

**The Matrix of Domination and Controlling Images of Salome in
Damon Galgut's Novel *"The Promise"***

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE FACULTY
OF HUMANITIES**

**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM
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**The Matrix of Domination and Controlling Images of Salome in
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THESIS

Presented to

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.)

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MALANG**

2026

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I state that the thesis entitled *The Matrix of Domination and Controlling Images of Salome in Damon Galgut's Novel "The Promise"* is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

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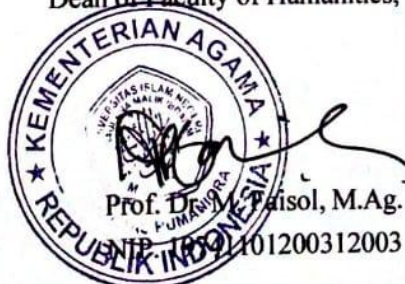
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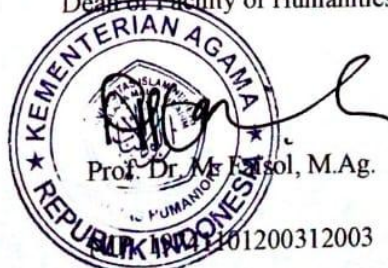
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MOTTO

“We are the main character in our story, so if you want a good story, just be a good character.”

“Every day learning something new.”

(Deen)

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

“Maka Nikmat Tuhanmu Manakah Yang Kau Dustakan”

(Q.S Ar-Rahman, Mentioned 31 times)

DEDICATION

This thesis is especially dedicated to:

My Family, especially my beloved parents, Ibu Siti Marfu'ah and Bapak Saiful Bachri. Also, my two younger siblings, Achmad Fauzi Dzikri and Nur Muhammad Rifa'.

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First, praise Alhamdulillahirobbil'alamin, of course, researchers say for the completion of this thesis. Second, sholawat and salam do not forget to say to the great prophet Muhammad SAW who has brought an Islamic light into this world full of darkness.

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Infinite and special gratitude also goes to the family of my younger siblings and especially my parents, my mother and my father who always prayed and also supported all my lecture needs. May Allah always take care of them and also give infinite grace.

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Lastly, I acknowledge that I still have a lot of inadequacies in my work on this thesis. The research's published findings should prove beneficial to everyone, particularly those who use them.

Malang, 24 June 2026

The Researcher,



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ABSTRACT

Imaduddin (2026). *The Matrix of Domination and Controlling Images of Salome in Damon Galgut's Novel "The Promise"*. Undergraduate Thesis.

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Keywords: Matrix of Domination, Controlling Images, Liberal Feminism.

This study analyzes the domination experienced by Salome, the Black female domestic worker, in Damon Galgut's *The Promise* through the perspective of Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought. The objectives of this study are to identify the forms of domination experienced by Salome and to explain how the matrix of domination and controlling images sustain her oppression throughout the novel. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method using textual analysis. The data consist of narration and dialogue related to Salome's experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and unequal treatment. The findings reveal that Salome's domination operates through the four domains of the matrix of domination: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal power. Structurally, apartheid-era legal systems deny her property rights. Disciplinarily, bureaucratic authority enables the Swart family to delay fulfilling the promise made to her. Hegemonically, dominant ideologies normalize the belief that she is unworthy of ownership, while interpersonally she experiences everyday discrimination through degrading language, exclusion, and dismissive interactions. The study also finds that Salome is constructed through controlling images that reduce her identity to a domestic servant whose labor is valued while her humanity and agency are ignored. These representations reinforce her marginalization and justify unequal treatment. This study concludes that *The Promise* portrays domination as a multidimensional system in which race, gender, and class intersect to sustain the oppression of Black women. By positioning Salome as the central subject of analysis, this research contributes to feminist literary criticism by highlighting how Black women's experiences remain marginalized even within post-apartheid narratives.

مُلخَص

إيماد الدين (٢٠٢٦). مصفوفة الهيمنة والصور النمطية الحاكمة لشخصية سالومي في رواية دامون غالغوت الوعد". رسالة تخرج (ليسانس). قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية بمالانق.
المشرف: أغونغ ويران هداية كوسوما، الماجستير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مصفوفة الهيمنة، الصور النمطية الحاكمة، النسوية الليبرالية

تُحلل هذه الدراسة مظاهر الهيمنة التي تعرضت لها "سالومي"، وهي عاملة منزلية سوداء، في رواية دامون وذلك من منظور الفكر النسوي الأسود لـ باتريشيا هيل كولينز، (The Promise) "غالغوت" الوعد تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد أشكال الهيمنة التي عاشتها سالومي، وشرح كيف تساهم مصفوفة الهيمنة والصور النمطية الحاكمة في استدامة اضطهادها طوال أحداث الرواية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي النوعي باستخدام التحليل النصي، حيث تتكون البيانات من السرد والحوارات المتعلقة بتجارب سالومي مع التمييز، والتهميش، والمعاملة غير المتكافئة. وتكشف النتائج أن الهيمنة على سالومي تُمارَس عبر الأبعاد الأربعة لمصفوفة الهيمنة: البعد البنيوي، والتنظيمي، والهيمني، والتفاعلي (بين الأفراد). فمن الناحية البنيوية، حرمتها الأنظمة القانونية في عهد الفصل العنصري من حقوق الملكية؛ ومن الناحية التنظيمية، مكنت السلطة البيروقراطية عائلة "سوارت" من تأجيل الوفاء بالوعد الممنوح لها؛ ومن الناحية الهيمنية عملت الأيديولوجيات السائدة على تطبيع الاعتقاد بأنها لا تستحق التملك؛ في حين أنها واجهت على المستوى التفاعلي تمييزاً يومياً تمثل في لغة مهينة، وإقصاء، ومعاملات قائمة على الاستخفاف. كما خلصت الدراسة إلى أنه تم تصوير سالومي عبر صور نمطية حاكمة اختزلت هويتها في دور خادمة منزلية تُفقد جهودها العمالية بينما يتم تجاهل إنسانيتها وقدرتها على الفعل والتغيير، وهي تمثيلات تعزز تهميشها وتبرير المعاملة غير العادلة لها. وتستنتج الدراسة أن رواية "الوعد" تقدم الهيمنة كنظام متعدد الأبعاد تتشابك فيه العرق والنوع الاجتماعي والطبقة الاجتماعية لاستدامة اضطهاد المرأة السوداء. ومن خلال وضع سالومي كأداة رئيسية للتحليل، تساهم هذه الدراسة في النقد الأدبي النسوي عبر تسليط الضوء على كيفية استمرار تهميش تجارب النساء السوداوات حتى داخل سرديات ما بعد عهد الفصل العنصري.

ABSTRAK

Imaduddin (2026). *Matriks Dominasi dan Pengendalian Citra Salome dalam Novel “The Promise” karya Damon Galgut.* Tesis Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing Agung Wiranata Kusuma M.A.

