

Memory and Disenchantment in Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me* and Zoe Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*.

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Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to show how Nadine Gordimer, in *None to Accompany Me* and Zoe Wicomb, in *Playing in the Light* have represented the past in their post-Apartheid novels and how it has influenced the ontological situation of the characters in the above texts in question. This paper is, therefore, based on the premise that the behaviour and present conditions of the characters in the works of the above novelists have been shaped by the trauma of their past. It is for this reason that the characters look at the past with anger and acrimony against those who perpetrated acts of nefariousness against them.*

Résumé

*Le but de cet article est de montrer comment Nadine Gordimer, à *None pour moi* et Zoe Wicomb *Accompagner, en jouant dans la Lumière* ont représenté le passé dans leurs romans post-apartheid et comment il a influencé la situation ontologique des personnages de ce qui précède textes en question. Ce document est donc basé sur la prémisse que le comportement et les conditions actuelles des personnages dans les œuvres des romanciers ci-dessus ont été façonnées par le traumatisme de leur passé. C'est pour cette raison que les personnages regardent le passé avec colère et amertume contre ceux qui ont commis des actes de nefariousness contre eux.*

Introduction

Memory is a human activity that plays a very great role in the existence of man and his wellbeing. Each and everyone have the propensity to recapitulate what had happened to him or another person in the past. In, *Social Memory and Contemporaneity*, Gulnara A. Bakieva asserts that "Interpretation of the past, reminiscences of the future, and the creation of contemporaneity are the ontological requirements of any society." (1) This assertion shows the importance of the past, which is known through memory, in shaping the ontological situation of man and moulding his future. She further articulates that:

“Events and facts of the past and present are pressed into social memory and form a mnemonic time and space different from physical time and space.” (1). The word, “memory”, comes from the Latin word “*memoria*” which means a remembrance or recollection. Consequently, memory essentially denotes the capability or power of remembering, retaining, or recalling past experiences in the life of an individual or a group of people and a nation. In the domain of psychology and psychiatry, memory is defined as the ability of an organism to store, retain, and subsequently retrieve information. The psychiatrists, Larry R. Squire and Richard D. McKee, in “Biology of Memory”, expostulates that:

Psychotherapy itself is a process by which new behaviours are acquired through the accumulation of new experiences. Thus, memory is at the heart of psychiatry’s concern with the individual, personal identity, and growth and development. Memory makes possible autobiographical recollection, it connects the present moment to what came before, and it is the basis for cultural evolution. (317)

The critical theory, chosen for this paper, is the Sociology of Knowledge. This approach came into sociological discourse as the handiwork of the German sociologist Karl Mannheim. The approach, in its essence, is the study of the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises, and of the effects prevailing ideas have on societies; it is not a specialized area of sociology but instead deals with broad fundamental questions about the extent and limits of social influences on individual’s lives and the social-cultural basics of our knowledge about the world. In his article “Sociology of Knowledge”, Karl Mannheim argues that art and human thinking in general is not an intrinsic or psychological enterprise. It is extrinsically determined by the individual’s experiences and the social and historical context in which he finds his/herself.

He further concludes his argument in the following words:

The history of art has fairly conclusively shown that art forms may be definitely dated according to their style, since each form is possible only under given historical conditions and reveals the characteristics of the epoch. [...] Just as in art we can date particular forms on the ground of their definite association with a particular period of history so in the case of knowledge we can detect with increasing exactness the perspective due to a particular historical setting. (242–243)

The recollection of memory is one of the topical issues which are discussed in post-Apartheid literary and cultural discourses. South African writers such as André Brink, J.M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, Nadine Gordimer, Gillian Slovo just to mention a few, were eye-witnesses of the Apartheid era. So, consciously or not, the writers are retrospective in their works, even when they treat post-Apartheid issues. In his article entitled “Stories of History: Reimagining the Past in Post-Apartheid Narrative”, André Brink argues “[...] in favour of an imagined rewriting of history or [...] of the role of the imagination in the dialectic between past and present, individual and society” (37). This imaginary rewriting of history cannot be possible without exploration of memory. This explains

Brink's statement that "Reinventing the past through the imagination involves primarily [...] a peculiar machination of memory. And memory [...] comprises not only act of recovery but processes of suppression" (36). In other words, Brink is contending that the memory of a people can create nostalgia of their past as well as it can also act as a source of painful suppression. However, in the context of South Africa, memory is perceived as a source of oppression and trauma.

Nadine Gordimer and Zoe Wicomb have adequately explored the concept of memory. In this paper, the focus is on both writers. Two works are chosen to examine the notion of memory: Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me* and Zoe Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*, both, considered as post-Apartheid novels, explore the past and how it has influenced the ontological situation of the characters. This assumption in this paper is that the behaviour and present conditions of the characters in the works of the above novelists have been shaped by the trauma of their past. It is for this reason that the characters look at the past with anger and acrimony against those who perpetrated acts of nefariousness against them. In "Telling 'Free' Stories? Memory and Democracy in South Africa Autobiography Since 1994", Sarah Nuttall argues that memory is always much about the present as it is the past. (76) This means that an individual's past is as important as his present. Consequently, both should be given importance. The characters, in these novels, think about the past not with nostalgia, as romantic poets will do, but with disgust, hatred and depression.

Nadine Gordimer's novel, *None to Accompany Me*, commences with a group photograph, which Vera discovers on her shelf. It is a picture Vera had snapped with her friends during a holiday party and sent "[...] to her first husband in his officers' quarters in Egypt during the war [...]" (*None* 4). This picture creates suspense in the story because, at this initial point, the reader is compelled to read ahead to understand what the picture symbolises. More so, the suspense is further seen where on this picture Vera, encircles the head of a man who is on her left. This explains why the narrator declares "[...] a man on her left, a circle round his head. He was identified by name in a line squeezed vertically alongside her account of the weather." (*None* 4) It is for this reason that the omniscient narrator begins the story with a rhetorical question: "And who is that?" (*None* 3). This question also generates suspense and creates the curiosity to know the person on the photograph and the reason why his head has been encircled.

