

# MULTICULTURALISM AND NATIONHOOD: A POSTMODERNIST READING OF NADINE GORDIMER'S NONE TO ACCOMPANY ME AND GILLIAN SLOVO'S RED DUST.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*In order to forestall the trauma of the past, post-apartheid South African leadership has been legislating laws to reconcile cultural differences among its citizens in the hope of invigorating the spirit of nationhood. Thus for socio-political harmony to exist in this society, cultural pluralism and dialogue must be encouraged so that the different races and ethnic groups will see each other as part of the same nation. Using Nadine Gordimer's None to Accompany Me and Gillian Slovo's Red Dust, this paper verifies the place of multiculturalism in post-apartheid literary narratives and its influence in inculcating the spirit of national consciousness in South Africa. From the paradigm of postmodernist criticism, this paper sustains the premise that for social justice and harmony to reign in multicultural and multiracial societies, there should be the political will of state leadership to shun cultural exclusionism and articulate policies that will reconcile and accommodate cultural/racial differences thereby leading to what could be termed cultural ecumenicism. In other words, governmental policies in such societies should be directed towards bridging racial and ethnic cleavages in order to build a cosmopolitan society.*

## **KEYWORDS:**

*nationhood, multiculturalism, postmodernist criticism, cultural ecumenicism, cosmopolitan society.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In every human society, there is the tendency and temptation for one group to think that it is superior and more important than the others. In fact, this tendency is very visible in racialised and ethnocentric societies where one culture or race tends to dominate the others. The former U.N Secretary-General, Kofi A. Annan in his 2001 Nobel lecture, condemned this cultural chauvinism in the contemporary society avowing that: "We recognize that we are the products of many cultures, traditions, and memories; that mutual respect allows us to study and learn from other cultures; and that we gain strength by combining the foreign with the familiar" (162). By this declaration, Kofi Annan shows that the world would be a better place when people embrace cultural tolerance since no culture is perfect and self-sufficient.

In societies where cultural chauvinism exists, there is bound to be racial or ethnic antagonism which, if not nib in the bud, could result to full-blown conflict. As Kofi Annan further opines, although one has the natural right to take pride in one's cultural heritage, "the notion that what is "ours" is necessarily in conflict with what is "theirs" is both false and dangerous. It has resulted in endless enmity and conflict, leading men to commit the greatest of crimes in the name of a higher power" (162). Nevertheless, this problem could be averted in societies with tough legal dispositions against cultural assimilation. Consequently in the midst of its socio-historical, cultural and racial backgrounds and in order to forestall the trauma of the past, the post-apartheid South African leadership is making conscious effort to enact laws that will reconcile cultural differences among its citizens. It follows, therefore, that for social and political harmony to exist in this society cultural diversity and dialogue must be encouraged.

This paper expounds on the interconnections between literary discourse and ideological perception by showing that writers are ideological beings who do not only say what society is but also what society should be. As the case maybe, most writers use literature as an aperture to propagate their ideological vision of life; so literature becomes grossly political and presents itself as an arena for ideological contestation and projection. Louis Althusser expressively spells out that artistic texts cannot be devoid of authorial ideology and the society from which they emanate. Althusser, further, contends that "When we speak of ideology, we should know that ideology slides into all human activity, that it is identical with the "lived" experience of human existence itself[...]" (1481). Consequently, it follows from a syllogistic perspective that art being a creative human activity cannot be dissociated from ideology. Althusser iteratively says:

I believe that the peculiarity of art is to 'make us see', 'make us perceive', and 'make us feel' something which alludes to reality [...]. What art makes us see, and therefore gives us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving', and 'feeling', is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes [...] (1480)

In this guise, this paper analyses the ideological orientation of multiculturalism or cultural ecumenicism in Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me* and Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* and how it has resulted to nationhood in post-apartheid South Africa. As a matter of fact, the analysis of these texts ascertains that for social justice, peace and harmony to reign in multicultural societies like South Africa, there should be conscious effort from the political leadership to shun cultural exclusionism and legislate laws encouraging unity in diversity or what could be described as cultural ecumenicism. The two novels, understudy, reflect the consciousness of the post-apartheid administration to construct a cosmopolitan South African nation.

## **DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

In the context of this paper, it is imperative to define the concepts and politics of "multiculturalism" and "nationhood" because they are not only crucial but controversial in the discourse of postmodernism and cultural studies as a whole. As concerns multiculturalism, Jonathan Seglow affirms that "Multiculturalism can be acknowledged, championed, challenged or rejected but it cannot be ignored because it describes a centre of the world in which we live" (156). Seglow's affirmation shows the importance of multiculturalism in shaping the world especially in the present context of globalisation, high information technology, and cultural

exchange. The concept and politics of multiculturalism is related to other concepts in cultural studies and anthropology such as “cultural pluralism”, “the politics of difference”, and “unity in diversity”. Actually, multiculturalism concerns the cohabitation of different cultural strands within a specific group or society without the attempt of one cultural filament struggling to muzzle the others. In this context, Jeffrey G. Reitz contends that “Multiculturalism as a social philosophy and as a policy suggests that, in an attempt to shape a cohesive society from diverse ethnic and cultural groups, it is better to recognize and value that diversity, and not seek to downplay diversity, or to cast all groups within one single cultural mould” (1). From this definition, multiculturalism leads to cultural heterogeneity and not homogeneity. In fact, it is a socio-political philosophy that accepts the co-existence of other cultural voices in a given or specific society giving them protection and space to operate in concert with other cultural voices or strands.

