led to poverty and suffering. The situations at the places of work were equally limiting for the labourers. Tinged with their long absences from home, these male migrant labourers set up unions with men in their places of work. These male-male unions led to a number of “cross-dressing ‘moffies’”, who would significantly grow in number, so that in the early 1990s, they were a group that hoped to form their own sub-cultural community, away from their repressed status at the mines (Munro, 2008: 753). Some of those who remained “straight”, however, set up unions with women in Black designated spaces and forgot their wives back at home. The long absences from home, coupled with the propensity of sexual liaisons in cramped informal settlements, led to sexually transmitted diseases and knotty marriages. Consequently, this led to the transfer of diseases from the labourer to his rural wife/wives, and, subsequently, the breakup of many families (Hunter, 2007: 692, 694).

The absence of the (male) father figures in the Reserves inexorably divorced them from their roles in the upbringing of their children, especially their sons, who were growing up in violent and incendiary spaces. For example, in the 1980s and the 1990s, South African townships recorded huge waves of revolts and killings that emerged as expressions of dissatisfaction among the marginalised youth who felt aggrieved by poor housing and living conditions (Seekings, 1988; Seekings, 1996: 103).

The youth in the “Bantustans” were also engaged in demonstrations against state repression and poor educational and living standards, and the absence of employment (Keenan, 1988: 137). This was a period of youthful urban influx, as South Africans pushed into the forbidden urban territories of the apartheid system.

During the apartheid era, the allure of the South African city, in spite of the economic depression and the physical brutality of the era prevalent in urban spaces, excited the imagination of the Black youth. In *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948), Alan Paton examines the intricate social and racial relations in apartheid South Africa that gave way to racial oppression. In the novel, a Black priest goes to the city to look for his lost son. He becomes a witness to the effects of the monstrous city that has swallowed his son and entrapped him in violence. Paton shows the ensnaring aspects of the apartheid South African city. The novel is a precursor to the post-apartheid novels of Phaswane Mpe, Niq Mhlongo and K. Sello Duiker that represent urban imaginaries as uneasy spaces in post-apartheid South Africa.

In South Africa’s historiography, whites feared Black urbanisation and the relative uplifting of the living standards of the Black population. In the apartheid formation, Black people only provided migrant labour in “white” cities. The apartheid system harnessed the power of space by creating a restricted urban territory that privileged the urban centres and cities for the white population. The Urban Areas Act effectively enforced legislations that curtailed the movement of Black people into the “white” cities (Davenport, 1991: 530). This relative occlusion served to not only create a unique white class, but also served socio-economic dimensions, as they were herded away in “Black” areas for easy monitoring. These physical restrictions were also in support of a greater socio-cultural, economic and ideological aim: to control the wealth and power as a white race in a dominant pattern, thereby subordinating the other races. This sealing off is reflected in the literary works of Ezekiel Mphahlele, who grew up in one of South Africa’s impoverished “Black locations”. In *Down Second Avenue* (1971), Mphahlele gives a personalised account of the effects of one of apartheid’s most oppressive laws, the Group Areas Act, portraying life in the African locations where racial oppression, the brutality of the apartheid police, poverty and the other inhuman restrictions of apartheid affected the Black population.

However, even with the Afrikaner fear of Black urbanisation, the late 1970s and the later years became increasingly difficult for the Afrikaner to restrict the growth of townships and Black people desire for urban work, propelled by the shifting Black political consciousness in urban streets at the time (Terreblanche & Nattrass, 1990: 7, 13; May, 1990: 182). With this increasing Black urbanisation, the stage had been set for the collapse of territorial restrictions in South Africa. The complexities of the growing Black desire for urban life are portrayed in the literature of the 1970s and the 1980s. Writers of this period represented the struggle against white economic hegemony and the difficult circumstances of the Black labour. Writers also represented the conditions of urban segregation, and the ensuing urban protests and the brutality of the apartheid system. The 1976 Soweto Uprising, rebellions in the townships and mass demonstrations against the untenable system provided rallying points for violent anti-apartheid response.

In *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972), Alex La Guma underscores underground subversion in the freedom struggle against the apartheid system. This novel portrays apartheid's violence on Black dissidents and lays bare the effects of oppression of apartheid on the Black population. In this novel, we find the "historical context" of the "post-Shaperville period of intense repression" and resistance, in which the brutality by the police was met by strong defiance by Black political organisers (Mkhize, 2010: 916). This novel is situated in South Africa's 1960s "social reality" in its portrayal of the Shaperville Massacre and forced resettlements (Mkhize, 2010: 918; Terreblanche & Nattrass, 1990: 14).