As one reads deep into the story, the suspense is gradually unravelled in that one realises the meaning of Vera encircling the head of the man on the photograph. The idea is to inform her first husband that this man is now her new husband. The narrator confirms this when he says, "What was written on the back of the photograph was not the message. Her message was the inked ring round the face of the stranger: this is the image of the man who is my lover. I am in love with him, I'm sleeping with this man standing beside me; I've been open with you." (*None* 4). Moreover, the narrator asserts and acknowledges that there is "[...] the recognition of specific memory the photograph

arouses [...]” (*None* 3). This is probably the memory of her first white husband, she had divorced, for the probable reason that he had been serving the Apartheid regime – a regime Vera detested and fought against. The picture, therefore, is a symbolic representation of the past, which results to Vera’s trauma.

Vera’s first husband brought this picture back home, after the war, to Vera because he did not understand the symbolic message from the picture; he instead read the message at the back of the picture but did not take note of the person on the picture whose head had been ringed – which indeed was the real message Vera wanted to pass across to him. (*None* 4) The discovery of this picture on her shelf, takes Vera forty-five years backward. These years are the years of the Apartheid era. The narrator says that “After forty-five years she was looking at the photograph again and seeing there in its existence, come back to her and lying on a shelf under some old record sleeves, that it was true: the existence of his innocence forever.” (*None* 5)

Furthermore, the omniscient narrator declares that Vera is astounded when she comes across this photograph since, before this time; she believed she had destroyed everything that had to do with the past or the old Apartheid order. The narrator says that “Vera Stark, lawyer-trained and with the impulse to order that brings tidiness with ageing, came upon a photograph she had long thought thrown out with all she had discarded in fresh start over the years”. (*None* 3-4). The issue of discarding everything for a new life shows that Vera does not want to keep any legacy of her gruesome, disparate and disintegrating past. The author, by making Vera discover this photograph, proves that one cannot run away from one’s past no matter how sordid it might be. Also the writer brings out the discriminatory attitude of the Apartheid regime through the concept of retrospection and hindsight. This attitude was central in the daily activities of the Apartheid regime. This explains why NM Shamyarira, in “Opening Remarks to AASP Seminar on “Whither South Africa” in 1988 contends that:

The apartheid is both violent and exploitative. There is plentiful evidence for this. However, the most peculiar feature of the apartheid state is its racial character – the ruling class is a racial oligarchy that has vast privileges of education, skills, and expertise that are generally denied to the black majority. (vi)

In the novel, one realises the forceful and crude removal of blacks and coloureds from areas which had been allocated for whites. This was in connection with the Group Area Act of 1950 that carved certain areas to be inhabited only by whites and Europeans. The omniscient narrator asserts that the Apartheid regime “[...] went off to bulldoze the homes of a community, pack the inhabitants and their belongings on trucks drawn like any other government equipment from the State’s stores and transport them to an area designated by the appropriate department.” (*None* 12-13) The forceful and discriminatory eviction of blacks and coloureds from their houses is, indeed, what the

Legal Foundation was criticizing in the days of Apartheid. This attitude shows that the Apartheid doctrine was inhuman and ruthless to blacks and coloureds.

The inhuman and exploitative undertone of the Apartheid regime is further echoed by the omniscient narrator when he says that after the state department has evicted the people from their homes:

There they were supplied with tin toilets, communal taps, and sometimes, if these could be drawn from the stores department, tents. Sheets of corrugated tin might be supplied for them to begin building shacks. They might be allowed to bring along bits and ends left intact by the demolition of their houses – a window-frame or some boards – but cows and goats had to be left behind [...] (None 12-13)

This passage is to show how the Apartheid regime had little care for blacks and non-whites in general. It is further said that the regime gave the people, who had been forcefully evicted from their houses, “tin toilets”, “communal taps”, “tents”, and “sheets of corrugated tin” so that they could begin constructing not houses but “shacks”. These elements are vivid metaphors of the horrific and detestable conditions under which the blacks and non-whites lived during the Apartheid era. More so, the passage also echoes the exploitative tendency of the white Apartheid regime when it is said that when these people were evicted from their homes, their cows and goats had to be left behind. This is an element of economic exploitation because the government wanted the people to be removed from these areas but insisted that their cows and goats, which are symbols of economic values, should not be taken along with them. This attitude of the Apartheid regime is similar to the man in the African proverb who detests a cow but drinks the milk of the same cow. This explains why the narrator, in a sardonic tone, poses the rhetorical question: “what would the beasts feed on, in a stretch of veld cleared and levelled for the barest human occupation?” (None 13) These beasts symbolise the white regime and its bestial behaviour towards the blacks and coloureds.

In addition, memory and recollection is seen when the narrator, through the use of the flashback technique, goes back to the days of racial discrimination and conflict to show how Oupa, the clerk and driver of the Legal Foundation, was arrested and molested by the Apartheid regime. Oupa’s suffering is a metaphor for the sufferings of all who vehemently criticized Apartheid during this period. Robben Island, in this case, is symbolic and representational of the memory of the Apartheid struggle, oppression and tribulation. Harriet Deacon, in “Remembering Tragedy, Constructing Modernity: Robben Island as a National Monument” heeds to this symbolism when he asserts that:

Throughout South African history Robben has thus performed a vital symbolic role. Oliver Tambo commented in 1980: "The tragedy of Africa, in racial terms (has been) concentrated in the southern tip of the continent - in South Africa, Namibia and, in special sense, Robben Island". Yet within the public memory of the new South Africa, it has now also become an important symbol of triumph of human rights over horrors of the atavistic system of apartheid, a symbol for national transformation. For many South Africans, Robben Island symbolizes 'the indestructibility of the spirit of resistance against colonialism, injustice and oppression'. (163)

The above comments show that Robben Island, in the days of Apartheid, had a different symbolism from the meaning it now has in the present post-Apartheid context. In the past, this prison symbolized the repressive nature of the Apartheid administration and also the determination of the oppressed in the struggle against racial segregation. This symbolic meaning stems from the fact that it was in Robben Island that anti-Apartheid fighters were incarcerated. However, Robben Island in its post-Apartheid context symbolizes the victory of liberty over oppression.