Kata kunci: Matriks Dominasi, Pengendalian Citra, Feminisme Liberal

Studi ini menganalisis dominasi yang dialami oleh Salome, seorang pekerja rumah tangga perempuan kulit hitam, dalam novel *The Promise* karya Damon Galgut melalui perspektif Pemikiran Feminis Kulit Hitam Patricia Hill Collins. Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk dominasi yang dialami oleh Salome dan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana matriks dominasi dan citra pengendali mempertahankan penindasannya sepanjang novel. Studi ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan menggunakan analisis tekstual. Data terdiri dari narasi dan dialog yang berkaitan dengan pengalaman Salome tentang diskriminasi, marginalisasi, dan perlakuan tidak setara. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa dominasi Salome beroperasi melalui empat domain matriks dominasi: struktural, disipliner, hegemonik, dan kekuasaan interpersonal. Secara struktural, sistem hukum era apartheid menolak hak kepemilikannya. Secara disipliner, otoritas birokrasi memungkinkan keluarga Swart untuk menunda pemenuhan janji yang dibuat kepadanya. Secara hegemonik, ideologi dominan menormalisasi kepercayaan bahwa ia tidak layak untuk dimiliki, sementara secara interpersonal ia mengalami diskriminasi sehari-hari melalui bahasa yang merendahkan, pengucilan, dan interaksi yang meremehkan. Studi ini juga menemukan bahwa Salome dikonstruksi melalui citra-citra yang mengontrol dan mereduksi identitasnya menjadi seorang pembantu rumah tangga yang tenaganya dihargai sementara kemanusiaan dan keberdayaannya diabaikan. Representasi-representasi ini memperkuat marginalisasinya dan membenarkan perlakuan yang tidak setara. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa *The Promise* menggambarkan dominasi sebagai sistem multidimensional di mana ras, gender, dan kelas beririsan untuk mempertahankan penindasan terhadap perempuan kulit hitam. Dengan menempatkan Salome sebagai subjek analisis utama, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kritik sastra feminis dengan menyoroti bagaimana pengalaman perempuan kulit hitam tetap terpinggirkan bahkan dalam narasi pasca-apartheid.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Contents	
STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP	III
APPROVAL SHEET	III
LEGITIMATION SHEET	Error! Bookmark not defined.
MOTTO	IV
DEDICATION	V
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	VI
ABSTRACT	VIII
ملخص	IX
ABSTRAK	X
TABLE OF CONTENT	XI
CHAPTER I	1
INTRODUCTION	1
A. Background of the Study	1
B. Problems of the Study	6
C. Significance of the Study	7
D. Scope and Limitation	7
E. Definition of Key Terms	8
CHAPTER II	9
REVIEW ON RELATED LITERATURE	9
A. Black Feminist	9
B. Matrix of Domination	12
1. Structural Domain of Power	12
2. Disciplinary Domain of Power	13
3. Hegemonic Domain of Power	14
4. Interpersonal Domain of Power	15
C. Controlling Images	16
CHAPTER III	18

RESEARCH METHOD	18
A. Research Design	18
B. Data Collection	18
C. Data Analysis	19
D. Data Source	19
CHAPTER IV	21
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	21
A. Matrix of Domination	21
1. Structural Domain of Power.....	22
2. Disciplinary Domain of Power.....	24
3. Hegemonic Domain of Power.....	28
4. Interpersonal Domain of Power	37
B. Controlling Images	40
CHAPTER V	43
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	43
A. Conclusion.....	43
B. Suggestion	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY	45
CURRICULUM VITAE	46

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section explains the context and focus of the research. It also explains the main problem to be researched and why this topic is important to study. Furthermore, the limitations and scope of the research are explained to help readers understand the scope of this study. Key concepts are defined to ensure that the researcher and the reader have a shared understanding.

A. Background of the Study

Every person is born with equal rights and dignity, but women around the world still face denial of this fundamental truth. Being born as a woman should never equate to having fewer rights. Many violations of women's rights persist. Historically, women have experienced numerous rights violations, and this continues today. As noted by Bin Md Said, M. H., Grace, K. E., Cahyani, T. D., and Hidayani, P. P. (2024), early international human rights laws neglected protections within the private realm, reflecting the belief that only the public sphere was under international law, leaving women's rights, often restricted to the private sphere, without official protection. This highlights how the separation between public and private has led to many women's rights violations being ignored because they occur in “areas considered private.” It underscores the need to bring women's issues into public and legal arenas to ensure equal protection and justice

The ongoing marginalization of Black women, especially in postcolonial societies, illustrates the intersection of race, gender, and class, resulting in compounded domination. Even with widespread acknowledgment of human rights, Black women continue to face systematic exclusion from legal protection, social involvement, and equitable representation. This issue is deeply entrenched in a broader historical context of intersecting oppressions, where women from formerly colonized regions experience overlapping structural, ideological, and daily forms of domination. Salome, a Black domestic worker in Damon Galgut's *"The Promise"*, represents this situation through the continual denial of her rights and the reduction of her identity to the stereotype of "the maid." This depiction powerfully highlights how Black women are often confined within power structures that organize, manage, justify, and normalize their subjugation (bin Md Said et al., 2024).

The struggle for women's rights is closely linked to the battle against racism, particularly as Black women experience complex discrimination rooted in both gender and race. Black women have a three to four times higher risk of dying during pregnancy compared to White women, a result of systemic inequality and social health determinants. This highlights how Black women are regularly marginalized and deprived of their basic rights, even in life-or-death scenarios, illustrating a form of systemic racial injustice that is mirrored in literature.

Despite its literary significance, *The Promise* has received considerable scholarly attention, with most studies focusing on its political, national, and familial dimensions, particularly the decline of white Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa. Carolin (2023), for instance, examines how the novel portrays the erosion of white patriarchal authority through the decline of white masculinity within the Swart family. In a similar vein, Manzan, L (2023) approaches the novel through postcolonial narrative criticism, highlighting the moral crisis, white identity, and psychological stagnation faced by the Swart family after apartheid. While these studies offer meaningful insights into the novel's portrayal of post-apartheid society, they predominantly highlight the perspectives of the dominant white characters, giving relatively little consideration to Salome as an independent subject of analysis.

While Salome's presence is acknowledged, she is often seen more as a symbol of the Swart family's moral shortcomings than as a Black woman whose real-life experiences expose the intersecting systems of power at play within the novel. This marginalization is apparent from the outset of the story when Amor remembers her mother's dying wish: "*She made me promise... that the house would go to Salome*" (Galgut, 2021, pp. 13–15). Yet, this promise remains unfulfilled for over thirty years, highlighting how Salome's rights are continually delayed and negotiated by others. As the novel later notes, "*They've had everything for so long, and they still don't want to give up anything*" (Galgut, 2021, p. 182),

underscoring the ongoing imbalance of power even after the political shift from apartheid to democracy.

As a result, the experiences of Salome, a Black woman working in domestic service, are still not thoroughly examined, especially in terms of how race, gender, class, and institutional power work together to keep her marginalized. This oversight forms the foundation for the current study. Utilizing Patricia Hill Collins's Black Feminist Thought, particularly the ideas of the Matrix of Domination and Controlling Images, this study redirects the analytical focus away from the dominant white characters to Salome's own experiences. By making Salome the main subject of analysis, rather than a symbolic plot device, this research aims to highlight how the novel illustrates interconnected systems of domination that continue to impact the lives of Black women in post-apartheid South Africa.

Hill Collins's matrix of domination and related Black feminist concepts have been effectively utilized in literary analyses of Black women's experiences in fiction. Ghasemi, P., & Heidari, S. (2020) use Hill Collins's framework to explore how the protagonist of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, a formerly enslaved mother, embodies and ultimately challenges the matrix of domination through her complex experiences of marginalization. In a similar vein, Saleem, A. U., Rasheed, S., & Aqeel, A. (2019) apply the four domains of the matrix of domination—structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal—to investigate how women

from different social classes, including a maidservant character, face varied forms of oppression in Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. Although these studies highlight the effectiveness of Hill Collins's framework for literary analysis, neither explores a domestic worker character within a contemporary post-apartheid South African context. This gap is important because Salome's role as a Black domestic worker in *The Promise* presents a unique configuration of domination, shaped specifically by the legacy of apartheid-era property law and post-apartheid family politics.