In the South African situation, literature took the form of "protest" writing, as anti-apartheid writers used literature to agitate against the excesses of the apartheid regime. The poetry of the apartheid period reflected the harsh political conditions of repression. One notes violent imagery, such as the use of "sounds" in Dennis Brutus's poetry, to personify the police violence of the apartheid era (Feinberg, 1980: 2, 3). Many South African poets focused on violence and death, and often paid glowing tribute to the heroes of the freedom struggle, who died during the struggle, or were serving prison sentences (Feinberg, 1980: 19, 20, 39, 55). They also condemned the brutality of the apartheid system.

In the South African literary landscape, writers have demonstrated their political commitment by penning texts that reflect the socio-economic and political realities of apartheid South Africa. Literature has been part of the general protest against the apartheid system, and against white (economic) domination. In many ways, apartheid writing reflected how the apartheid system skewed the control of resources, and the resultant economic subjugation revealed through apartheid's influx control, land annexations, oppression and racial discrimination.

South Africa by the 1990s was awash with youth who were largely homeless and unemployed. At this time, many young South Africans were apprehensive of the future. This widespread dissatisfaction among the youth was often a rallying point against state repression, and this stoked tensions and fed embers to youthful agitation in the areas in the run-up to the democracy. In the national imaginary of post-apartheid South Africa, there is a shift from the representation of the state violence and mistreatment of the apartheid system, and its violent aftermaths, to the depiction of stories that had been suppressed during the apartheid era (Gagiano, 2004: 815). The South African situation shows the transforming possibilities of literature.

### **“Transformation-as-Entanglement”: Ambiguous Transition to the “New” Nation**

The 1990s was a period of social and political transformations in South Africa. As a momentous historical epoch for a country caught up in decades of racial inequality, the 1990s was marked by the abolition of many of apartheid's exploitative legislations (Cronin, 1999). In 1991, in the run-up to the realisation of full democracy, the Land Act, the Group Areas Act and the Registration of Population Act were repealed.



The “New” nation’s founding father, Nelson Mandela was released from the Robben Island maximum security prison, alongside other political prisoners. Nadine Gordimer represents this celebratory and uniting moment for Black families in her short story, “Amnesty”. Gordimer portrays the effects of apartheid on family relationships, intertwining the “private and social destiny” of the diverse South African races (Clingman, 1981: 167). The South African literary writers have long been part of the struggle against apartheid, and many of the leading lights, such as Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Njabulo Ndebele, have represented the decisive historical moment when apartheid ended (Chapman, 2003). Ndebele’s *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (2004) is an insightful exposé of the suffering of neglected women waiting, and searching for their missing husbands, taken away by the mines, exile and political activism.

The post-1994 period in South Africa envisaged a new beginning that was evidenced by a transformative agenda. There was an anticipation of a freer society modelled along a democratic tradition that recognised diverse races and peoples under the banner of a Rainbow nation. The Rainbow nation was a hopeful beginning for South Africans of diverse cultures. The hope in the democratisation lay in the inclusive participation of the diverse races and classes in the Rainbow (Turok, 1996). This is the envisioned hope of a future of a new political dispensation. The founding leaders set ground for a constitutional beginning and a fresh democratic start.

Under the banner of the Rainbow, the different groups anticipate inclusiveness and equity from the democratic government. While cognisant of this national desire, post-apartheid literature projects a future of “non-racialism” and reconciliation (Heywood, 2004: 20; Attridge & Jolly, 1998: 3). South Africans in general remain optimistic of a collective future of “non-racialism”, equity and freedom. South Africans of diverse races hold out to a future of racial cohesiveness. Post-apartheid literature recognises the gains and the losses of the democratic transition, without overly getting sentimental about the past, or by losing sight of the promised Rainbow.

The Rainbow nation, though making attempts to live up to the promise of economic and racial equality, has found it difficult to resolve many economic and political challenges inherited from apartheid. This inertia of social change has largely been responsible for the prevalence of collective apprehensions among the Black and the white groups in South Africa. Post-apartheid literature reflects the ambiguous trajectory of a nation caught up in a complex transformation. With the country’s transformation to the “New” South Africa, new contradictions have emerged. The post-apartheid nation finds itself enmeshed in new forms of conflict, revealing an uneasy disjuncture marked by “transformation-as-entanglement” with racial and class based contradictions that set forth an array of other socio-economic and cultural problems (Nuttall, 2004: 740). In spite of the end of racism and of the embrace of a “non-racial” South Africa, race and class differences bring up new sites of contest and disagreement. Literature of the post-apartheid period captures the frustration at the slow pace of change in the country. Though race and racism are no longer privileged in social and economic discourses, they are nuanced in many socio-economic and political discussions.