In a conversation between Oupa and Vera Stark, the omniscient narrator says: "Then he [Oupa] began to talk to her [Vera] about his four years in Robben Island, seventeen to twenty-one" (*None* 15). Recounting this event to Vera brings out memories of trauma and disintegration of the past. Through Oupa's memory, one also realizes the corrupt and decadent nature of the Apartheid society. The narrator affirms that "[...] the theft [of Vera's car] revived something else [...]" in Oupa's mind (*None* 16). This makes him reminisce on his own state in the days of Apartheid, when he was awaiting trial on the mainland in a cell with criminals. This incident happened before he went to "the Island". He narrates his experiences with the criminals in the cell where they bribed the warders, and even their white counterparts, in order to survive. Oupa says that the murderers and gangsters in the cell "[...] were brilliant" and "—Nothing to touch them for brains" (*None* 16). Pamela Jooste, in *Frieda and Min*, has also portrayed the corrupt nature of the Apartheid context where Min, the white female protagonist, is incarcerated for her anti-Apartheid activism, and where the security forces, on their part compel her to bribe them before she is released.

A further analysis of the conversation between Oupa and Vera reveals the fact that the detainees of Robben Island were given inhuman and nefarious treatment. This awful and horrific treatment of political detainees was the subject in almost all fictional works composed by artists and writers who detested this system of governance. This treatment of political prisoners forces the inmates to resist the prison warders by going on hunger strike (*None* 15). The omniscient narrator further says that Oupa stopped his conversation with Vera and returned to it some other time. The narrator says:

He broke off and returned to it on other days, remembering things he had forgotten or not wanted to remember; not only the brutality and heedless insult of walls and warders, but also the distortions in his own behaviour he now looked upon. Sometimes with disbelief, talking to her, sometime with puzzlement, even shame" (None 15).

The above passage by the narrator brings out memories of disenchantment and dehumanization of these prisoners during the Apartheid period. The passage also shows that even in the present post-Apartheid situation, Oupa looks back to what happened to him in Robben Island in shame, distress and depression.

The maltreatment of these prisoners in Robben Island encouraged the inmates to have a bond of unity and brotherhood among themselves since they had a unity of vision and were fighting for a similar goal. The narrator explains, "There was the comradeship, the real meaning of brother" (*None* 15). The word "comradeship" in the political context depicts that the detainees had the same political goal and vision while the use of the word "brother" shows the unity and intimacy that existed among the inmates during this period. However, despite the unity among the prisoners, there were times when they had conflicts and misunderstandings among themselves that even resulted to fighting. Oupa explains " – But you suddenly hate someone, you can hardly keep your hands off his throat – and it's over nothing, a piece of string to tie your shoe, one time a fight in the shower about whose turn it was!" (*None* 15)

When Oupa had finished narrating the ordeal of what he and the other political criminals had gone through at Robben Island, Vera asks this question to him: "– You ever come across any of them again outside?" (*None* 16). The collective pronoun "them" in this question refers to the prison warders or the soldiers who maltreated the detainees in prison. Consequently, Vera probably wants to inquire whether Oupa holds the oppressors in bitterest hate or not especially in this new dispensation of the post-Apartheid context. Oupa's reactions to this question shows that he still demonstrates vivid memories of the terrifying and dehumanizing past. The narrator says, "Oupa pressed his elbows to his ribs and brought his shoulders up to his ears". (*None* 16) This vivid description is used by the narrator to show Oupa's indignation of the past and those who perpetrated acts of injustice and political subjugation against the South African people. This is justified by the exclamatory sentences Oupa uses to bring out his feelings and reactions of the past. He exclaims: "– Those people! Man! J-e-ss-uss!" (*None* 16) These exclamatory sentences are very effective in the sense that they bring out a feeling of disgust and indignation of the Apartheid era.

The visit of the black couple, Sibongile and Didymus, to the Stark's residence recalls the sentiments of the past. These two families, the Maqomas and the Starks, have a long-standing relationship because both of them were involved in the Apartheid struggle before its abolition. This is made lucid when the narrator says that:

When the railway line is abandoned, the tracks aren't taken up. Under weeds and grass, they remain, marking a route. For the start, with Sibongile and Didymus Maqomas, suddenly sitting in the Starks' living-room again after more than twenty years, there was an unexpected warmth and understanding across the conditioned inhibitions of colour, between couples sharing youth and the ties of children (*None* 38).

The first two lines of the above quotation have a proverbial inclination. The narrator remarks, in a proverbial manner, that a rail way line which has been abandoned does not necessarily mean that the tracks have been wiped off. Even when weeds and grass grow on it, some spots will still be seen to commit to memory that the rail was once used. This is an allusion to the fact that Maqomas and Starks families cannot forget their past in the traumatic Apartheid context. It is in this context that this visit takes the couples into a retrospect of twenty years to reflect on the struggle they waged against the Apartheid state.