Furthermore, proponents of cultural pluralism see cultural diversity as a source of strength and not of weakness. This is because multiculturalism supports the English adage that variety is the spice of life. Thus, the multicultural ideology opens the door for cultural dialogue and exchange since it is only in this context that cultural conflict and ethnocentrism could be minimized. In view of this, R.C. Pradhan postulates that:

Multi-culturalism can very well give rise to the global human unity in spite of the differences in race and culture. The differences are no barrier to unity in human ideals and values. Mankind can definitely rise to the level of the unity in mind and spirit if sufficient effort is made by the human community. For this, what is needed is the understanding of the unity at the level of the human spirit which gives rise to the higher order human values. (184)

The other concept requiring definition is nationhood, a reality which is leagued with nation. Reo M. Christen et al. define a nation as “[...] a relatively large group who feel they belong together by virtue of sharing one or more of such traits as a common race, a common language, a common culture, a common history, a common set of customs or traditions” (20). For Louis P. Pojman, “A nation [...] is a group of people who are tied together through common sources of meaning and identity, through ethnic similarities, through language, literature, history, myth, religion, and other cultural phenomena” (2). He elaborates that a nation represents the communal, voluntary aspects of social life, stressing the particular over the universal. Put differently, that every nation has a specific reality that makes it distinct from other nations.

In addition, a nation is associated with a social group, which shares a common history, culture, race, tradition and a sense of homogeneity, usually reinforced by a strong sense of belonging. These definitions imply that people from different cultures, traditions, races, religious backgrounds, history, etc. cannot constitute a nation. Yet, a group of people might have the same history, culture, and traditions but do not constitute a nation. Truly, the citizens of a country do not have to be from the same race, ancestry or have religious affiliations to form a nation. In fact this is immaterial because it is the will and disposition to live together under a negotiated politico-legal frame irrespective of origins and culture that constitute a nation. Ernest Renan, in a lecture delivered at the Sorbonne on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1882 highlights his views that:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form [...] The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. (19)

From Renan's assertion, a nation exists only when there is the volition or willingness of the people to live together under a laid down politico-legal framework. Consequently, membership of a nation becomes a matter of passion and personal commitment that evokes and distils the sentiment of patriotism and collective brotherhood. Bernard Fonlon remarks that "A nation [...] is not merely so many millions of people inhabiting so many thousands of square miles and held together under the precarious grip of an external agent like a government. A nation [...] is also, and essentially, a unity of thought and feelings" (19). In addition, the alacrity of the people to live together is illustrated by George Guest as follow:

It is a fact that a common language and literature, together with a common body of law, are important factors in the growth of nationality. But, in order to constitute a nation, a body of people must also have the desire to live together under the same government, and even claim to have to share in the framing of its laws for the common welfare. Without this desire, this sentiment, this spirit, there can be no real national tie. (93)

Contextually, the concept of nationhood refers to the inward feeling of certainty or assurance that one genuinely belongs to a nation and have equal rights and opportunities with all and sundry without any form of discrimination or preference for any group be it because of race, gender or age. In a nutshell, nationhood is hinged on the principles of equality and social justice and on the profound and lofty ideas of Thomas Jefferson that all men by their natural and intrinsic nature are created equal and are endowed with certain inalienable rights which should not be tampered with.

## **THEORETICAL PARADIGM**

The reading practice which has been adopted for the analysis of this paper is postmodernism – which is a theoretical construct that came into literary and cultural criticism as a counter-discursive theory to modernism. This theory is very important in the analysis of these novels because it breaks down the barrier between high and low cultures by placing them on an equal platform. Lyotard gives a succinct definition of postmodernism in the following words: "I define *postmodern* as incredulity towards metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences. But that progress in turn presupposes it" (xxiv). In other words, postmodernism debunks and deconstructs established structures of power and knowledge; it opens the avenue to a multiplicity of different voices and structures of power.

Since the publication of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, other critics have further elaborated on the concept of postmodernism from different perspectives. Linda Hutcheon notes that postmodernism manifests itself in many fields of cultural endeavour such as architecture, literature, photography, film, painting, video, dance, music, and elsewhere. (1) In other words,

Hutcheon acknowledges the multidisciplinary nature of this concept since it manifests itself in different domains of life and studies. She also asserts that it is difficult to have “a definition of postmodernism that would encompass all the varying usages of the term”. Nevertheless, she focuses on “one particular definition of postmodernism from the point of view of its politicized challenges to the conventions of representation” (Hutcheon 17). According to her, therefore, postmodernism is against representation since the very act of representation is ideological and cannot be divorced from subjectivity, prejudice or bias. Pauline Marie Rosenau explicitly discusses postmodernism by essentially contrasting it with mediated perspectives of ideological institutions thus:

Post-modernism challenges global, all-encompassing world views, be they political, religious, or social. It reduces Marxism, Christianity, Fascism, Stalinism, capitalism, liberal democracy, secular humanism, feminism, Islam, and modern science to the same order and dismisses them all as logocentric, transcendental totalising meta-narratives that anticipate all questions and provide predetermined answers. (6)

These ideological units propagate “grand narratives” or “metanarratives” which are undercut by the postmodernist séance that every narrative is ‘grand’ in its own right and no form of narrative – political, economic, social, cultural or philosophical – should be used as a canon for judging other narratives. Thus, Keith Faulks avers that “Postmodernists are particularly scathing about metanarratives, which are theories that claim to be able to map the future direction of society by an analysis of the past and present condition of humanity” (166). In this light, postmodernism rejects the traditional, dogmatic and scholastic philosophy of authority and also the idea of universalism in favour of particularism and pluralism. Moreover, the post-modernist theory claims that it is impossible to make absolute statements or final conclusions about the structures of society or about historic causation because the way that one perceives, expresses, and interprets life, is influenced by gender, class, politics, and culture.

What makes postmodernism particularly unique is the idea that it is by and large “anti-authority”. In fact, postmodernists speak out against the constraints of religious morals and secular authority; they also wage intellectual revolution to voice their concerns about traditional establishment; they wage an onward surge against the “magisterium” of politics, commerce, culture, and art. It is in this perspective that Bryan S. Turner comments that: “Postmodernism in its populist form also threatens to shatter hierarchies of taste established by expert opinion” (4). He further buttresses this fact that “[...] postmodernism is cultural differentiation; it emerges with late consumer capitalism, and opposes avant-garde art and high culture” (4).

Postmodernist theory does not only analyses the stylistic quality of a text but also endeavours to investigate the socio-political and cultural context of literary and cultural productions as well. Not being independent of society, cultural productions are interpretations of society with specific socio-historical and political contexts. Simon Malpas, in *The Postmodern*, underscores that: “A[ny] discussion that focuses entirely on the stylistic features of postmodernist culture without investigating the social, economic and political contexts from which it emerges is too crude an undertaking to be particularly helpful to any serious critic of either postmodernism or postmodernity” (31). These novels will be analysed, therefore, within the South African politico-

historical context and the biography of the writers. The intention here is to situate the texts within the background and context of this historical milieu.

## **GORDIMER AND SLOVO: DISCIPLES OF CULTURAL ECUMENICISM**

Multiculturalism is one of the discourses of postmodernism and represents the ideological premise in the works of Nadine Gordimer and Gillian Slovo as seen in *None to Accompany Me* and *Red Dust*. In fact, this is the reigning ideological current in the cultural productions of most South African writers. In an interview with Rolf Solberg, Serote expresses his view that in order for peaceful co-existence to flourish in post-apartheid South Africa, multiculturalism should be adopted by the state so that other cultures will not feel cheated. He argues that “it is wrong for any country to suppress people’s cultures” and that “It is very important for South Africa to stimulate and promote multiculturalism to its full blossoming, as we should also do with our languages. By doing so, we are empowering the nation itself and the individuals and collectives within the nation” (183).

Gordimer and Slovo are prominent white South African female writers who are amongst the major female writers who fought against the apartheid leadership through their works. The difference between them is that while Slovo’s parents went on exile with her, Gordimer, despite the corrosive nature of the apartheid regime was still courageous to remain in South Africa and continue vituperating the system. Gordimer was born in South Africa in 1923 and her parents were Jewish émigrés - her mother from England and her father from Latvia. She has remained in South Africa, having lived in Johannesburg since 1948 until the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2015 when she died. She was educated in an all-white covenant school and spent a year at Witwatersrand University after which her life has been dominated by writing which led her to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994. Her pungent criticism of the apartheid super-structure, as seen in *Burgher’s Daughters* (1978) and *July’s People* (1981), shows her unvarnished support for multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism since apartheid is strictly against these ideologies.

Nadine Gordimer’s literary career witnessed a volte-face in 1990 following the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. She then had to tailor her thematic preoccupations to suit the new socio-political context. Ulrike Auga explains that:

With the negotiated settlement heralding a nation-state democracy and market economy and later neoliberalism, notable shifts occurred in ANC policy. In line with these shifts, Gordimer became the house critic of post-apartheid South Africa. Such a stance entails the Legitimation and stabilization of the system. Gordimer became the legitimizing intellectual, a role that has been part of the institution of national unity, democracy, and the market economy ever since the French Revolution. (209)

Gordimer has since focused on reconciliation of races and how a “rainbow nation” could be formed from the ashes of apartheid. *None to Accompany Me* (1994), her first post-apartheid novel, deals with a society at pains to reconcile itself after decades of racial animosity. The novel could be described as a transition novel from white minority rule in South Africa to black majority rule – a fitting description, given that political power in it is still in the hands of white minority South Africans. However, the significant difference is that the white regime is anti-

apartheid and negotiations are on the way with the black freedom movement to establish a new constitutional framework to cater for all the racial components in the country. In fact, the novel presents a South African society immediately after the abolition of apartheid where an anti-apartheid white regime takes over a pro-apartheid white government with its commitment to dialogue with the black freedom fighters. This political dialogue is done against the backdrop of racial antagonism and violence despite the political openness of the anti-apartheid regime seen in the release of all political prisoners and the opening of its frontiers to South African exiles.