The historical origins of stereotypes about Black women can be linked to the transatlantic slave trade. During this time, colonial and slaveholding societies intentionally created racialized images of Black people as naturally inclined for servitude and manual labor to justify their exploitation and uphold systems of domination (Devakumar et al., 2000). These stereotypes went beyond economic exploitation, depicting Black women as naturally submissive, physically strong, and destined for domestic work. These portrayals were not impartial descriptions but rather ideological tools used to legitimize unequal treatment and deny Black women recognition as independent individuals. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) describes these persistent stereotypes as controlling images, suggesting that they serve to normalize and sustain overlapping systems of racial, gender, and class oppression. These images did not disappear with the end of slavery; instead, they have continued to influence societal

attitudes and institutional practices, affecting how Black women are viewed and treated in today's society. This historical pattern is evident in Damon Galgut's *The Promise*, where Salome is repeatedly referred to as "the maid," a label that reduces her identity to her domestic role while overshadowing her humanity, rights, and agency.

Though "*The Promise*" holds significant literary value, much of the existing research has predominantly focused on its political and historical context, particularly the deterioration of the white South African family post-apartheid. Nevertheless, the experience of Salome, a Black domestic worker, in terms of domination has been largely overlooked. This oversight highlights the need to explore how Black feminist thought, through the lens of the matrix of domination and controlling images, can offer a deeper understanding of the racial, gender, and class disparities that continue in post-apartheid South Africa. By employing Hill Collins's framework, this study seeks to contribute to Black feminist literary criticism by bringing attention to a marginalized female character whose experience of domination has been eclipsed by the novel's primary narrative of white family decline.

B. Problems of the Study

1. How are the forms of domination represented in Salome's character in Damon Galgut's novel "*The Promise*"?

C. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to Black feminist literary criticism by drawing on Patricia Hill Collins's concepts of the matrix of domination and controlling images to analyze a postcolonial novel set in post-apartheid South Africa. It broadens the use of these concepts from their original sociological framework to literary analysis, enhancing scholarship on the depiction of intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class in fiction. Theoretically, this research demonstrates how Black feminist thought can illuminate the complex layers of domination experienced by a domestic worker character, offering a different critical perspective from existing interpretations of "*The Promise*", which have mainly focused on white experiences.

D. Scope and Limitation

This research focuses on examining the matrix of domination and controlling images, as theorized by Patricia Hill Collins (2000), within Damon Galgut's novel, "*The Promise*", especially through the depiction of domination in the character of Salome. The study is confined to exploring the four domains of power—structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal—and the concept of controlling images. It does not cover other Black feminist concepts like self-definition or Black feminist epistemology. Furthermore, the research is restricted to this single novel by Damon Galgut, meaning the findings cannot be applied to his other works or the novel genre in general.

E. Definition of Key Terms

Black Feminist Thought

According to Hill Collins (2000), Black feminist thought is a body of knowledge produced by Black women that places their experiences and standpoint at the center of analysis, emphasizing how race, gender, class, and sexuality work together as interlocking systems of oppression.

Matrix of Domination

According to Hill Collins (2000), the matrix of domination describes the overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained, structured through four interrelated domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal.

Controlling Images

According to Hill Collins (2000), controlling images are socially constructed, stereotypical representations of Black womanhood (such as the mammy, matriarch, or jezebel) created by dominant groups to justify and naturalize the oppression of Black women.

Forms of Domination

In this study, forms of domination refer to both the four domains of power within the matrix of domination (structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal) and the controlling images that operate within them to justify and sustain domination over Salome's character.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW ON RELATED LITERATURE

A. Black Feminist

Patricia Hill Collins views Black feminist thought as more than just an academic pursuit; she sees it as a specialized, critical social theory focused on empowerment and political resistance for women. This theory synthesizes and articulates the collective consciousness African-American women have cultivated over generations in response to their unique, systemic marginalization. Unlike conventional sociology or mainstream feminist theories, which often generalize women's experiences from a white, middle-class viewpoint, Black feminist thought emphasizes the specific, lived experiences of Black women, asserting that their perspectives provide unique and crucial insights into the nature of social injustice.

The essence of this definition is based on the crucial idea that self-determined knowledge is essential for achieving freedom. When an oppressed group is stripped of the ability to create its own knowledge, it becomes susceptible to being defined and exploited by others. Thus, Collins argues that this theory serves as a dynamic form of resistance. As Collins states, “Black feminist thought seeks to empower African-American women in the face of social injustice perpetuated by overlapping oppressions” (Collins, P. H, 2000). This definition suggests that the creation of knowledge is intrinsically linked to power dynamics. By

asserting the authority to define their own experiences, Black women actively challenge the control that dominant groups exert over marginalized narratives. This perspective encourages researchers to explore how marginalized individuals shift from being passive subjects in studies to active participants in generating knowledge, making it an essential tool for analyzing social hierarchies and grassroots activism.

The origins of Black feminist thought stem from the historically marginalized social standing of African-American women, which Collins famously refers to as the “outsider within” status. Over the years, many Black women found themselves working close to dominant groups, often as domestic workers in white homes. Collins explains it in “Remaining a perpetual outsider within a group can never result in gaining power, as this role inherently demands being on the margins. Everyone must carve their own path, understanding that their personal story, although distinct, is not as singular as they might believe” (Collins, P. H, 2000). This unique social position enabled them to witness the inner workings of white privilege and power, all while being entirely shut out from its advantages. This structural displacement gave them a distinctive, critical perspective to recognize the glaring contradictions between the reassuring ideologies of the dominant group and the harsh realities of systemic oppression.

Additionally, Collins emphasizes that the historical suppression of Black women's intellectual contributions was intentional, serving as a tool of institutional control. By excluding the analytical and literary works of

Black women from mainstream universities, publishing houses, and political arenas, the prevailing culture sought to create a false sense of complacency among the oppressed. This history of silencing highlights the necessity of the theory's emergence as a counter-hegemonic act. To explain this dynamic, Collins said, "Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization" (Collins, P. H, 2000). It demonstrates that marginalized groups actively respond to their circumstances, developing complex methods of critique as part of their survival strategies. Understanding this context enables one to argue that any examination of a marginalized group should consider the historical obstacles that have limited their public expression and representation in academia.

A key aspect of Collins' framework is its focus on intersectionality, challenging the conventional approach of examining social categories such as race, gender, and class separately. Collins contends that for Black women, these identity markers do not operate as isolated, additive layers of disadvantage. Rather, they interact to create a unique form of socio-economic oppression. Collins states, "Intersectionality describes specific types of overlapping oppressions, such as the intersections of race and gender, or sexuality and nationality" (Collins, P. H, 2000). To completely understand the economic exploitation of Black women, one must consider

how their race and gender together make them susceptible to certain kinds of underpaid work. Intersectionality changes the focus from competing victim narratives to a comprehensive understanding of how different aspects of identity interact and strengthen each other.