The narrator further recounts an event, which took place five years before when Didymus clandestinely came to South Africa from exile. When he stopped at Vera's house, disguised as a clergyman, she apparently did not recognize him. Without asking him, Vera thought he was a black pastor coming to ask for her church contribution. It is only during their conversation that Vera discovered that the man was Didymus who "[...] had been smuggled into the country and that he had a purpose about which she must not ask" (*None* 40). Didymus had secretly entered the country in the midst of tight security to give Vera a letter so that she could help him post it to Europe. The dialogue between Didymus and Vera, in this flashback, depicts the rate of insecurity, fear and uncertainty during the period of Apartheid. Vera, out of fear and nervousness, says:

"—can't believe it! But I'm so afraid for you what they'll do to you if they catch you – you could just disappear you know that, they keep infiltrators in solitary confinement for months under interrogations, months and months before they piece together enough to bring them to trial. If they ever do—" (*None* 41-42).

The above statement, by Vera, brings out the abuse of human rights in the Apartheid era – where political prisoners were caught and locked up for years without trial. In addition, Vera's use of the contractions (Can't, I'm, they'll) in the passage above gives an image of fear and suspicion that pervaded the Apartheid atmosphere. The omniscient narrator further evokes this atmosphere of fear and suspicion through the rhetorical question that "What would she do if the police did come, what if they were waiting somewhere hidden in the street, sitting in a car, ready to take him as he walked out of her game?" (*None* 42). This rhetorical question shows that the Apartheid era was one of uncertainty since nobody, especially the freedom fighters, could say with certainty what will happen to them in the next minute. In addition, it is out of this fear of the unknown that Didymus pleads that Vera should defend him in case he is caught. He says: "—you'll defend me if I come to trial, Vera, I count on you—" (*None* 42)

The gruesome and spiteful context, in which the South Africans lived during the Apartheid days, is also seen in the contrast drawn by Didymus between the present context and the Apartheid situation. When Sibongile and Didymus come to the Hillbrow hotel, Sibongile complains of the adverse condition of the hotel. Sibongile even describes the hotel as "this filthy dump, this whore-house for Hillbrow drunks".

Didymus, however, consoles her that she should just persevere and bear it, for the days of Apartheid were worse. He says “—Sibo you’ve lived much worse. It didn’t kill us—” (*None* 45). The use of this contrast is to show that the post-Apartheid era, with all its imperfections, is comparatively better than the Apartheid situation.

During the period of Apartheid, the regime did all it could to penetrate and disintegrate the Movement – even when the members were on exile. The regime infiltrated the Movement with spies and when they were caught, they were largely brutalized and some were even lynched. In a dialogue between Sibongile and Didymus, after her assignment abroad to negotiate on the takeover of the property of the Movement in the countries where the members were taking their asylum, Didymus asks her whether she visited some of the camps in these countries. These were the camps where infiltrators and spies of the Movement were incarcerated. The narrator articulates that:

*Recently there had been released by the Movement a public report of things done there [in the camp]; unspeakable things. When the report was about to come out he had thought he’d better tell her what he had never told her: that for a time, a desperate time when the Freedom Fighters and the Movement itself were in great danger by infiltration, he had been an interrogator – yes – a jailer, there. He’d told her the code names of others who were running the place and how two of them had joined him eventually, in protest against the methods being used to extract information. She knew, all right, about whom he was enquiring when he mentioned those names. (*None* 128)*

This information, which is realised through the use of the flashback technique, enhances the concept of memory and social disintegration in Apartheid South Africa. Through this flashback, one realises that the Apartheid regime could go to any length to curb a move that was aimed at destabilising the smooth function of the system.

The Movement is doing all in its capacity to keep the history of the exile alive. This is due to the fact that its members do not want posterity to forget about the struggles of the South African people. Most importantly, in order to build a strong and united post-Apartheid nation the past should not be shoved into oblivion. In a discussion between Sibongile and Vera, the latter asks the question: “-I hear Didy’s commissioned to do a book. A history of the exile period, is it? -” (*None* 132). The idea of writing the history of the exile is an aspect of keeping the memory of the past intact. This is because the development of a people and their wellbeing partly depends on its history. The people need to know the errors they committed in the past in order not to commit the same errors in the present and the future.

The use of memory is also realised in Zoe Wicomb’s *Playing in the Light*. Just like Gordimer, the author explores the idea of memory, through the use of the flashback technique, to reveal the brutal and uncompromising nature of the Apartheid regime whose agent of brutality was the Forces of Law and Order. This view is substantiated

in the novel when the narrator avows that “[...] the past is contained in endless dreary rows of parcelled days, wrapped in tissue paper, each with its drop of poison at the core.” (*Playing* 61) This view shows how gruesome and frustrating the South African past is.

Through memory, one realises that John Campbell in his youthful days was suffering from identity crisis. He testifies that he used to question his father why his siblings including him, had English names. The narrator comments thus:

In the cramped tin-roofed terraced house in Observatory, he often thinks of the old farm: the house with whitewashed walls and black window frames; the loft, which stretched the entire length of the roof, with its black wooden door. All the farm houses had woodwork painted in gracht green. Why not theirs? Why had he never asked his father? But his father was a man of few words, a man without letters who refused to answer questions. Or perhaps knew none the answer. Why do we have English names? Why, why why? His father mimicked. Is that all you can ask? Ask no questions and you'll hear no lies. (Playing 5)

From the passage above, many facts are known about the childhood of John Campbell. Firstly, the narrator mentions “the farm houses” which is an indication that he is from a typical agricultural family. Secondly, his father could not tell him why he gave them English names. This biographical information shows that John was suffering from identity crisis – since a person’s name is also a carrier of his identity because every name is borne within a particular culture. One can also infer that, by not giving John Campbell this information, his father was hiding something from him.