In the novel, the white couple, Vera and Bennet Stark, organise a party to celebrate their wedding anniversary in “[...] the year the prisons opened” (Gordimer, 5). This year can be situated within the context of 1990 when Nelson Mandela and other apartheid activists were released from jail thereby bringing the apartheid saga to an end. Before now, the third-person omniscient narrator argues that this couple

[...] have been married so long they didn't usually make an occasion of the recurrent day; but sometimes it suggested an opportunity to repay invitations, discharged all we owe in one go, as Vera says, and on this year of all years it seemed a good excuse to go further than that: to let themselves and their friends indulge a little in the euphoria they knew couldn't last, but that they were entitled to enjoy now when, after decades when they had worked towards it without success, change suddenly emerged, alive from entombment. (Gordimer 5)

The celebration of their wedding anniversary in this year when “the prisons opened”, after many uncelebrated ones, has a political undertone; it is more of celebrating the official end of apartheid and racial segregation since this white couple were uncompromising activists against the apartheid system. In the context of social semiotics, the party signifies the celebration of the end of apartheid and the introduction of socio-cultural pluralism and freedom for the oppressed in South Africa with the release of prisoners from jail, which shows the triumph of multiculturalism over exclusionism and cultural hegemony in South African society.

The party at the Starks is also attended by members and colleagues of the Legal Foundation as well as people from different activist groups. As the omniscient narrator underscores that:

[...] white men and women who had been active in campaigns against detention without trial, forced removal of communities, franchise that excluded blacks: students leaders, ganged up under a tree in the garden drinking beer from cans, who had supported striking workers: a couple of black militant clergymen and an Afrikaner dominee excommunicated for his heresy in condemning segregation : a black actor who hid and treated young militants injured in street battles with the police and army: black community leaders who had led boycott; one or two of the white eternal from the street meetings of the old Communist Party[...] who had survived many guises. (Gordimer 5-6)

The dignitaries to this party are from all races and classes of people. The party, metaphorically, represents a prototype of the envisaged new South Africa which will accommodate people from different races, classes and cultures in the spirit of cultural and racial tolerance. Cheryl Hendricks

affirms the idea that non-racialism, cultural tolerance and forbearance as the rallying ideology of the anti-apartheid freedom fighters in the following words:

Throughout the latter half of the 1980s the call by the masses was for the establishment of one non-racial, non-sexist, democratic state. This vision became ANC policy during the transition period. Internal dynamics as well as external factors, which have been elaborated on by many authors necessitated that these be the principles governing a future society. It was the only vision that could bring a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The discourses of non-racialism, civic nationalism and multiculturalism were key to enabling the transition for they entitled all to see themselves as citizens of a reconstituted state with all the rights and privileges that universal democratic citizenship confers. (102)

Furthermore, the party provides an occasion for South Africans to express their desire to be liberated from the claws of apartheid. In a vivid description, the narrator says “Music began to shake the walls and billow out into the garden; political argument, drinking and dancing went on until three in the morning” (Gordimer 6). This drinking and political debate, which characterised the occasion, show the victory of multiracialism over racism and discrimination. The people now are free to express their views and ideas on issues which concern their country without any fear of spies or police brutality. This explains why Vera’s divorced husband can visit her at ten o’clock at night with “[...] no fear of muggings back in those days in the Forties” (Gordimer 7). This contrast between the present and the past has been drawn to vindicate the idea that there is relative freedom and security in present South Africa because of the multicultural vision of the anti-apartheid white regime.

The cordial relationship between the Stark and Maqoma families is an important element of racial tolerance in the post-apartheid context. This relationship which dates far back into the apartheid days continued to the post-apartheid era. The narrator explains, through the help of heterodiegetic analepsis, that: “the Stark couple enjoyed breaking the law of segregation, from the comfort of their side, by coming at night into Chiawelo to listen to jazz recordings – Didymus was a collector and himself played the trumpet in those days! – and drink and perhaps dance, bumping into Sally’s well-polished furniture” (Gordimer 39). The Maqomas, a black family, were living in Chiawelo, Deep Soweto, in the days of apartheid. Paying a visit to them in their house is a way of the Stark family (a white family) resisting the law of segregation and sending a strong message to the apartheid regime that racial segregation has no place in South Africa. This cordial relationship is further strengthened in the post-apartheid society where the children of these two families are also living in racial harmony and conviviality. The children of these two families are extended metaphors of the future South Africans. It sounds a note of optimism and certitude in post-apartheid South Africa when the youths interact among themselves regardless of their race. This is a healthy move towards reconciliation and national reconstruction since the youths, as it is said in political discourse, are the leaders of the future.