B. Matrix of Domination

While intersectionality highlights the unique blend of overlapping biases that an individual experiences, the Matrix of Domination describes the broader structural framework that maintains and manages these overlapping oppressions throughout a society. Collins argues, “Seeing domination as including the interwoven oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation highlights the importance of these oppressions in shaping the structure of a specific system of domination” (Collins, P. H, 2000). That means power is not a single, hierarchical force, but rather is expressed through four distinct yet interconnected domains that manifest across various forms of oppression. Women are integral to understanding these dynamics.

1. Structural Domain of Power

The structural realm serves as the foundation of the matrix, consisting of broad institutional systems, laws, and economic structures that govern how resources and opportunities are distributed. This realm embeds inequality into the very structure of social infrastructure, evident in labor market divisions, housing segregation, and legal frameworks. It functions both historically and persistently to maintain institutional

disadvantages for marginalized groups. As Collins states, “The structural domain of power involves the organization of social institutions to perpetuate the subordination of Black women over time” (Collins, P. H, 2000). This indicates that personal bias isn’t the only factor driving inequality; instead, deeply rooted institutional frameworks perpetuate discrimination.

Collins adds, “In the realm of power structures, individuals and groups cannot gain empowerment without changing the U.S. social institutions that contribute to their exclusion” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Collins’ insight explains that within the structural sphere, empowerment should not be confused with rare instances of individual advancement. Collins argues that oppression is systematically maintained by interconnected social institutions like the legal system, labor markets, and public education. Therefore, the marginalization of a group is a result of institutional processes, not personal shortcomings. As a result, genuine empowerment cannot merely be achieved by individuals who succeed in overcoming these obstacles independently. If society's foundational structure remains unchanged, the system will persist in generating unequal outcomes for most marginalized people.

2. Disciplinary Domain of Power

The disciplinary domain functions via organizational bureaucracies, established hierarchies, and regular surveillance methods. Rather than using explicit legal prohibitions, it exerts control by regulating

behavior, enforcing rules, and determining who can hold administrative power or engage in decision-making. This system operates within corporate offices, academic institutions, and governmental bodies to discreetly exclude marginalized individuals from influential roles.

According to Collins, “The disciplinary domain manages power dynamics through its reliance on bureaucratic hierarchies and surveillance techniques” (Collins, P. H, 2000). It explains that the disciplinary domain does not rely on overt, physical violence or explicit legal bans to maintain inequality; instead, it uses the quiet, sophisticated machinery of modern bureaucracy and surveillance. By embedding power relations into standard operating procedures, rigid workplace hierarchies, performance metrics, and constant monitoring, institutions can regulate human behavior from the inside out. In this domain, power becomes specialized, decentralized, and largely invisible. Individuals are conditioned to self-police and conform to organizational expectations, effectively neutralizing potential resistance before it can even manifest into an overt protest.

3. Hegemonic Domain of Power

The hegemonic domain directly engages with culture, ideology, language, and human consciousness. It plays a crucial role in persuading subordinate groups to accept their lower status as natural, normal, and unavoidable, thus creating agreement with the prevailing social order. By influencing media stories, educational content, and cultural norms, the dominant group ensures its perspective is embraced as the universal truth,

thereby concealing the structural injustices present in society. As Collins states, “To preserve their authority, dominant groups establish and uphold a widely accepted set of ‘commonsense’ beliefs that justify their entitlement to govern” (Collins, P. H, 2000). By transforming systemic biases into commonly accepted cultural truths, dominant groups manage to place the blame on the oppressed, effectively quelling any potential dissent before it can challenge large-scale institutions.

Collins also said, “If racist and sexist beliefs are not accepted, they lose their effectiveness. Therefore, a key aspect of the dominant power structure is the ongoing need to reshape images to gain backing for the U.S. system of control” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Collins contends that ideologies, unlike legal systems or physical constructs, are completely dependent on human awareness and belief for their authority. If marginalized communities and the general populace cease to believe in racist and sexist ideologies, the underlying ideological support for the matrix of domination falls apart. Thus, the continuation of systemic oppression hinges on its capacity to persuade people that social hierarchies are both normal and justified. When a society adopts dominant ideas, individuals start to regulate their own behavior and perceive systemic failures as their own personal failings.

4. Interpersonal Domain of Power

The interpersonal domain reflects the micro-level expression of the framework, showing up in daily life experiences, personal interactions, and

routine exchanges between people. Within this domain, large-scale structural inequalities and dominant ideologies are expressed through practical behaviors like micro-aggressions, everyday discrimination, or verbal insults. It illustrates how systemic oppression is enacted and experienced on a personal, everyday level. According to Collins, “The interpersonal domain operates through regular, everyday interactions in how individuals treat each other” (Collins, P. H, 2000).

Collins states further, “The interpersonal domain emphasizes daily life, and the strategies for resistance within this area can be as varied as the individuals themselves” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Since oppression is localized and adaptable, resistance strategies should also be flexible, creative, and personal. Instead of large protests or legal battles, resistance in personal interactions often appears as everyday acts of survival and self-preservation. A marginalized person might resist by speaking up to a biased boss, using humor to diffuse discrimination, creating safe spaces in their community, or practicing radical self-love. By acknowledging that these strategies are diverse, Collins affirms individual agency, showing that everyone can challenge power and find freedom in their own reality.

C. Controlling Images

Controlling images are powerful, negative stereotypes created and spread by the dominant culture to objectify Black women and justify their lower status in society. As Collins states, “These controlling images aim to present racism, sexism, poverty, and other types of social injustice as

natural, normal, and unavoidable aspects of daily life” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Collins suggests that these figures, which include both historical icons and modern archetypes, are crafted to make systemic exploitation seem like a natural outcome of the supposed inherent flaws of marginalized groups. By redirecting the blame from flawed institutions to perceived individual shortcomings, controlling images use culture as a tool to maintain the existing power dynamics.

According to Collins, “The initial stereotype associated with U.S. Black women is the mammy... This image was designed to rationalize the economic exploitation of enslaved domestic workers... The mammy serves as the standard against which all Black women’s behavior is judged” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Moreover, the claim that the mammy acts as a universal “standard” underscores its role as a means of regulating behavior within the power structure. This controlling stereotype creates a strict dichotomy: marginalized women who fit the submissive, selfless mold of the mammy receive societal approval, while those who express independence, anger, or leadership are quickly punished and branded as rebellious. In this way, the image functions as an unseen disciplinary tool in everyday life. It gives dominant groups—and society as a whole—a psychological measure to evaluate, control, and stifle the self-expression and resistance of marginalized women, keeping them trapped in their designated social roles.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter details the research design, data sources, data collection procedures, and data analysis steps. The following sections provide a detailed explanation of each of these four aspects.

A. Research Design

Literary criticism is the research design used in this study. Essentially, literary criticism seeks to scientifically investigate and discover new knowledge about a literary phenomenon through systematic procedures. As stated by Didipu H (2019), in literary studies, the objective approach investigates literary phenomena by focusing on the form of the text itself. The objective approach can be understood as focusing on the literary text itself, rather than factors outside the text, such as the socio-cultural context or the author's biography. This research is carried out by analyzing data in words, sentences, and paragraphs from Damon Galgut's novel *The Promise*. The analysis generates descriptive data by focusing on elements such as words, sentences, paragraphs, and aspects of the matrix of domination and controlling images within Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought*, in Damon Galgut's novel *The Promise*.