The narrator further comments on the special skills of John Campbell in distinguishing the sounds of cars from afar even without seeing them. As a police officer who was in charge of traffic, he spent most of his life working in the city. This explains why the narrator says that:

John has a special ear for traffic. Which is not surprising, given that his working life was spent on crossroads and traffic islands, appreciating the sounds that he came to identify as one might separate instruments in a symphony. That, for the young man from Karoo, was the essence of the city: a symphony of sound, of people chattering in Afrikaans or English or, in their neighbourhood, switching smartly in mid-sentence between the two; of buses, bakkies, cars, and lorries. (Playing 5)

From the above quotation, the narrator remarks that only Afrikaans and English were the languages that were spoken by the South African citizens in the city. These languages are metaphors of oppression and domination in the days of Apartheid – since they are the languages of the Afrikaners and South Africans who had British descent. This indicates that during the Apartheid era, the African culture was relegated from the centre to the periphery. This shows why, in *Frieda and Min*, Pamela Jooste narrates the Apartheid imbroglio and shows how non-whites and anti-Apartheid activists were fighting to rescue that African culture from suppression.

The narrator says that John Campbell's name was misspelt by the police officer at the Traffic Department when he first pronounced his name to him. Instead of Campbell, the police officer wrote "Kembel." However, John does not correct him because of fear. It is in connection to this that the narrator admits thus: "[...] John, who could read and write perfectly well, knew that it would be a mistake to correct a man so dapperly turned out in khaki – yes, those were days before the airforce-blue uniform" (*Playing* 5). The above statement creates humour; the reader is amused to see how one is afraid to correct somebody who spells his name wrongly. Underneath this humour, lies a penetrating satire on the brutality and furiousness of the Apartheid police against the citizens of South Africa. It shows that the Forces of Law and Order were so brutal that the citizens were even afraid to correct them when they were wrong. The narrator, in order to strengthen this satire, asks the following rhetorical questions: "Why fuss over a spelling that made not the slightest difference? Or if it did, if that was all it took to turn him into someone new, a man of the city with prospects, who was he to complain? The name could easily be corrected later without offending the officer" (*Playing* 5). From these rhetorical questions, one realises that John Campbell did not want to anger the police officer that is why he did not care to correct him. In addition, one realises that John, in his youthful days, was suffering from the crisis of identity. He used to question why they – his brothers and sisters had English names. The narrator says that "[...] his [John] father was a man of few words, a man without letters who refused to answer questions" (*Playing* 5). John's father could not tell why he had English names probably because he wanted to hide his identity from him for the probable reason that identity was a crucial issue in the days of Apartheid.

Wicomb also uses memory to depict the racial orientation and thinking of some South Africans in the days of Apartheid. This racist tendency is seen through the character traits of Marion's mother, Helen, and her friend Annie Boshoff. When their servant, Tikkie, dies, Marion who is five years old at the time wants to attend the funeral ceremony. Her mother refuses on the pretext that they will organise theirs at home, which they never do (*Playing* 32-33). Marion's father, however, criticises this attitude and cautions them that God would not forgive them for not going to the funeral. In hearing this Annie Boshoff mocks at Marion's father saying "[...] that was kaffirboetie talk. There was no need going to a servant's funeral, no matter how old or wonderful she was." (*Playing* 33) This attitude does not only bring out the concept of racial segregation in the Apartheid era; it also portrays the fact that the Apartheid society was also based on class distinction. However, the narrator argues that Annie does not understand that Tokkie was more than just a servant to the family and especially to Marion.

In the dialogue between Brenda and Boetie on the situation of violence and insecurity in the society, the former accused the latter for being complacent with the Apartheid system by voting for it the first time it was instituted in 1948. In her furiousness, Brenda questions him: "Really? You don't think that years of oppression and destitution and perversion of human beings, thanks to the policies that you voted in, have anything

to do with you?" (*Playing* 36) This rhetorical question interrogates the Apartheid era and memories of it because it shows, according to Brenda, that the present chaos and insecurity in post-Apartheid South Africa is due to the policy of racial segregation that was officially instituted in the country in 1948 when Dr. Malan and his National Party won the election. This rhetorical question also identifies Boetie as a pro-Apartheid activist – which was a customary attitude of most whites during this era. Even though Boetie rejects this allegation by responding to Brenda that he did not vote for Apartheid, she finds it difficult to believe him. (*Playing* 36) It is in this guise that Brenda makes the sarcastic comment that "It's impossible to find a person in this country who voted for the Nationalist Party. God knows how that phantom called apartheid came into being all by itself[...]" (*Playing* 36) This sarcasm is to lampoon the hypocrisy of those who voted for the Apartheid system; with the new dispensation, nobody wants to identify him/herself with the regime.

Through the use of memory, one realises that there was constant friction between the church, as an institution, and Apartheid state. In principle, the church operates on the ideology of equality and social justice. So in the context of Apartheid, it was normal for the church not to be in unison or agreement with some of the Apartheid laws. The omniscient narrator comments that Father Gilbert, the Anglican priest, was always at loggerheads with the regime. He further comments thus:

Being English and therefore a radical, he had to demonstrate the parish's abhorrence of apartheid, especially after the example set by Huddleston, the young firebrand priest of the north, who for all Father Gilbert could see spent rather more time messing about with young jazz-playing tsotsis than serving God. (Playing 159)

The above passage shows that the church was not an accomplice in the policies of the Apartheid state. It did not mince words when it came to criticising the ills of the Apartheid system. It is in connection to this that the narrator, in paraphrasing Father Gilbert, says: "The church must make a stand, he said, or so Trevor Huddlestone preached, and history, he was sure, would prove him right in his endeavours to fight the iniquitous [Apartheid] system" (*Playing* 160)

In addition, in order to nib the Apartheid policy in the bud, Father Gilbert focuses his attention more on the youth so as to dissuade them from supporting the execrable and unjust Apartheid doctrine. This is probably because, sensitising the youth on the iniquities of Apartheid will make the policy evanescent since the youth are the leaders of tomorrow. The narrator asserts that Father Gilbert did not spare any opportunity that came his way "[...] to make young people aware of the iniquities of racialism and apartheid." (*Playing* 159) This English Anglican priest, therefore, can be compared to Martin Luther King Jr. who spent the greatest part of his life fighting against racism, inequality, and social injustice in America.