The anti-apartheid white regime in *None to Accompany Me* further shows its predilection for multiracialism when it grants general armistice to all exiles to return to South Africa. They are given a rapturous welcome by the crowd which had been waiting in the airport. The omniscient narrator captures this scenario using vivid description thus:

The plane-load of returning exiles who were arriving every few days were awaited at the airport by chanting and dancing crowd; when they came through the automatic doors that closed behind them on the old longing for home, when they emerged pushing squeaking chariots charged with the evidence of far places carrying airport store giant teddy bears, blind with excitement in the glare of recognition – not at once, of who they were individually but of what they stood for, the victory of return – a swell of women’s ululating voices buffeted them into the wrestle of joyous arm. Children seen for the first time were tossed from hands to shoulders, welcome banners were trampled waved, bull-horns sounded the hugging capering procession of transit to repossessing life regained, there outside the airport terminal was a carnival beyond belief it would ever be possible to celebrate. Home: that quiet word: a spectacle, a theatre, a pyrotechnic display of emotion for those who come from wars, banishment, exile, who have forgotten what home was or suffered not being able to forget. (Gordimer 43-44)

The enthusiasm of the population, as the exiles return shows their penchant for multiracialism and freedom. This is understood when the narrator remarks that the crowd was rejoicing not for who the exiles are but for what they stood for. In other words the issue, following the return of the exiles, is not a matter of the social class or racial orientation of the exiles but the unquestionable effrontery that they demonstrated in fighting against injustice and inequality in their society.

More so, there is the introduction of freedom of speech and association in the post-apartheid context. This is an essential hallmark in the concept of cultural tolerance. Didymus is seen organising protocols and press conferences, on behalf of the Movement, as he comes back from South Africa from exile. He is even appointed “one of the first delegations to talk with white businessmen” and invited to give “a graduation address at a college (Gordimer 72). These aspects of cultural and racial tolerance were curtailed in the days of apartheid. These gestures illustrate the view that in the post-1990 South African society, the anti-apartheid white regime is now receptive to new idiosyncrasies. In the novel, “The Movement” further handles its general elections without any trepidation of police brutality - a confirmation that there is liberal consciousness and racial tolerance in the post-apartheid nation. That is why the narrator argues that earlier it would have been an affront to see people gathering as members of a movement that opposed the apartheid policies.

Cross-cultural interaction is also found in the comportment of the characters. In *None to Accompany Me*, the post-apartheid white regime comes to self-realisation that blacks are also capable of doing things that whites can benefit from. In the text, the Starks and other whites attend the opening ceremony “of an exhibition of painting and wood carving by black artists”. In cultural studies, it is said that art, in general, is not only an expression of beauty but also the reflection or carrier of the culture of a people. This exhibition of African art truly symbolises the beauty of the African culture and also shows that creativity is not the monopoly of the white race; that blacks are also very creative. The narrator further remarks that the artefacts and craftsmanship of these black artists “had become fashionable” because “city corporations and white collectors had seen such acquisitions as the painless way to prove absence of racial prejudice” (Gordimer 73). These African artefacts are, therefore, semiotic resources and the

interest shown by whites in them shows that they acknowledge African culture in its essence and existence and communicate the truth that something good can also come from Africa

The multicultural and inclusive consciousness in post-apartheid South Africa is also manifested in the situation where the Movement organises its congress in order to elect members into different positions of responsibility. The various candidates who are vying for the different positions have their posters all around the country. The narrator comments that “The posters are curling at the corners and some have faded strips where sunlight from a window has barred them day after day, month after month” (Gordimer 92). This narratological assertion depicts two important issues in post-apartheid South Africa: it shows that the regime is increasingly becoming more tolerant towards the Movement as a whole and it also portrays the degree of democracy, freedom, and internal tolerance in the Movement. In fact, this is a laudable practice for the Movement because it cannot be vying for national governance when it does not practise internal democracy and tolerance. This democratic atmosphere is not only of interest to the elders of the party; even the youths are equally very enthusiastic about the performance of the Movement. The narrator further says that “Crowds who dance their manifesto in the streets are too young to recognize anyone who dates from the era before exile unless he is one of the two or three about whom songs were sung and whose images were kept alive on T-shirts”(Gordimer 92). The involvement of the youth in this democratic process serves as a positive move for the future of South Africa. Exposing the youths to this democratic culture inadvertently makes them politically tolerant to ideas that are different from theirs, consequently making them better citizens in the future.

Furthermore, the liberal consciousness is seen in the character of Didymus. He is portrayed in the novel as a democratic, progressive, and tolerant person. When the results of the election are being read, his name is not among those who have been voted into the new executive. His democratic valour is pictured from the perspective that he is not embittered or disillusioned when he is not elected. This is seen as he still attends the congratulatory party organised by those who are now members of the new executive. Sibongile, his wife, sees the non-election of her husband as a travesty of justice. Didymus, however, consoles her that:

- For God’s sake, Sibongile – He changed from English to their language, or rather hers, which was the tongue of their intimacy. – It’s done. It’s happened. I don’t want to deal with it now. It’s political life, we held everything together in exile better than any other movement did, now’s not the time to start stirring up trouble. There may be a purpose. I don’t know something else planned for me –.  
(Gordimer 98)

Didymus’ comments show that he believes in the alternation of political power. In his opinion, since they were at the helm of power during the period in exile, it is normal others continue the battle in the post-apartheid context. This attitude of his shows that Didymus is not a megalomaniac who wants to remain in power at all costs.