B. Data Collection

This research uses a library method, focusing on Damon Galgut's novel *The Promise* as the main object of study. Data is collected through a read-and-record technique. The researcher begins by thoroughly and

repeatedly reading the novel to gain a deep understanding of its content. From there, the study identifies and highlights words, sentences, and paragraphs that relate to the four domains of power within the matrix of domination and controlling images... categorized based on their relevance to the study's focus, specifically the domination experienced by Salome within the novel. These highlighted parts are then collected and categorized based on their relevance to the study's focus, specifically the themes of subalternity and silencing within the novel.

C. Data Analysis

In the data analysis process, the researcher used Patricia Hill Collins's Black feminist thought, particularly the concepts of matrix of domination and controlling images. There are four steps: first, the researcher separates the data based on the conflicts experienced by the main character, Salome, in the novel. Second, the data is categorized into the four domains of power within the matrix of domination (structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal) and the concept of controlling images. Third, the researcher analyzes the data one by one based on Hill Collins's concepts to help answer the research problem. Finally, the researcher summarizes the results and concludes the analysis.

D. Data Source

The data source is the most important factor in deciding on a data collection method to determine where the data object originated. The data source for this study is Damon Galgut's novel *The Promise* in the form of

hard files. Damon Galgut's novel *The Promise* was published in May 2021 by Umuzi, an imprint of Penguin Random House South Africa. It was published by Europa Editions in the United States and Chatto & Windus in the United Kingdom. The novel is divided into 4 sections and 199 pages. The researcher's main data set includes words, phrases, clauses, dialogues, and sentences from Damon Galgut's novel *The Promise*.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher offers a descriptive analysis using data gathered from Damon Galgut's novel *"The Promise"* to address the study's research questions. The chapter is split into two primary sections. The first section explores the types of domination Salome faces through the lens of Patricia Hill Collins' Matrix of Domination. The second section delves into the Controlling Images applied to Salome, explaining how these stereotypical depictions perpetuate her marginalization and uphold systems of domination throughout the novel.

A. Matrix of Domination

Patricia Hill Collins introduces the idea of the Matrix of Domination to illustrate that oppression arises not from a single inequality system but from multiple, interconnected power systems working simultaneously. Rather than considering race, gender, class, and other social identities as distinct categories, Collins suggests that these systems intersect to influence individuals' social standings and life experiences. She asserts that "seeing domination as including the interwoven oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation highlights the importance of these oppressions in shaping the structure of a specific system of domination" (Collins, 2000). This viewpoint highlights that domination is systemic, indicating that inequality is produced and

sustained through the interplay of various social structures, rather than through isolated discriminatory acts.

This concept is especially pertinent to Damon Galgut's *"The Promise"*, as Salome's experiences cannot be solely attributed to gender discrimination. As a Black woman domestic worker in post-apartheid South Africa, Salome finds herself in multiple marginalized social roles, which influence the discrimination she faces in the novel. Her inability to own property, her lack of decision-making authority, and her ongoing marginalization are not isolated events but rather reflections of larger systems of domination present within the Swart family and the post-apartheid social framework. Hence, this study utilizes Collins's Matrix of Domination to explore how these interconnected power structures create and maintain Salome's oppression throughout *"The Promise"*.

1. Structural Domain of Power

The structural domain serves as the foundation of the matrix of domination, made up of large-scale institutional mechanisms, laws, and economic systems that systematically allocate resources and opportunities. Instead of depending solely on individual bias, this domain embeds inequality directly into the social framework through labor market divisions, housing segregation, and legal structures to sustain long-standing institutional disadvantages. As Collins states, "The structural domain of power involves the organization of social institutions to perpetuate the subordination of Black women over time" (Collins, P. H,

2000). Therefore, true empowerment cannot be achieved simply through isolated instances of individual progress or overcoming challenges alone; as Collins adds, “In the realm of power structures, individuals and groups cannot gain empowerment without changing the U.S. social institutions that contribute to their exclusion” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Since marginalization results from interconnected institutional processes rather than personal failings, the system will continue to produce unequal outcomes for most marginalized individuals unless these fundamental social structures are profoundly reformed.

Amor: “He did promise. I heard him. He promised Ma he would give Salome her house”. Anton: “Salome can’t own the house. It’s against the law”. (Chapter 1, Page 55)

The interaction between Amor and Anton reflects the matrix of domination’s structural mechanisms, where state-endorsed systems are purposely crafted to withhold basic human rights from marginalized groups. In their conversation, Anton's blunt remark that “Salome can’t own the house” because “it’s against the law” highlights how discriminatory policies are embedded within state structures. This legal constraint exemplifies Collins’ argument that “Black women’s long-standing exclusion from the best jobs, schools, health care, and housing demonstrates the comprehensive range of social policies designed to prevent Black women from attaining full citizenship rights” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Under oppressive regimes like Apartheid, property laws didn’t just govern land; they functioned as a macro-level tool to institutionalize racial

and gender hierarchies. By legally preventing a Black woman like Salome from owning property, the state systematically denied her full citizenship rights, ensuring her economic dependence and permanently limiting her ability to gain the fundamental security of property ownership.

Additionally, this data underscores the clear divide between personal morality and the structural realm of power, illustrating how systemic structures overshadow individual intentions. While Amor stresses a moral duty—stating that “He did promise... He promised Ma.”—Anton’s response highlights that personal promises and goodwill are entirely negated when faced with deeply rooted legal systems. This situation supports Collins’ argument that structural exclusion is upheld through “a broad array of social policies” rather than isolated acts of personal malice. Even when individual members of a dominant group wish to act kindly, the overarching institutional system sets the absolute legal boundaries. Consequently, Salome’s marginalization is not due to personal ethical failures but rather an automatic, state-endorsed process of dispossession that systematically invalidates her rights to ownership and equal legal protection.

2. Disciplinary Domain of Power

The disciplinary domain acts as a decentralized means of control within the matrix of domination, utilizing organizational bureaucracies, established hierarchies, and regular surveillance techniques instead of explicit legal bans. By integrating power relations into standard operating

procedures, strict workplace hierarchies, and performance metrics, this system operates within corporate, academic, and governmental entities to subtly regulate behavior and determine who can assume administrative authority. As Collins states, “The disciplinary domain manages power dynamics through its reliance on bureaucratic hierarchies and surveillance techniques” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Thus, this domain does not rely on visible physical violence or explicit legal restrictions to uphold inequality; instead, it employs a quiet, sophisticated bureaucratic apparatus that encourages individuals to self-regulate and adhere to organizational norms. By presenting these restrictive practices as standard protocol, institutions effectively exclude marginalized individuals from positions of influence and neutralize potential resistance before it can evolve into open protest.

The family has done nothing,.... about Pa’ promise to their mother.
(Chapter 2, Page 85)

The assertion, “The family has done nothing,.... about Pa’ promise to their mother,” demonstrates how the disciplinary domain perpetuates inequality through institutionalized delay and bureaucratic neglect. Instead of engaging in open conflict, the family maintains control over Salome by keeping her in a perpetual state of anticipation. This local form of domestic neglect reflects the larger structures Collins describes, “whether the inner-city public schools... the low-paid jobs in the rapidly growing service sector... the culture of the social welfare bureaucracy that makes Black

mothers and children wait for hours” (Collins, P. H, 2000). By withholding the promised property without outright denial, the dominant structure sidesteps confrontation while gradually diminishing Salome’s autonomy. This silent, draining process of enforced patience accomplishes the primary aim of the disciplinary domain, Collins argues, “creating quiet, orderly, docile, and disciplined populations of Black women” (Collins, P. H, 2000).