Also, the use of memory conveys an image of poverty and hardship among non-whites during the Apartheid era. Since the policy of Apartheid was discriminatory against the blacks and non-whites in general, it did not give them the opportunity to be economically rich as the whites. "Father Gilbert", in narrator says, "spoke with passion about the parishes in the townships, the poor coloured people who were so lacking in facilities and resources that they were vulnerable to devil's work and dagga" (*Playing* 67). These coloured people are so poor that they cannot even build a church of theirs. "[...] so a group of freshly confirmed girls were sent out to take Sunday-school classes at the new church in Bonteheuwel, kindly donated by the ladies of the southern suburbs" (*Playing* 67). This gesture by the ladies of the southern suburbs is an indication that the under-privileged groups were at the mercy of members of the civil society – and not of the state. It also shows the degree to which the state neglected these groups and treated them unjustly. In addition, even at the level of education, nonwhites because of their poverty-stricken nature, found it very difficult to educate themselves to a particular length. This is the case with Tokkie – who is being nicknamed as Thomasina by Flip Karelse. The narrator asserts that she could not go to the high school because her family had no money to sponsor her to that level – despite the fact that she was intelligent at school as testified by Flip Karelse who falls in love with her because of this (*Playing* 135).

While in her mother's room, "Marion sits cross-legged on the floor, leaning against her mother's dressing table, from which she has taken the Black Magic box" (*Playing* 116). In this box is found "[...] nothing among the meagre remains of Helen's possessions that gives anything away" (*Playing* 116). The most significant and symbolic item she discovers in the box is "A registry office marriage without any guests, with no family. There is Helen's green identity card marked WHITE, with a photograph that does not do justice to her beauty" (*Playing* 116). The most striking item in this box is Helen's identity card, which has been marked white to show that she is a member of the white race – (which of course is faulty because Helen, just as her husband John Campbell, is of the coloured race who was mistakenly classified as white in the Apartheid days.) This identity card recalls to memory the days of Apartheid when South Africans were segregated and tagged. The racial affiliation of people was more important and any other thing was secondary. This is attested to the fact that, on the card, her race is written in bold and in upper case. This is to prove that the information concerning her race is more important than any other information on the card.

The National Library is one of the structures which is an epitome of the collective memory and the historical past in the South African society. In fact, the role of this library is not too different from that of museums that have also helped in shaping the memory of South Africans. In her article entitled "Museums and the Reshaping of Memory" Patricia Davidson argues that. "Museums, like memory, mediate the past, present, and future. [...] museums give material form to authorized versions of the past, which in time become institutionalized as public memory. In this way, museums anchor official

memory.” (15) It is for this reason that Marion spends her lunch hour in the library. Her intention of visiting this library is to look for information about “play-whites” in South Africa. In the novel, play-whites were those coloured South Africans who were mistakenly classified as whites by the Apartheid administration. The narrator says that when Marion reaches the library, “[...] the woman in navy blue [the librarian] who has noted her look of defeat and disappointment asks so soothingly, so kindly whether she can be of any help, that without hesitation Marion says yes, she would like to find out about play-whites.” (*Playing* 120) In the course of the search, the narrator defines play-whites thus: “Play-white, they imagine, must be the condition of whiteness but whiteness itself, according to the library’s classification system, is not a category for investigation.” (*Playing* 120) This statement is a scornful and scathing satire on the question of race in the days of Apartheid. It shows that during this period in the history of South Africa, the determination of one’s race was very complex and complicated; there were coloured South Africans who were declared white but were later reclassified and vice versa.

The use of memory is reminiscent of the white supremacist mentality in the days of Apartheid – which found in-roads into all South African structures and institutions. The whites saw themselves as superior to the Africans and dragooned non-whites to believe in the idea as well. Most coloureds were even happy to be mistaken for whites. This created serious identity crisis and split personality especially among members of the coloured race. The narrator affirms that John Campbell, though from the coloured race, was content to be mistaken for a Boer. (*Playing* 126) “Indeed”, the narrator says, that was what had sparked the idea of becoming white – not an act of imagination on his part, no, merely a happy case of mistaken identity.” (*Playing* 126) When he is mistaken for a white in the Traffic Department, he does not notify the superintendent; he lives with this mistaken identity – with all the advantages that follow it – until the end of Apartheid.

Memory further reveals distress and despair in the days of Apartheid. This is because the omniscient narrator discloses that children were also caught in the heat of racial segregation. This is very traumatising because children are generally considered to be the national-builders of tomorrow. So their copying of the racist propensity of their elders, it was not a good sign for the future of Apartheid South Africa. The narrator starts by recounting that Helen saw [...] no point in being known in the coloured neighbourhood when, frankly, there was no future in attachments to such people, when the new lives she envisaged demanded a clean slate.” (*Playing* 129) Helen is one of the play-whites in the novel; she is actually coloured but just as her husband, she has been mistaken for a white. She does not see herself and family interacting with members of the coloured community for – according to her – they had a futureless future. This thinking shows how depressed non-white South Africans were in the days of Apartheid. It is in this context that the omniscient narrator appends and corroborates that “As for the poor-white estate across the railway line, from where barefooted children threw stones at the coloured houses, shouting Swartgat, swartgat, that too was an object lesson. That raggedness was not what she had in mind at all.” (*Playing* 129)