Despite all the explanations Didymus gives to his wife, Sibongile still finds it hard to believe that her husband has not been elected. She mocks him when he tells her that maybe it is divine purpose for him not to be elected this time around. Sibongile says: “- Hai you! What purpose! You going to grow a beard and all that stuff and infiltrate – where? What for? Why can’t we just get off a plane at an airport and walk in, now? We’re not living in the past! –” (Gordimer 98).

Sibongile's sarcasm depicts her as one who wants to arrogate powers and functions to herself. However, Didymus becomes very indignant towards her sardonic remarks and chastises her in the following words: "- Listen, woman. - He sat up with effort. - You are going to be there, now. In there. Here at home in the country. Keep your mind on what you have to do, you have to work with everyone on the Executive, don't make enemies for private reasons -" (Gordimer 99). His comment is pregnant with a plethora of meanings. Firstly, he addresses her as "woman" to express his irritation and then reminds her that she has to work with everyone and not create animosity with people for "private reasons." This remark justifies Didymus' vision of post-apartheid South Africa that goes beyond the individual self and embraces the entire nation. In other words, in the post-apartheid context, collective interests should supersede personal or private interest.

Like Nadine Gordimer, Gillian Slovo, in *Red Dust*, also manifests her predilection for multiculturalism in post-apartheid South Africa. Much younger than Gordimer, this white South African female writer was born in 1952 in South Africa. Her father, Joe Slovo, was the leader of the South African Communist Party (S.A.C.P.) but in 1985 joined the A.N.C. movement to become the first white member in the national executive organ of the party. Her mother, Ruth First, was a journalist who was assassinated in Maputo in 1982, by a parcel bomb. From this parental background, it is easily understood why Slovo, in her writings, is very critical of the apartheid regime. In her memoir, *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country*, she conveys the history of her family in the context of apartheid and shows how her parents were actively involved in the struggle against the system. Just like Gordimer, her criticism of apartheid shows that she believes in a multicultural and cosmopolitan society where the various races interact in harmony and tolerance. *Red Dust*, therefore, is situated in the context of post-apartheid reconciliation in which Slovo depicts a regime of black majority rule in South Africa and the move taken by the regime to bridge the racial gap. In doing this, the regime creates a Truth Commission to reconcile the oppressors (mainly whites) and the oppressed (mainly blacks) during the apartheid dispensation. As in *None to Accompany Me*, this move towards reconciliation and reconstruction is carried out in an atmosphere of hatred, mutual distrust and racial violence.

The ideology of multiculturalism – which leads to liberalism – is also reflected in the novel which portrays the writer's vision for the post-apartheid South African society. The protagonist is a young female white South African lawyer Sarah Barcant, who lives in New York when the novel commences. Probably on exile in America for her criticism of the apartheid ideology, she has just won a court case and is full of happiness and satisfaction. The narrator notes that "Coming out of the subway at 79<sup>th</sup> Street, her smile broadened. Not only had her victory buoyed her up, but on days like this she would experience anew the joy of being in New York" (Slovo 1). The city of New York is an extended metaphor for the whole of America and represents freedom and pluralism. In this guise, Sarah enjoys the "joy of being in New York" because of the liberal consciousness of this society which is also a component of multiculturalism. To show her admiration for the city of New York the narrator further explains Sarah's movement on Broadway, an indication that she is very comfortable in the area:

She turned right on Broadway. As she moved out of the protection of the Apthorp, the wind cut into her. She didn't mind. This was one of those dry

February days she relished the sky a clear ice blue, the air crisp and sharp, highlighting the city's hard outlines. She walked briskly, thinking of the malt she would pour herself when she got home. Broadway was so wide, she thought, and so solid with its for once smooth gliding traffic, its stores summoning passers-by into glutted end-of-season sales and its markets with their laid-out wares. She stopped outside one and looked over the polished, perfect fruit and glistening vegetables, clean and healthy under the light, all varieties despite the season. It was all so luxurious and so different from that bleak, dry place where she'd been born. (Slovo 1-2).

The writer's use of this detailed description shows that Sarah is happy in America because she can articulate herself without fear of police brutality, unlike in South Africa where police brutality is the norm. In addition, the narrator contrasts the affluence and luxury in Broadway with "that bleak, dry place where she'd (Sarah) been born". The narrator's allusion is probably to South Africa during the apartheid era filled with misery and hardship - among the citizens most especially non-whites.