Moreover, the family's complete inaction underscores how disciplinary expectations confine Salome to a “mammified,” submissive role. Since the surrounding social order normalizes the unpaid or underpaid labor of Black women, the family feels no structural urgency to honor their ethical or verbal commitments. Salome is expected to quietly carry on with her domestic duties; any assertive demand for her rights would immediately disrupt the disciplinary expectation for marginalized women to remain “orderly, docile, and disciplined” (Collins, P. H, 2000). The family’s lack of action demonstrates that the disciplinary domain doesn’t need physical force to suppress resistance. Instead, by making systemic neglect a standard, everyday occurrence, the dominant group effectively conditions the oppressed to endure exploitation without disturbing the social order.

Amor: “We could make that official. Write it up as a legal document.”
Anton: “No.” (Chapter 2, Page 104 – 105)

Anton’s refusal to formalize the promise—steadfastly dismissing Amor's suggestion to “make that official. Write it up as a legal

document”—demonstrates how the system uses informal arrangements to deny marginalized individuals institutional protection. By blocking Salome’s claim from being acknowledged in a legal, documented form, Anton ensures that her future remains solely reliant on the unpredictable goodwill of the dominant group. This gatekeeping behavior echoes Collins’ critique of the “bureaucratic context,” where administrative power is wielded to determine who gains access to formal rights. Transforming Salome from an informal dependent to a legally recognized property owner would disrupt the unseen hierarchies that the system aims to maintain. By keeping the promise outside the realm of official documentation, the dominant structure retains complete control over her, quashing her legal agency before it can even take shape.

Furthermore, maintaining Salome’s informal status acts as an intricate tool for monitoring and regulating behavior. As Collins notes, “In this bureaucratic context, surveillance has emerged as an important feature of the disciplinary domain of power. There is a marked difference between merely looking at Black women and keeping them under surveillance” (Collins, P. H, 2000). In this sense, surveillance is not about physical observation; it pertains to systematic oversight that ensures a marginalized individual adheres to their prescribed social role. By holding Salome to an unfulfilled, unwritten promise, the family effectively places her under structural surveillance. She must continuously fulfill her duties and remain compliant, aware that any perceived misconduct or rebellion could lead to

the withdrawal of the verbal agreement. The absence of a “legal document” ensures she remains ensnared in this closely monitored state of dependency, illustrating how the sophisticated machinery of the disciplinary domain employs administrative exclusion to enforce ongoing, quiet compliance.

3. Hegemonic Domain of Power

The hegemonic power operates directly within the domains of culture, ideology, language, and human consciousness, playing an essential role in convincing subordinate groups to view their marginalized status as natural, normal, and unavoidable. By shaping media narratives, educational content, and cultural norms, the dominant group ensures its viewpoint is accepted as the universal truth, thereby masking structural injustices and placing the responsibility for systemic failures on the oppressed. As Collins states, “To preserve their authority, dominant groups establish and uphold a widely accepted set of ‘commonsense’ beliefs that justify their entitlement to govern” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Since these ideologies rely entirely on human awareness and belief for their power, they need continuous maintenance to stay effective; as Collins adds, “If racist and sexist beliefs are not accepted, they lose their effectiveness. Therefore, a key aspect of the dominant power structure is the ongoing need to reshape images to gain backing for the U.S. system of control” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Ultimately, if marginalized communities stop believing in these constructed cultural truths, the foundational ideological

support for the matrix of domination collapses, showing that the persistence of systemic oppression relies solely on its ability to manipulate consciousness and condition individuals to regulate their own behavior.

...she is apparently invisible. And whatever Salome feels is invisible too. (Chapter 1, page 11)

By integrating Collins' theoretical framework with the empirical data, it becomes evident that Salome's deep sense of invisibility is not merely a random personal misfortune, but a direct outcome of the hegemonic domain of power. As Collins notes, "The importance of the hegemonic domain of power is in its ability to influence consciousness by controlling ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies. As evidenced by Black women's quests for self-definition, in such contexts where ideas hold significance, reclaiming the 'power of a free mind' becomes a crucial form of resistance" (Collins, P. H, 2000). In Salome's world, she becomes "she is apparently invisible. And whatever Salome feels is invisible too". This distressing data point demonstrates exactly how the hegemonic domain operates on a psychological level; by erasing Salome's personal experiences, emotions, and humanity from the dominant cultural narrative, the matrix of domination effectively stifles her ability to be recognized or heard. When the inner emotional reality of a marginalized individual is systematically invalidated and rendered invisible by societal ideologies, their erasure is normalized as "common sense." Thus, for someone like Salome, overcoming this enforced invisibility requires more than just structural changes; it calls for the radical act of self-definition and

reclaiming a “free mind” to actively resist the hegemonic erasure that attempts to determine her value and existence.

Amor: “You will keep your promise.”

Pa: “What promise is that?” (Chapter 1, page 17)

According to Collins, “Since the hegemonic domain of power is concerned with ideology, culture, and consciousness, it plays a crucial role in addressing this need. Its goal is to legitimize practices within these areas of power” (Collins, P. H, 2000). This dialogue demonstrates how dominant power structures manipulate collective social reality and obligations by pretending not to know or by disregarding previous commitments. When Amor tries to remind Pa of a promise, Pa’s defensive question, “What promise is that?” serves as a subtle tactic of dominance. By refusing to acknowledge the agreement, Pa undermines the ethical and ideological basis of their relationship. This is exactly how hegemonic power functions: it changes or removes the “rules of engagement” to rationalize unjust treatment, leaving the subordinate party feeling as though their expectations are unfounded.

Pa: “I said what?” / “When did I say that?” (Chapter 1, page 41)

This interaction highlights the psychological undermining of self-awareness, commonly known today as interpersonal gaslighting. When Pa questions with, “I said what?” or “When did I say that?”, the attention diverts from Pa's own responsibility and instead questions the accuracy of the victim's memory and perception. Since the dominant figure has the authority to dictate what is considered “true,” their constant denial leads

the marginalized person to doubt their own senses. Collins states, “Dominant ideologies regarding race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality are often so widespread that imagining alternatives is challenging, not to mention finding ways to oppose the social practices they support” (Collins, P. H, 2000). This supports Collins' argument that hegemonic power is so deeply entrenched that it limits a person's ability to imagine an alternative reality or develop a coherent defense against the oppressive practices they face.

When examined together, these two points reveal how hegemonic manipulation operates on both large and small scales to dominate external ideologies and undermine personal self-awareness. Initially, the dominant figure manipulates social and personal beliefs by nullifying commitments and altering accountability to justify their lack of cooperation—mirroring the way hegemonic forces reshape cultural narratives to validate structural inequality. Subsequently, this manipulation escalates into a psychological attack on the victim's cognitive independence; by persistently questioning the victim's memory, “When did I say that?”, the dominant framework actively destabilizes their self-awareness. When hegemonic ideologies become so pervasive, they infiltrate the mind of the marginalized person, causing them to question their own reality and recollection. This dual-layered manipulation ultimately neutralizes dissent at its core by rendering alternative realities inconceivable, leaving the oppressed confined within a social and mental state entirely controlled by the dominant group.