The fall of apartheid, and the collapse of institutionalised racism, upset the scales in the economic structure of South Africa's social formation. The privileges that white South Africans enjoyed during the apartheid era because of their "superior" race fizzled out. Their earlier position in relation to capital was challenged by a new economic rationalisation with a reparative and restorative agenda. Hall's (1980) observation captures the situation in South Africa after apartheid:

In particular social formations, especially in periods of 'transition', social formations themselves may be an 'articulated combination' of different modes with specified, shifting terms of hierarchical ordering between them. (325)

Ideologically, the transfer of political power to the ruling Black elite has done little to tilt the scales in the economic and the labour situation of the country. Piecemeal reforms have been wholly inadequate for the Black worker. In most cases, these reforms have not favoured the Black working class (Terreblanche & Nattrass, 1990: 15). Consequently, by the time apartheid ended in the early 1990s, the white population, in general, had substantial economic power, and the transition did not substantially affect their economy (Giliomee, 1992). Economically, the kind and nature of work, and the wages accruing from it, often reflect class and racial differences. This means that the different classes provide different forms of labour, in which its cost is paid up on the basis of race and other factors such as education (which still racially defines the job cadres).

The system of migrant labour has not improved in terms of wages and working conditions in the new era. In spite of the mining companies increased profits, the migrant labourer was, and is still, paid wages below the cost of production. Glaringly, the same exploitation of labour persists decades into the Rainbow. The 2012 Lonmin Marikana Platinum mine strike is a case in point. The recurrent strikes have demonstrated a lack of social and economic inclusion, especially for the majority of the African population. Even in the Rainbow, underpaid migrants living in poor shacks and poor infrastructural development work in dangerous mines with reportedly high accidents and fatalities (Webb, 2012). This reveals the dominance of the interests of the economically privileged classes, particularly the whites, in the mining sector of the country's economy, and in the other sectors as well. The democratic government's inability to cushion workers, and the reported massacres by the police of several Black mine workers in the Marikana industrial action, echo the cases of police brutality and mining-related deaths witnessed during the apartheid system.

The situation in the rural areas in post-apartheid South Africa has also been limiting, and as already observed, colonial land annexations and the relegation of Black people into unproductive areas eventually led to a developed white economy, and a destroyed African economy (Davenport, 1991: 488-494). Principally, land has remained a contentious issue in South Africa.

Different communities, especially the Black majority, have been unhappy about land reform. Disgruntled by the inability of the post-apartheid government to repatriate land to the “rightful” owners, the disenfranchised Black people continue to live as dispersed and disparate groups within a set-up of an African economy. Even in the Rainbow, land ownership, commerce and the mining industry continue to support the white political economy, while sustaining the same exploitative labour pattern witnessed during the colonial and apartheid eras (Davenport, 1991: 488-494). In spite of a number of reparative gestures such as the giving of the land grants to emerging Black farmers, the achievements are comparably insignificant, as many Africans are still in hunger for land (Lodge, 2002: 71, 81). Far too many Black people requiring financial help overwhelm the post-apartheid government. On the other hand, the white farmers are in a relatively comfortable zone, as the apartheid system was able to give them financial support and land grants, in addition to the Black cheap labour (Terreblanche & Nattrass, 1990). Decades into the Rainbow, access to land by African people is limited.

Land in post-apartheid South Africa continues to fracture existing social relations, often manifested in the wider socio-cultural and economic problems between the various races. After the 1990s, many white farmers were on the receiving end of racially motivated crimes. Black people reportedly used violence, rape and murder to gain access to land (Kok, 2008: 13). J.M. Coetzee, in his post-apartheid novel, *Disgrace*, ploughs into the divisive land question. In the novel, Coetzee situates white rape and violence in a wider schema of revenge and retribution by the Black population. In an environment where rape has been endemic against women, both Black and white, Coetzee’s novel situates rape within a social and economic (mal)adjustments. In Achmat Dangor’s *Bitter Fruit* (2001), rape projects post-apartheid haunting, making it difficult for the haunted female victim to forgive the rapist even in the new dispensation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. South Africa is painted as a dystopia in which land emerges as a dominant trope for post-apartheid socio-economic and political restructurings.