When Sarah arrives her apartment door "juggling keys and gags" she "heard the phone ringing". She does not bother about the call because, as the narrator says, "She always needed a moment of solitary reflection after a case finished and she knew that whoever it was trying to contact her would either leave a message or call back" (Slovo 2). As she switches on the recorder to get the message of the caller, she realises that it is Ben Hoffman, from South Africa, calling her to come back to her home country. The narrator says that, "The tape kept turning, recording his (Ben Hoffman) injunction: 'I want you back' (Slovo 2). Hoffman's desire to have Sarah back in South Africa is an indication that the apartheid imbroglio has come to an end and the reconstruction of the South African nation is in progress. In this regard, Sarah's summons by Hoffman is for her to also participate in the development of post-apartheid South Africa.

Despite Sarah's hesitation, she decides to honour Hoffman's plea and returns to South Africa, her country of birth after fourteen years in New York. The narrator comments that as Sarah's plane lands in Port Elizabeth she drives into the town of Smitsrivier where she lodges at the Smitsrivier Retreat. After taking her bath, she decides to saunter "down Smitsrivier's Main Street to its distant end" (Slovo 8). Sarah probably undertakes this stroll in order to have first-hand information about South Africa after apartheid being the first time she is in the country since its abolition. As she strolls, she "noticed how much more crowded Smitsrivier was and, even more radically, as she passed the municipal garden stocked with strangely twisted aloes, she saw three black men sprawled out on a wooden bench that had once been reserved for whites only" (Slovo 9). The "municipal garden" denotes, in the context of social semiotics, cultural tolerance in post-apartheid South Africa and the "three black men" who sit on the bench which had been "reserved for whites only" shows the practice of racial tolerance in the post-apartheid era. In addition, the fact that whites and non-whites South Africans could carry out recreational activities in the same garden shows the distance that the society has moved in reconciling the different racial cleavages in post-1990 South Africa for this is at variance with the Group Areas Act of 1950 which provided for the creation of separate areas throughout the country, in which ownership and occupation of land was restricted to a specific group. Approvingly, therefore, the narrator further opines that "They (the three black men) were passing a bottle of cheap Golden Mustang between them - an act of defiance that in the old days would have brought police sjambok raining down" (Slovo 9).

Furthermore, just like Vera Stark in *None to Accompany Me*, the omniscient narrator portrays Sarah Barcant as one who does not want to think about the past. She wants to see her country graduate from its sordid past and reconcile itself. This attitude shows that Sarah is forward-looking and would not want to incarcerate herself in the darkness and misery of the past in the historical discourse of her country. The narrator contends that on coming to South Africa, “the pact she’d (Sarah) made with herself when she’d agreed to answer Ben’s summons” was “that she would not allow herself to be dragged into a contemplation of the past” (Slovo, 13). Sarah’s decision not to get into the past is very symbolic. It shows her preference for the post-apartheid dispensation where multicultural discourse and cultural ecumenicism is the reigning national policy and ideology as opposed to the days of apartheid where there was cultural fragmentation and intolerance. In addition, Sarah also enjoys the liberty that reigns in post-apartheid South Africa, largely the fruits of multicultural consciousness. When the “kombi van” which is “part of the local township’s informal mass transit system” stops in front of her “to disgorge passengers”, Sarah is elated with the freedom enjoyed by these passengers who are mainly blacks. (Slovo 9). The narrator notes that “Skirting round the van she was assailed by the rhythmic blasting of its sound system, deep men’s voices thumping out that strange lyrical fusion of pop and revolutionary metaphor that was unique to South Africa” (Slovo 9). The music, heard from this van, shows the degree of freedom that exists in post-apartheid South Africa. When she sees three black men at a car greeting each other, Sarah is amazed. Her amazement pushes the narrator to comment that Sarah Barcant “[...] re-experienced the liveliness of her mother country. It’s good to be back, she thought: to hear the laughter in those once familiar voices and to be surrounded by all those different loud South African accents” (Slovo 9). The different accents in South Africa symbolise the different cultures co-habiting and tolerating one another.

Furthermore, in *Red Dust*, the characters who are at the forefront to see that justice is applied in the post-apartheid era are mainly white characters. Importantly, this proves the view that not all whites supported apartheid; there were many liberal whites who opposed the ideology of racial segregation and propagated a cosmopolitan society where the various ethnic and racial groups could intermingle in harmony. A case in point is the character Ben Hoffman who in the days of apartheid was the main lawyer handling judicial cases concerning blacks. The narrator affirms that there were no “qualified black lawyers” and “Ben had been the only white lawyer prepared to take on a ‘political’ case when political meant almost anything that happened to any black person” (Slovo 18). The fact that Ben Hoffman could risk his entire existence to defend blacks on legal matters insinuates that he was not in accord with the apartheid system. Even in the post-apartheid era, many blacks still solicit his legal expertise on issues that concern them. The narrator reiterates that “The spectre of James”, in narrator reiterates, “seemed to be in the room with him, reminding him in turn of what unending line of other Africans who had, over the years come here to ask for his [Ben Hoffman] help as a lawyer” (Slovo 17). This gesture illustrates that Ben is anti-racist and prefers multiracialism and not racial bigotry.