Pa: "I'm already paying for her son's education... Must I do everything for her?" (Chapter 1, page 41) (penindasan generosity)

Using Collins' framework, Pa's defensive remark, "I'm already paying for her son's education... Must I do everything for her?", clearly demonstrates how the hegemonic domain creates a "commonsense" justification for exploitation. Collins argues that "dominant groups maintain their power by establishing and perpetuating a popular system of 'commonsense' ideas that bolster their right to rule" (Collins, P. H, 2000). In this exchange, Pa leverages his financial support as a means of crafting a self-serving logic: because he provides a one-time act of charity by funding Salome's son's education, he feels justified in ignoring any additional ethical or labor responsibilities toward his maid. This rhetorical tactic allows Pa to exercise his dominant power by withholding further support, portraying Salome's basic expectations for fairness as unreasonable demands. By inflating his minimal assistance into a magnanimous gesture, Pa shifts the narrative from systemic domestic exploitation to individual entitlement. In essence, this interaction reflects the broader hegemonic structure by showing how dominant individuals manipulate the concept of charity to rationalize unequal power relations, thereby making the continuous subjugation of the marginalized worker seem both natural and justified.

My mother wanted Salome to have the house...but it's never been given to her. (Chapter 2, page 99)

When analyzed using Patricia Hill Collins' framework, the systemic denial of Salome's property rights—as demonstrated by Amor's statement, "My mother wanted Salome to have the house...but it's never been given to her"—reveals how the hegemonic domain of power subtly sustains institutional injustice by undermining marginalized consciousness. According to Collins, "The significance of the hegemonic domain of power lies in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies. As Black women's struggles for self-definition suggest, in contexts such as these where ideas matter, reclaiming the 'power of a free mind' constitutes an important area of resistance" (Collins, P. H, 2000). In this scenario, the mother's unfulfilled wish and the continuous withholding of the house serve as a concrete manifestation of a hegemonic ideology that considers a domestic worker undeserving of structural or material equality. By perpetually delaying or denying Salome's rightful ownership, the dominant structure normalizes her dispossession, altering the narrative so that her ongoing lack of property is perceived as a normal condition rather than an active injustice. For someone marginalized like Salome, recognizing that this withholding is a systematic abuse of power—rather than an unchangeable reality—is the first step toward resistance. Ultimately, this information underscores that the true insidiousness of hegemonic power lies in its ability to render the exploitation of the marginalized invisible and

inevitable, making the internal reclamation of a "free mind" an essential prerequisite for demanding material justice.

Anton: "Nobody else heard that promise"

Amor: "But I did" (Chapter 2, page 104)

In this interaction, Anton uses majoritarian reasoning to dismiss Amor's testimony by highlighting the lack of public witnesses. By asserting that "nobody else" saw the agreement, he portrays Amor's solitary knowledge as an unverified, personal claim lacking institutional credibility. Amor's firm counter, "But I did", serves as a direct challenge, affirming the unquestionable validity of her own memory against Anton's effort to nullify the social contract.

Anton: "So you say"

Amor: "I was there"

Anton: "So you say" (Chapter 3, page 146)

This dialogue exemplifies the deliberate undermining of direct, personal experience through repeated rhetorical dismissal. When Amor states her physical and historical involvement, "I was there", Anton uses the dismissive phrase "So you say" to downgrade an eyewitness account to mere opinion or hearsay. By consistently disregarding her assertion of truth, Anton shows how someone in a position of power can single-handedly dismiss the testimony of a marginalized person, no matter how sure or involved they were in the incident.

When analyzed through Patricia Hill Collins' framework, these two data points reveal that the dominant power structure influences society not by physical force, but by controlling the criteria for what is deemed "valid"

truth. Collins states, “To maintain their power, dominant groups create and maintain a popular system of 'commonsense' ideas that support their right to rule” (Collins, P. H, 2000). In these discussions, Anton establishes a "commonsense" criterion of truth that inherently excludes Amor. If an event lacks corroboration by multiple witnesses or endorsement by the dominant party, it is considered not to have happened. This reflects a smaller-scale example of larger-scale epistemic injustice, where the accounts of marginalized people are systematically dismissed as unreliable, emotional, or mere gossip.

This dynamic becomes more profound when considering how manipulating validity directly assaults human consciousness. Collins states that “The significance of the hegemonic domain of power lies in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies” (Collins, P. H, 2000). By continually challenging Amor’s reality with remarks like “Nobody else heard” or “So you say,” the dominant structure seeks to alter her internal consciousness. The ultimate aim of this linguistic manipulation is to instill self-doubt, compelling the marginalized individual to question their own perceptions and adopt the dominant group's reality. By controlling what is deemed valid evidence, the dominant group effectively stifles dissent. Thus, when Amor steadfastly asserts her position, “But I did” / “I was there”, she is doing more than disputing a fact—she is actively reclaiming the "power of a free

mind" and resisting the hegemonic erasure that attempts to invalidate her existence and memory.

Lukas: "Must we be grateful to you? Three fucked-up rooms with a broken roof. And we must be grateful?" (Chapter 4, page 191)

When viewed through Patricia Hill Collins's theoretical lens, Lukas's bold question—"Must we be grateful to you? ... Three fucked-up rooms with a broken roof. And we must be grateful?"—acts as a potent example of resisting paternalistic exploitation. Collins asserts, "To maintain their power, dominant groups create and maintain a popular system of 'commonsense' ideas that support their right to rule" (Collins, P. H, 2000). In this socio-economic context, the dominant group has propagated a "commonsense" notion that marginalized individuals should express complete gratitude for any minimal resources provided, irrespective of their inadequate quality. By offering run-down accommodations ("three fucked-up rooms with a broken roof"), the dominant class tries to portray basic survival necessities as acts of great generosity, thereby concealing their structural dominance and keeping the subordinate group feeling indebted and compliant.

Nevertheless, Lukas's refusal to embrace this imposed narrative directly confronts how the dominant power seeks to control the thoughts of the oppressed. Collins asserts that "the significance of the hegemonic domain of power lies in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies" (Collins, P. H, 2000). The concept of obligatory "gratitude" is a crafted notion aimed at

soothing discontent and making substandard living conditions seem like an acceptable norm. By openly addressing the reality of his leaky roof, Lukas defies the ruling group's ideological framework. Rather than letting his awareness be molded by a false sense of duty, he dismantles the facade of charity and reveals it as systemic neglect. Ultimately, this exchange illustrates that revealing the material truth of exploitation empowers the oppressed to reclaim the "power of a free mind," effectively dismantling the hegemonic "common sense" that justifies their continued subjugation.

4. Interpersonal Domain of Power

The interpersonal dimension of power represents the micro-level display of the matrix of domination, emerging in localized, face-to-face interactions and everyday exchanges. In this sphere, broader structural inequalities and dominant ideologies transform into tangible, daily behaviors like micro-aggressions, routine discrimination, and verbal insults. As Patricia Hill Collins notes, "The interpersonal domain operates through regular, everyday interactions in how individuals treat each other" (Collins, P. H, 2000), while also highlighting that "the strategies for resistance within this area can be as varied as the individuals themselves" (Collins, P. H, 2000). Because this type of oppression is deeply personal and adaptable, resistance within it seldom resembles large-scale political protests or macro-legal battles. Instead, it appears through flexible, creative acts of individual agency, survival, and self-preservation. Whether by confronting a biased authority figure, using

humor to diffuse prejudice, creating safe communal spaces, or practicing radical self-love, these varied personal tactics show that the interpersonal domain is not merely a site of routine subjugation but a crucial space where individuals actively challenge power and reclaim their autonomy within their own lived experiences.