At the centre of the agitation for the economic and political reforms in post-apartheid South Africa is the question of land redistribution. Heightened political tensions even within the ranks of the African National Congress itself have been chiefly on the “soft” government policy of land reform, which has been promoting land adjustments based on the willing buyer-seller arrangement. Yet in spite of these proposals being projected by the government as “non-racial”, many Black people support Julius Malema, the young, fervent and firebrand political leader, once an elected president of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL). Malema’s calls for the nationalisation of the mines and the seizure of white owned farms is a pointer that land historical injustices against Black people have not been authoritatively addressed by the post-apartheid government (Glaser, 2012; Hall, 2004: 24). In South Africa today, land reform is painstakingly slow and inconsistent.

Malema, an epitome of the Mandela children who grew out of the struggle for African emancipation in the 1980s, has been supported by a section of the Black population for his radical proposals for racial equity. But in spite of his seeming support for the majority poor, his quick rise to economic success and luxury because of his close association with the African National Congress, and the reported cases of tax evasion and money laundering, cast a shadow over his (youth) emancipation ideals (Glaser, 2012: 127, 137, 140). Furthermore, the new democratic government has kept a status quo in many of the defining economic policies of the apartheid system, while entertaining sleaze and corruption within its ranks. Burawoy (1981) captures the difficulty of political systems to radicalise economic changes:

All ruling parties, insofar as they do not directly dismantle the capitalist state, are prisoners of its logic which, among other things, operates to disorganize the working classes and constitute the unity of the dominant classes. (309)

Many of the country's socio-economic, cultural and political policies, while reaching out to Black people in a number of respects, have been largely protective of the exploitative structure of the South African form of capitalism in which privilege articulates in favour of race.

The South African class formation was premised on a combination of systems of rules and regulations that complicated racial and ethnic identities. Burawoy (1974) argues about the delicate confluence between race and ethnic identities, and colonialism/apartheid, and the role it plays in shaping the class structure:

Where the superstructure is not a direct reflection of the class structure but distinguishes and discriminates on the basis of racial categories, then the economic interests of racial groups within the same class may differ ... it then becomes pertinent to examine how class forces give rise to and perpetuate a superstructure based on distinctions such as race. (528)

In post-apartheid South Africa, race and racial categories of the apartheid system have been replaced by a consciousness towards "non-racialism", so that the discourse on race has somewhat muted into class differentials. This situation is revealing of the post-apartheid class-race condition, fitting into Wolpe's (1988: 75) contention that, "fissures along class lines may occur within racially defined groups ... the racial division of classes and the class division of races may be present simultaneously". In post-apartheid South Africa, race and class dialectic consistently define social groups and structure ongoing conflicts.

The Black middle class who previously belonged to a marginalised group have taken advantage of the changing political and ideological situation, thereby living alongside whites in the same economic climates (Hall, 1980: 341). However, race remains “the modality in which class is ‘lived’, the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and ‘fought for’” (Hall, 1980: 342). The Black middle class, although relatively increasing, is a small percentage, compared to the disenfranchised Black population. The Black middle class in post-apartheid South Africa find themselves in crosscurrents of racial and class strife. The Black political bourgeoisie and the ambitious Black middle class have become rich at the expense of the majority of the population. This group has benefitted from the economic and political struggle with the change of the political dispensation.

With the end of apartheid, the whites who had been the beneficiaries of the apartheid system, felt marginalised and alienated in the new dispensation. Some right wing Afrikaners expressed a wish for autonomy, calling out for a separate homeland for the Afrikaners, whom they felt the democratic government would dispossess in lieu of past violations (Krog, 2002). However, the transition to the democracy did not substantially affect white economy, as the democratic government did not dismantle the economic structures of the apartheid system, opting instead for a conciliatory path. Thus, although they lost the political will and influence, a large percentage of the whites are still dominating the economy, along with the Black middle and the Black political class. In relation to capital, the white population still stands at a privileged position. Race reveals itself as a factor in the capitalist structure, signified through white racial privilege. Racism, with its colonial roots, continues in a nuanced manner through economic power. On the other hand, however, the transition to Black leadership has not directly translated to the transfer of economic power to the majority of the Black people. A substantial part of the Black population still lives outside the reparative dream of the Rainbow.