While in his study room, Ben Hoffman’s gaze falls on Steve Sizela’s photography who was arrested during the apartheid era by Pieter Muller and since then his whereabouts is unknown (Slovo 16). Steve’s father, James Sizela, believes that Pieter Muller is responsible for the disappearance of Steve Sizela. The narrator says that:

Miller's culpability was a theory that had been doing rounds of Smitsrivier for more than thirty years, ever since Steve had been arrested on Pieter Muller's orders and then had disappeared. Although he had no concrete proof of this, most people in the town – certainly most black people – believed that Steve was dead and that Muller was responsible. (Slovo 17)

Steve's photograph in Ben's house shows that he criticises any society where racism is the reigning ideology. In this discussion with James Sizela, Ben convinces him that he should apply to the Truth Commission to convict Pieter Muller to talk about the whereabouts of the body of Steve Sizela – if at all he is dead. Ben's advice to James Sizela shows that he is for social justice in post-apartheid South Africa and desires that all those who committed wanton acts of human rights abuse should face the law and pay for their crimes.

In addition, Nelson Mandela's picture is hung on the wall where the Truth Commission's meetings are to be held. The narrator says that this is where "...other presidents had once looked down" (Slovo 77). The portrait of Mandela in the Truth Commission Hall symbolises freedom and the triumph of non-racialism over racial disintegration since this was the main ideology of the ANC movement during its fight against apartheid. Also, during the opening of the court session, the chairman of the Truth Commission explains that the lawyers have the right to speak in Shona, or Zulu or Xhosa or any other official languages in the country. The declaration by the chairman of the Truth Commission that the lawyers are free to use any of the official languages of their choice shows that the commission is aware of the multilingual and multicultural nature of South Africa and does everything in its capacity to promote each culture.

The attitude of the chairman is a reflection of the multicultural dimension of the South African Constitution that was adopted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1996 and amended on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1996 by the South African Constitutional Assembly. "The Preamble" of the Constitution stipulates that South Africans: "Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity" (1). The phrase "united in our diversity" illustrates that the post-apartheid regime is not unaware of the truism that South Africa is a multicultural society where the various cultures are bound to co-habit with one another. In order to further defend its multicultural status, the Constitution elevates some of the local languages of South Africa by giving them official status. Article six of the constitution, which deals with the language policy of the state, reads: "The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, siSwali, Tshivendi, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu" (Art. 6.1). The article goes further to state that the South African state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. These constitutional provisions express the efforts by the post-apartheid regime to protect the different cultures in South Africa.

Finally in order to facilitate the notion of multiculturalism and to make the people understand the court proceedings in their own languages, the Truth Commission appoints translators and interpreters. This explains why Hannie Bester, (Dirk Hendricks' lawyer) chooses to speak in Afrikaans where the narrator says that he spoke slowly so as to give the interpreters in their glass-walled booths time to translate his speech into English or Xhosa to the audience. This idea of preserving the culture of the various ethnic and racial groups in post-apartheid South Africa had been the programme of the A.N.C. movement when it was struggling against apartheid. In a paper prepared for the A.N.C. in-house seminar on culture in 1989, Albie Sachs postulated that as the

movement was preparing for eventual leadership, it had to make it a state ideology to promote the cultures of all ethnic groups in South Africa. He argues thus:

We want full equal rights for every South African, without reference to race, language, ethnic origin or creed [...] Yet this is not to call for a homogenized South Africa made up of identikit citizens. South Africa is now said to be a bilingual country: we envisage as a multilingual country, it will be multifaith and multicultural as well. The objective is not to create a model into which everyone has to assimilate, but to acknowledge pride in the cultural diversity of our people[...] We will have Zulu South Africans and Afrikaner South Africans and Indian South Africans and Jewish South Africans and Venda South Africans and Cape Muslims South Africans. Each cultural tributary contributes towards and increases the majesty of the river of South Africanness. (243-44)

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Norman K. Denzin maintains that the textual analysis of meaning “requires the implementation of a variety of reading strategies which examine how a text constitutes (hails) an individual as a subject in a particular ideological moment and site” (82). Mindful of Denzin’s argument, this paper set out to analyse Nadine Gordimer’s *None to Accompany Me* and Gillian Slovo’s *Red Dust* to underpin the interrelations between cultural texts and ideological discourse. From the postmodernist perspective, this paper has proven the stance that literature cannot be exonerated from ideological content because writers, themselves, are politico-ideological beings who unconsciously reveal their ideological platform in their texts and the general ideology of their socio-political context. These two post-apartheid novels reflect the conscious effort made by the post-apartheid administration to break away from the past where cultural antagonism was its trade-mark to the present context of cultural ecumenism. In this guise, it is deciphered that multiculturalism is the authorial ideology of Gordimer and Slovo as reflected in *None to Accompany Me* and *Red Dust* respectively. They harbour the vision that for a united South Africa to come to fruition, the post-apartheid leadership should adopt multiculturalism as its guiding ideology. The citizens should also learn to accept the unvarnished fact that South Africa is a society of many cultures where cultural co-habitation must be encouraged. It is in the context of this multicultural reality that Jonathan Seglow says: “[...] we must recognise that our multicultural reality is pertinent for politics as soon as we start theorising about it [...] Approaching multiculturalism with honesty and integrity, means accepting that it is not a decorative but a permanent feature of our public social world” (157).

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