In addition, Zoe Wicomb probes into the past, in the history of South Africa, to satirise some of the Apartheid laws – especially those that define the concept of race and colour. In the novel, the author shows the complexities and complications that are involved in defining the racial orientations of South Africans – especially the coloureds. While in the National Library, the narrator comments that Marion and the librarian “[...] pore over the laws and confusing racial definitions.” (*Playing* 120) This comment, by the narrator, depicts the contradictions that were embedded in the racial laws during the Apartheid era. This incongruity in the racial laws is further buttressed when the narrator recounts thus:

The 1946 franchise laws allowed mixed blood in one parent or grandparent, but the new bill of 1950, designed to formalise and fix the categories of coloured and white, conflicted with the earlier one. Coloureds could now elect European representatives to the House of Assembly, but many whites who until then had thought of themselves as European were in the fifties transferred to the newly established separate coloured voters’ roll. (Playing 120–121)

As Marion and the librarian probes deeper into the archives in the library, they realise that the definition of who a white person is, following Act No. 20 of 1950 contradicts the Population Registration Amendment Act of 1960. The narrator says that in 1950, a white person was defined as: “one who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person.” This law does not depend on any scientific or rational parameter. In other words, the law has to do with perception and not reality. It means that coloureds, who supported the Apartheid policy, were considered whites while whites who were adversarial to this policy could even be considered as non-white. It further alludes that being white or non-white in the days of Apartheid was a matter of ideological orientation (*Playing* 121). This law, however, was modified in 1960 and the amended definition read as follows:

A ‘white person’ is a person who (a) in appearance obviously is a white person and who is not generally accepted as a coloured person; or (b) is generally accepted as a white person and in appearance obviously not a white person, but does not include any person who for the purpose of classification under this Act, freely and voluntarily admits that he is by descent a native or a coloured person unless it is proved that that the admission is not based on fact. (Playing 121)

After studying the two laws, Marion doubts whether there is any real difference between them. This is seen in the use of the rhetorical question by the narrator when he says: “But is that any difference, Marion asks, from the 1950 Act?” (*Playing* 121) One can infer from this question that Marion finds no intrinsic difference between the former law and its amended one. Also, the study of these laws is reminiscent of trauma, distress, and anguish during the Apartheid era. The narrator says:

The librarian lifts an admonishing palm, purses her lips to silence Marion, but it is not long before she succumbs to laughter. In vain they try to stifle the sound; they stagger drunkenly between the aisles before sliding with the heavy tomes onto the carpeted floor, where they rock with quiet laughter. Tears stream down their faces. There are decades worth of folly trapped in these pages. (Playing 121)

The librarian further affirms that in the fifties and sixties, in South Africa, the Apartheid regime ran into confusion on the definition of who a white is. This confusion probably stems from the fact that some coloured South Africans were passing for whites. The omniscient narrator remarks that “Must have been a hell of a confusing time, between the fifties and sixties, when whiteness was not yet properly defined, the narrator says.” (*Playing* 121) This assertion depicts the view that even the regime, in the days of Apartheid, found it difficult to say who a white is.

One realises that white superiority complex was rife during the Apartheid era. This explains why there were coloureds that saw themselves as whites. Just like Marion, Flip Karelse is also a coloured South African who is very comfortable because he is recognised as a white. The narrator describes him as “[...] a handsome, light-skinned man with dreamy hazel eyes.” (*Playing* 135) In the novel he fell in love with Tokkie who is, indeed, a non-white. When both of them go out for a pleasure trip on Sunday, Flip Karelse brings her back to her house very late. The narrator says that “No girl should be brought home after sunset; that was the rule, and it was because the Karelses thought of themselves as white, and therefore superior, that he dared to disobey.” (*Playing* 137) The above statement, by the narrator, depicts the concept of white superiority and mistaken identity during the Apartheid days. This is made lucid from the narrator’s phrase that “the Karelses thought of themselves as white.” In other words, this is just a perception but not the reality because this family is actually coloured not white. The white community merely mistook them for whites. This passage further shows that the white race was looked upon as superior; those who were recognised as members of this race had the latitude to trespass the laws and conventions of the society with impunity.

Zoe Wicomb also criticises ethical and moral corruption in the days of Apartheid. This type of corruption was mostly found within the ranks or milieus of important personnel in South Africa. One of such characters is Councillor Carter who is a member of the Anglican Church – but very corrupt and morally loose. When Helen Campbell goes to his office to request for an affidavit from him to prove that the Campbells are known members of the white community, Carter requests to have sex with her before she could obtain her request. (*Playing* 143) Helen reminds him that she is a married woman but this information rings no bell in Councillor Carter’s mind, resolute to have sex with her. The attitude of Councillor Carter shows the immorality that was orchestrated by the elite in the days of racial segregation in South Africa. Carter has the courage to make such an immoral advance to a married woman like Helen because he knows that she is in

desperate search for this affidavit. Councillor Carter, therefore, is an extended metaphor of the entire elite in Apartheid South Africa. The author, therefore, levels a pungent attack on this increasing rate of immorality amongst the elite during the Apartheid era.