From the foregoing, the white and the Black races of South Africa show marked socio-economic patterns and shifts, blurring the edges between those who are poor, and those who are rich. The different classes existing today are heterogeneous groups, often with different, competing interests. Even in the post-apartheid period, race has continued to preserve the earlier economic hierarchies of apartheid which sustained the white race for generations. In effect, race is imbued within class struggles. Hence, class experiences in South Africa reveal the existence of internal contradictions, in which race takes up the locus. The capitalist class in the “New” South Africa is revealing of a tense disjuncture between the white owners of production and the new ANC ruling elite and a conglomerate of Black middle class wielding economic power and patronage.

The African National Congress (ANC), which won the elections and set up the post-1994 “non-racial” democracy, instead opted out for a “Rainbow” that set an agenda for a Black reparative and restorative justice to happen, without dismantling the social or economic structure of the country. It was a peaceful restructuring, which was supported in part by the institution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which foreclosed the trauma, and the grandstanding of the apartheid era in favour of “non-racialism” and equality among the different cultures. The TRC was an achievement of the democratic government. It carried a reparative dream for many victims of the apartheid era, especially the Black population who suffered from violence (Lodge, 2002: 190). A number of post-apartheid writers, including Antjie Krog (2002), understand the urgency of representing the “new nationalist discourse” beyond the violent truth of the apartheid past, and, hopefully, bring restitution and healing to the fractured history of the nation (Naidu, 2001: 18). Krog in *Country of My Skull*, shows the dialogic engagement between the perpetrators of apartheid and their victims seeking to understand the aftermaths of the violent rapacity of the apartheid era in the hope that a “new, shared identity [is] negotiated” (Naidu, 2001: 19). Krog exemplifies the difficulty of accepting unwelcome truths of a traumatic past in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings of the “New” South Africa.

At the core of this failure of the redistributive agenda is the bitterness and anger of many of the Black people who feel that the white economy prevailingly disenfranchise the majority. Yet the ANC’s resolve to follow the path of reconciliation, and non-racialism, was the most pragmatic, given that South Africa had undergone intense violent social restructurings in the past (Marks, 1994: 6).

The road to constitutional democracy was marred by greater socio-political and economic problems for the youth. This period was a traumatic and tense moment for Black youth, as they agitated for social, economic and political reforms. The period was marked by an intensely violent youth, who found political reasons with the ANC to fight the apartheid system, which returned the brutality in equal measure (Marks, 2001: 65, 116, 118, 122). They were the ANC’s “young warriors” who laboured in anticipation of social inclusion and economic freedom from the democratic and political change-over (Marks, 2001). They justified violence as a tool for social change against an equally violent system. South Africa’s violence, predominantly carried out by the youth, has its root in the apartheid era, and in the (Black) political organisations of the 1990s.

After the transition to the democratic governance, the ANC was clasped by a dilemma of how to bring restitution to the many of these youth, who were both victims of apartheid violence, and participants in the violence of the transition period. This was even captured in the mind of the nation’s founding fathers, including Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, who felt that social change was to start with the most urgent group – the youthful South African population (Seekings, 1996: 103-4; Mandela, 1994). They expected a promising future for the South African youth.

Yet, in spite of these anticipated changes, the transition to democracy did not translate to better living conditions for the youth. It did not translate to increased employment opportunities. With the end of apartheid, and with the outlawing of apartheid's most suppressive spatial and economic laws, the youth were in a relatively free society. Most of them had to contend with the poor educational standards in the Reserves/"Bantustans", and had to live in squalid conditions in predominantly migrant situations. Those who went to the "arid Bantustans"/homelands in the new dispensation to work, as Damon Galgut in *The Good Doctor* shows, found the places wretched, despondent and limiting, wasting away their youthful idealism, passion and dreams. The rural areas have continued to degenerate despite the transition. Those who left school found nothing more to do: they remained in search of the elusive Rainbow, using violence to get means to a livelihood. They were the "angry generation" in Mazisi Kunene's poem, "The Rise of the Angry Generation" whose "merciless talons", later on in the 1990s, would violently display their disaffection with the Rainbow (Feinberg, 1980: 78).