Salome: "I am getting my house?"

Anton: "I don't know anything about that. Better ask my father" (Chapter 1, page 34)

In this interaction, Salome begins by verbally inquiring about the property she was promised. Anton employs a typical bureaucratic tactic, claiming ignorance and passing responsibility to his father, to sidestep confirming her claim. This in-person avoidance is a classic interpersonal obstacle intended to wear down the resolve of a marginalized individual.

That girl isn't getting a house, Tanne Marina says. (Chapter 1, page 41)

This statement highlights the everyday gossip and casual dismissals that occur within local social circles. By bluntly declaring that Salome, "that girl", won't get her house, Tanne Marina contributes to the interpersonal reinforcement of inequality, treating the denial of Salome's rights as an accepted, predetermined outcome among her peers.

Salome: "Mine?"

Amor: "Yes. Or it will be very soon, if you can just be patient a little longer." (Chapter 4, page 190)

In this scene, Salome persistently asserts her claim with a straightforward and hopeful question, "Is it mine?" Amor replies with a reassuring statement that combines a positive acknowledgment with a

plea for patience, “if you can just be patient”. Although intended to soothe, this dialogue highlights how interpersonal communications can be used to control and placate marginalized people by indefinitely postponing the material rights they are entitled to.

When examined collectively, these conversations demonstrate how systemic oppression is actively negotiated, upheld, and resisted at a micro-level through everyday human interactions. Collins highlights that “The interpersonal domain functions through routinized, day-to-day practices of how people treat one another. The interpersonal domain stresses the everyday, resistance strategies within this domain can take as many forms as there are individuals” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Salome’s experiences are shaped not only by large-scale legal systems but also by her personal interactions with those around her. Anton’s deflection, “Better ask my father,” Tanne Marina’s disregard, “That girl isn’t getting a house”, and Amor’s plea for patience, “be patient a little longer,” are all routine actions that collectively uphold the status quo. They illustrate how family members and acquaintances act as the enforcers of the matrix of domination, using casual conversations to keep Salome in a state of dispossession.

Yet, considering Salome solely as a victim overlooks the deep agency embedded in her straightforward inquiries. Collins emphatically cautions against this analytical oversight, stating that “African-American women have been victimized by intersecting oppressions. But portraying

U.S. Black women solely as passive, unfortunate recipients of abuse stifles notions that Black women can actively work to change our circumstances and bring about changes in our lives” (Collins, P. H, 2000). By continually asking “Am I getting my house?” and “Is it mine?”, Salome actively resists being a passive victim of abuse. In a society where her community has already concluded she will receive nothing, her persistent questioning serves as a personal strategy of defiance. She utilizes her voice to unsettle their complacency, compel them to acknowledge her demands, and sustain the promise. Her straightforward inquiries defy the quiet, submissive role typically expected of a domestic worker, demonstrating that even within highly restrictive personal environments, marginalized individuals can assert their agency and actively work to alter their situations.

B. Controlling Images

Controlling images are potent, negative stereotypes crafted and propagated by the dominant culture to objectify Black women and justify their lower societal status. These images serve as ideological tools designed to make systemic exploitation appear as a natural result of the supposed inherent flaws of marginalized groups. As Collins states, “These controlling images aim to present racism, sexism, poverty, and other types of social injustice as natural, normal, and unavoidable aspects of daily life” (Collins, P. H, 2000), thereby shifting the blame from flawed institutions

to perceived individual shortcomings to maintain existing power dynamics.

According to Collins, “The initial stereotype associated with U.S. Black women is the mammy... This image was designed to rationalize the economic exploitation of enslaved domestic workers... The mammy serves as the standard against which all Black women’s behavior is judged” (Collins, P. H, 2000). Furthermore, the assertion that the mammy acts as a universal “standard” highlights its role in regulating behavior within the power structure, creating a strict divide where marginalized women who conform to the submissive, selfless mold receive societal approval, while those who exhibit independence, anger, or leadership are quickly punished and labeled as rebellious. Thus, this image functions as an unseen disciplinary tool in everyday life, providing dominant groups—and society at large—a psychological measure to evaluate, control, and suppress the self-expression and resistance of marginalized women, keeping them confined to their designated social roles.

Don’t let him give a house to the maid. (Chapter 1, page 35)

The phrase, “Don’t let him give a house to the maid,” vividly illustrates how controlling images are wielded by the dominant class to reinforce socioeconomic boundaries and justify the ongoing material deprivation of marginalized workers. According to Collins, “The first controlling image applied to U.S. Black women is that of the mammy—the faithful, obedient domestic servant... the mammy image represents the

normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's behavior" (Collins, P. H, 2000). By reducing the worker's identity to the generalized label of "the maid," the dominant group invokes the historical mammy archetype to assess her worth and determine her societal role. This ideological benchmark requires an ideal domestic servant to remain submissive and self-sacrificing, ensuring she does not accumulate wealth, making the notion of her owning property a disruption of the racial and class hierarchy.

Collins further explains that "These controlling images aim to present racism, sexism, poverty, and other types of social injustice as natural, normal, and unavoidable aspects of daily life" (Collins, P. H, 2000). By portraying the domestic worker as inherently unfit for property ownership, the dominant group rationalizes her poverty and systemic exclusion as a natural state rather than a violation of human rights. This plea to block her from receiving a house directly enforces this layered ideological system, showing how cultural stereotypes are employed to normalize inequality and entrap marginalized women in perpetual economic dependency.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

This study utilized Patricia Hill Collins's concepts of the matrix of domination and controlling images to examine Damon Galgut's "*The Promise*", with a focus on the character Salome. The findings indicate that Salome's subjugation is structured across four interconnected domains of power. In the structural domain, she is barred from legally owning the house promised to her due to apartheid-era property laws. In the disciplinary domain, the Swart family's refusal to document the promise highlights how institutional procedures are employed to manage and perpetuate her exclusion. In the hegemonic domain, her assertions and evidence are consistently dismissed or reframed as acts of generosity instead of rights, illustrating how ideology justifies her ongoing dispossession. In the interpersonal domain, routine dismissive interactions with family members demonstrate how domination operates in everyday interactions. Additionally, beyond these four domains, Salome is subjected to controlling images, especially being reduced to "the maid"—an identity that strips her of personal subjectivity and reflects the broader stereotype of Black women as domestic workers.

In conclusion, Salome's character illustrates how the complex system of domination and controlling images works in tandem to maintain her marginalization. This is achieved not through just one

mechanism, but through the interconnected workings of legal exclusion, institutional control, ideological reasoning, daily interactions, and stereotypical portrayals.

B. Suggestion

This research is constrained by its exclusive use of Black feminist thought, especially the matrix of domination and controlling images, as the only theoretical lens, and by its concentration on one literary piece, "The Promise." Although this perspective facilitates a thorough exploration of intersecting oppressions faced by women, it does not incorporate related Black feminist ideas like self-definition or Black feminist epistemology, which might provide further understanding of Salome's inner life and resistance. Moreover, the applicability of the results is restricted by the lack of comparative analysis with other post-apartheid novels.

In future research, academics could analyze *The Promise* in conjunction with other literary pieces that delve into race, gender, and class within post-apartheid or postcolonial settings. Additionally, future investigations might utilize Hill Collins's idea of self-definition to explore instances of resistance or agency in Salome's character that surpass mere domination.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



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