Apart from Councillor Carter, Mr Boshoff is also another character who has been used by the author to portray the moral dereliction of the Apartheid era. Just like the case of Carter, this moral decrepitude of Mr Boshoff is also seen through the author's use of the flashback technique. The narrator records this scandal when he says that "Mr Boshoff caught with his pants down on top of a coloured girl, his buttocks white and frozen in the policeman's torchlight. In the very backseat of the Chevie where Marion and Annie bounced about with the dog on Saturday-afternoon drives to Milnerton Beach." (*Playing* 193-194) This repugnant and decadent act, however, should not just be blamed on Mr Boshoff's moral bankruptcy and impoverishment alone. It was the general trend even amongst young girls at the time. So it is this coloured girl who seduced him into this act as one reads from the assertion of the narrator that "This coloured girls may not be oil paintings – the girl's mouth was distinctly African – but she certainly know how to tempt a man, to ruin his life." (*Playing* 194)

John Campbell sees the past as traumatising and wants to unleash it to her daughter Marion. By so doing, he believes that he will be released from the trauma, depression, and the nightmare of his family history. What is psychologically disturbing is the fact that he is aware of his consciously mistaken identity – of which his daughter, Marion is not aware of. So he wants to make her know the story of his family which he has been concealing from her. Up to this moment, Marion has been living in the mistaken identity that she is from the white race meanwhile she is really a coloured South African. This explains why the narrator describes John as "[...] an emblem of the phantasmagoric past." (*Playing* 155) This description means that John has elements in his past that are hidden from others. John chooses the Wynberg Park because he wants an environment that both of them can talk without any hindrance. The narrator comments: "John barely recognises his own courageous voice: Come child, we'll go to Wynberg Park and I'll buy you an ice cream. There we can talk nicely in the shade, clear up this whole business and forget about the past." (*Playing* 155)

When they reached the park, John Campbell gives a detailed account of his life and the manipulation they had to do in order to be recognised as members of the white community although they are coloureds. (*Playing* 156-157) The narrator reveals that John was very happy when the Traffic Superintendent mistook him for a Boer. In other words, he was happy to be mistaken for a white. This does not necessarily mean that he loved or admired the white race. In the days of Apartheid, the white race was the superior race. So non-whites, especially those from the coloured race, were happy if they were mistaken for whites. This made them gain access to the white community and benefit from the political and social dividence that comes with it. Also, the superiority complex of the white race is seen when it was held that coloureds could not work in the Traffic Department for, according to the Apartheid regime, it was abnormal and, above

all, degrading, for a coloured to control white drivers. This superiority complex of the white race is further elucidated from the narrator's utterance that "[...] being white in the whole is surely about being at ease, since the world belongs to you." (*Playing* 152)

Non-whites were almost in constant and frantic demonstration against the racist Apartheid legislations. This was one of the major root causes of violence and uncertainty during this period. The narrator insinuates that Fourie, the husband of Elsie, was one of the ringleaders against the unjust Apartheid laws. This information is found in the local tabloid or newspaper called Cape Times. The narrator remarks:

On the front page of the Cape Times there'd been a photograph of coloured men waving defiant fists, and Fourie in the centre named as a prominent Unity Movement rebel. They'd led a procession through the streets of Cape Town, congregating on the Grand Parade, where Fourie and others had spoken against the new laws. (Playing 170-171)

In addition to the above fact, the narrator affirms that "The late seventies were terrible years. One just didn't know whether you'd see your children alive the next day. John didn't go to the university until he turned thirty; Bella was in the military wing, away for years all over Africa; and our youngest, William, shot dead on the border." (*Playing* 171) What made this period in South Africa so terrible, unpredictable, and volatile was the Soweto Massacre which took place on the 16th of June 1976. This was when Soweto children initiated a mass protest, primarily in reaction to the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in their schools. The forces of law and order opened fire at the crowd of students and massacred hundreds of them. This macabre incident in Apartheid inspired the creation of many literary productions. One of such is Nadine Gordimer's novel, *Burgher's Daughter* (1977), which is an allegorical rendition of the incident of 1976. It is for this reason that the novel was banned from the South African reading public when it was published.

In the days of Apartheid, there were South Africans, especially those of the coloured race, who consciously and deliberately disguised their real racial identity and passed for whites. Mostly, women dressed in white wigs in order to mask themselves and cover up their real racial identity. In a discussion with Marion, Vumi conferred to her that the idea of identity disguise was just a survival strategy which was used by his mother. Vumi says to Marion: "Oh no, he says, mine were okay; people do what they can to survive. And when apartheid came to an end, my mum just took her wig off, right there among the coloureds, and now they're living nice and comfy in a black neighbourhood. I just love their impertinence – he laughs uproariously." (*Playing* 206)

In a discussion with Marion, at the end of the novel, Brenda promises to write the biography of John Campbell. In the novel, she does not really call it biography but "story". Her inspiration to document John's story comes as a result of the discussions she had been having with him when Marion was on vacation to Europe. This is because,

on her vacation to Europe, Marion did not tell her father. This explains why he kept calling her office. Out of love and pity, Marion visited him and presented him a gift of a bottle of brandy. In most of their discussions, he told Brenda the history of his life which according to her is interesting and worth documenting. (*Playing* 217) The idea of writing the story of John shows that Brenda is determined to keep history alive for posterity to come and read. However, Marion takes very serious offence against this project or initiative to write her father's story. The narrator says that, on hearing this, "Her voice is cold with rage. So in the guise of a do-gooder, you went back to prise more out of a lonely, senile old man who was grateful for your visits? Sis. How dare you! Why don't you write your own fucking story?" (*Playing* 217) Marion's indignation depicts that she wants to sever links with her past which is symbolised in her father.

In conclusion, this paper set out to explain the concept of memory in post-Apartheid fiction and its importance in Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me* and Zoe Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*. This paper postulates and affirms that memory, in post-Apartheid literary and cultural discourses, have been used to portray the sordid realities of the Apartheid days and also to show that characters in post-Apartheid narratives "look back in anger" when memories of the past are being evoked by the omniscient narrators or the characters themselves. The past, which embodies the memory of Apartheid, is a continuous nightmare to the non-white South just as the history of slavery and slave trade keeps haunting the Caribbeans and African-Americans today.

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