In later years, Black youth from marginalised rural areas and the townships would move to the cities in search for work and employment. The 1990s marked a decided shift in the demographic reorganisation in South Africa. A previous population relegated to unproductive areas through "dumping" and relocation was steadily going to the city in droves. They were mainly the youth, as their parents remained as "consumer communities" in the rural areas (May, 1990: 175). Consequently, rural people began to depend on economic networks with their relatives working in the urban areas (Ashforth, 2005). These rural areas have remained as wretched places in which rituals, jealousy, witchcraft and other social pathologies permeate, owing to rural poverty and complex traditional systems. The dependence of the rural economy shifted from the migrant labour situation established during the apartheid system, to the urban (youth) migrants who had to fend for the ageing population in the Reserves. However, the period marked an important phase in the history of South Africa, as Africans reworked and subverted centuries of European and Afrikaner colonialism by occupying formerly forbidden spaces. In post-apartheid South Africa's spatial imagination, "walking" in the city by Black people is a symbolic enunciation of the freedom from spatial and racial restrictions of the apartheid era.

In the "New" nation, socio-economic inequalities are to blame for the suffering of many of the Black population. Poor housing and lack of employment opportunities generate socio-cultural problems, which ultimately lead to prevalence of HIV/AIDS and heighten vulnerability, especially among women (Hunter, 2007: 689). The rural forms of disenfranchisement and emerging segregation in urban areas bring out a new formation that is awash with vulnerability, death, drug abuse and street crime. Duiker in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, and Phaswane Mpe in his urban setting in the novel, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, tellingly explore these pathologies of the "New" South Africa. These two novels, while ostensibly celebratory of the new urban freedom for Black people, echo the complex path to Black urbanisation.

As envisaged before, the long absence of migrant labourers from home explains the prevalence of many disenfranchised and separated homes in (post)apartheid South Africa, because the basic constitution of the family was ruptured, as children and their parents lived at odds. The persistence of socio-economic inequalities, the lack of jobs, and the proliferation of further cramped spaces and informal settlements are a harbinger of loose and broken families in the post-apartheid South Africa. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* engages with these complex socio-cultural dynamics in the urban space of Cape Town. In *Thirteen Cents*, Duiker captures the homelessness and the rootlessness of the South African youth in Cape Town. It is a coming-out narrative of young South African gays battling with non-acceptance of the “moffies” (gays), contrary to the rights of the group of gays as envisioned in the liberal South African constitution.

The 1996 South African constitution finally recognised the rights of the gay community, which was a key celebratory note for an earlier disenfranchised group. Homosexuals in the new dispensation, previously unaccepted in their families and in the mines, became free, and openly demonstrated their sexual orientation in unique styles, especially in the urban centres. In many respects, the South African urban youth easily found recognition in this sub-culture. It appealed to their unique tastes and offered an avenue for exercising individual freedom. Furthermore, the South African youth, growing up in difficult ghettos and experiencing sexual and physical violation, easily identified with this unique formation, expressed alongside other cultural lifestyles such as the Rastafarian and the “kwaito” music and style, in predominantly urban areas. Niq Mhlongo, a post-apartheid South African novelist who grew up in Soweto, celebrates this youthful style in the urban space of Johannesburg in the novel *Dog Eat Dog* (2004).

In post-apartheid South Africa, the formerly exclusively white schools have opened their doors to Black youth. But even with the de-racialisation of the country’s educational systems, the schools have for the most part remained racially segregated. Many Black people cannot afford the high cost of education in previously white schools, coupled with the pre-emptive feeling that such institutions “historically” belong to specific races (Davenport, 1991: 533; Thompson, 1995: 255). For the middle class, Black youth who enrol in racially integrated schools find that continued racial divisions work against cultural inclusiveness. Kopano Matlwa’s novel, *Coconut* (2007), explores new forms of prejudices in the educational system of South Africa, as the Black youth find it difficult to fit into racially integrated institutions. Racial hate and a hungering for whiteness by the privileged Black youth complicate social relations. South Africa is also a country in whose history racist policies have remained socially “internalised”, so that they have survived through the decades long after the end of apartheid (Marks & Trapido, 1987: 59). Furthermore, under-investment in education and lack of adequate educational resources continue to dog the Black population from competing favourably, especially coming from a complex racial disenfranchised environment (Fiske & Ladd, 2004: 6). The high level of disparities in the education system, coupled with poor economies among the Black population, point out the difficulties of improving racial and labour relations in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, post-apartheid South Africa continues to glare out the educational inequalities of the apartheid system.



The years that followed the formation of an all-inclusive democratic dispensation and the 1994 transfer of electoral power provided even greater challenges for the rural (youth) migrants. The jostling for space became severe, as people from other African countries, often fleeing from civil and economic strife in their countries, sought sanctuary in the promised Rainbow. But in spite of this seemingly free spatial environment, the South African city has also been a space that conflates the espoused freedom with the socio-spatial, racial and economic problems. Most of the socio-economic divides of the apartheid system are still discernible in South African cities, particularly in Johannesburg and in Cape Town, which have been largely representative of the urban spaces of South Africa.

As rural migrants and immigrants from elsewhere in Africa throng into South African cities, the “original” white owners of the city, and the emergent Black middle class, have fortified and secluded themselves in gated, rich and expensive neighbourhoods. In some places, such as in Hillbrow in Johannesburg, the whites relocated to safer areas, leaving their apartments, threatened by bludgeoning rural to urban migrations and the ensuing crime waves, while other whites reportedly emigrated to safer countries/continents (Hlongwane, 2006: 71). This fight for space is the post-apartheid nightmare, as the different racial groups compete for urban and rural spaces, with the South African cities aptly projecting this spatial rush. The representation of the city, and city life, bears markedly in the post-apartheid South African literature. Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* historicises Hillbrow, an urban space in downtown Johannesburg that is a microcosm of the complex urban dynamics prevalent in the Rainbow Nation. Duiker’s novel, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, portrays youth and migrant challenges in the urban spaces of Cape Town.

In the post-apartheid cities, new forms of socio-economic and spatial inequalities continue to emerge. Given that rapid demographic shifts have occurred after apartheid, these cities markedly show the changing socio-economic, cultural and political realities of modern day South Africa (Maylam, 1995: 20). There are several social polarisations manifested in the skewed manner of wealth differentials among the different classes and races. Black South Africans who thronged the city in anticipation of a beautiful socio-economic Rainbow have instead found a mirage. The levels of social insularity among the different races and classes give way to other socio-economic problems. Despite the transition to democracy, Cape Town, for example, portrays persistent racial poverty (Robins, 2000: 409). Although segregation is no longer entrenched in the law, the historically white inner city and the southern suburbs remain the exclusive preserves for the white population, while the Blacks and the coloured remain in the neighbouring townships of Khayelitsha and the Cape Flats (Robins, 2000: 411). A similar economic divide in Johannesburg revealed in the squalid and wretched conditions of the Alexandra Black township, compared to the rich and predominantly white neighbourhood of Sandton (Houssay-Holzchuch & Teppo, 2009: 351). K. Sello Duiker’s urban novel, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, captures the socio-economic contradictions between the rich and the poor in its spatial and racial dimensions. In this novel, issues of race and class permeate the urban imaginary of Cape Town.

Contemporary post-apartheid writers who have represented the urban space in South Africa include Ivan Vladislavić, Niq Mhlongo, K. Sello Duiker and Phaswane Mpe. In the post-apartheid society, the “social imaginaries” of the cities engage the social consciousness of most post-apartheid writers (Gaylard, 2011: 15; Nuttall, 2004: 740). Vladislavić’s *Portrait with Keys*, for example, provides a picturesque impression of Johannesburg social spaces. These writers portray the social and economic realities of a predominantly youthful population thronging South African cities, pulled by the allure of the city, and pushed away from rural areas by poverty and the limiting economic opportunities. In many of their novels, the urban push for integrated and collective nationhood is emphasised, in spite of the pitfalls that such kinds of uneasy integration poses. They, alongside other writers, took up the challenge of representing a society that was previously interlocked in opposition, which ultimately led to, and defined, (sub)cultures in resistance in post-apartheid South Africa. While it is difficult to deal with a society in which its social relations retain past cultural inadequacies, South Africa has tried to integrate different cultural aspirations (Atwell & Harlow, 2000: 2). Post-apartheid novels embody the representation of complex social lives of South Africans in the new dispensation. They focus on contemporary themes and on subject matter previously under ban and censorship during apartheid South Africa.

Socio-economic problems have increasingly taken root in the South African cities. The majority of the Black population in the cities are entrapped in poor and violent spaces, much the same way as those in townships and in other areas that were previously designated “Black” by the apartheid system. White neighbourhoods and expensive shopping malls are the preserve of the whites and the Black middle class, while informal settlements continue to proliferate to house the many rural to urban migrants, as well as people from other African countries. The city, however, still reveals patterns of limited access to specific classes and sections of the population. The gated communities, while reducing crime levels, are also suggestive of social exclusion and urban segregation, which mirror apartheid’s spatial segregation. These enclosed neighbourhoods have also engendered new forms of violence, as they have become crime targets. They are also a pointer to the increased levels of socio-economic inequalities in the South African cities, both in their potentiality as crime zones, and as regions of economic occlusion.

With the ensuing socio-political tensions, the South African city has also been a site for the burgeoning of violent and clandestine spaces. The youth, especially the Black youth, have been participants in the soaring crime levels. Linked to the poor economic standards among the Black population, some of the Black youth have used crime, to express both their wilful belief that they are poor because *others* have disenfranchised them, and to achieve economic ends through gangsterism and theft. This kind of violence has heightened vulnerability of other races and classes. The foreigners in South Africa have been especially vulnerable.

Black people in South Africa have vented their economic frustration on people from other African countries in the belief that they are slicing off the Rainbow cake when they themselves have not eaten to their fill. The xenophobia has risen as a new form of “apartheid” in which divisive otherness of picking out “non-South Africans” from among the crowd and chasing them out of the Rainbow is practised. And ironically, some Black South Africans, now politically free in the new dispensation, have refused to offer sanctuary to foreigners from countries that they themselves, ironically, fled to during the worst times of apartheid.

Buoyed by perceived feelings that foreigners have taken away jobs, the native South Africans have mistreated this vulnerable group. In a country where the Bantu Education Act of 1953 worked against Black South Africans getting good education (and therefore getting high-cadre jobs), the entry of often well-educated foreigners years after the democracy, and a few years after the repeal of that Act, posed a formidable challenge to Black South African job aspirations (Marks & Trapido, 1988: 9). Coupled with a highly competitive and racial labour market, the local South Africans vent their anger and frustration on Black people from other countries in Africa, and as a result, they are often convenient scapegoats for those who still feel angered by the persistence of racial and economic inequalities (Nkealah, 2011: 124, 129).

## **Conclusion**

This article premised that exploitation in South Africa’s social formation stems from the racial nature of labour organisation. Apartheid’s labour structures, in particular, the migrant form of labour power, created different racial and class differences. The socio-economic problems of the predominantly Black population in the “Bantustans”/homelands can be explained through the systems of land and labour (re)organisations. The article has argued that apartheid’s socio-spatial and cultural legislative restrictions, particularly those that related to (rural) land ownership and urbanisation, brought up unequal racial and cultural groups in South Africa. Accordingly, apartheid writing has reflected the socio-economic conditions occasioned by the differential socio-economic situation of the diverse peoples of South Africa.

After apartheid, there have been socio-political, economic and cultural shifts under the banner of the “New” South Africa, which have created new social relations. The “New” South Africa attempts to move beyond the violent aftermaths of the apartheid system into a “non-racial” future. In South Africa today, different racial groups have their fundamental rights recognised in the country’s 1996 constitution. The post-apartheid hybridisation of rural and urban spaces has markedly featured in post-apartheid literature. A new social formation has emerged in which the economic, social, cultural and political levels are constantly being renegotiated through class struggles.

It has been observed that the entry of new classes has redefined the earlier racial model of South Africa's capitalism. Race, however, continues to exert its own subtle inflections on the economic and social patterning. Racial conflict continues to sever and fracture with respect to the means of production, and it defines the way classes and races are arranged, often in a dialectical relationship. Where racial and class interests compete, race overbears class conflicts. The South African post-apartheid society is a society in which competing interests take centre-stage, creating further socio-economic divisions.

In a highly tensile environment in which the emblem and banner of "non-racialism" is being encouraged in spite of generations of racial domination, the "New" South Africa evinces a complex shift between the emergence of new classes and the subversion of earlier ones. The white capitalist structure, though not necessarily dismantled, has been blurred by non-racialism, creating a newer structure in which the Black middle class and the political elite also occupy the tip of the economic ladder. The majority of the Black people, however, have not had their lives and living standards significantly changed for the better.

The pattern of the reproduction of labour has also changed, with the apartheid mine migrant population getting replaced by rural to urban migration, especially by the youth, in response to (urban) spatial freedom and economic, educational and employment promises. But this same pattern has reproduced conditions that bear an uncanny similarity to the apartheid system, increasing insecurity and insularity, widening economic and social rifts, and accentuating class and racial differences. The urban push for collective unity and inclusiveness as a response to the socio-economic and political transformations of the "New" South Africa has led to fragmentary narratives of Black foreign migrants, the youth and the Black middle class groups. The emergence of ethnic profiling, especially of African immigrants in predominantly urban spaces in South Africa, has dimmed the dream of the Rainbow, and variegated its edges.

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